

ANTIHEROES IN MODERN LITERATURE

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For my parents, for their support, encouragement and for believing in me

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Lulu Marzan Salma

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Abstract

This paper seeks to look at the definition of antiheroes and the purpose of these kinds of protagonists in the modern literature. I tried to show the formation of antiheroes in modern literature by looking into the protagonists of three novels and a play. The study of these texts will bring out the purpose and the characteristics of some of the major antiheroes of English literature.

Introduction

Antiheroes are a quintessential element of Modernism, postmodernism and existentialism. Although the breed of anti heroes came into focus and entered the main stream of literature in large numbers roughly during and after the period of Modernism, the concept was present even before. The idea of a hero who is flawed, weak, and possesses humane insecurities rather than epic virtues has fascinated many writers and readers alike. This paper will try to define anti heroes by looking at different characteristics presented in major texts where the protagonist deviates from the epic heroic mold. What is an Antihero? The answer to this question can be found by looking at different texts that claim to have an Antiheroic character rather than an epic heroic character. The spice of a story, the element that makes it more than a simple tale of heroes and villains, lies within the character of the Antihero. The Antihero is someone with some of the qualities of a villain, up to and including brutality, cynicism, and ruthlessness, but with the soul or motivations of a more conventional Hero. The Antihero probably existed first (before conventional Heroes), perhaps pre-dating the sanctifying influence of organized religion. Many of the protagonists of Western and Eastern classical and mythological stories fit into the broad Antihero mold, especially those who are shown as having turbulent, violent backgrounds and conflicting motivations. Frequently, it is this mental conflict that serves to link the discrete episodes which compose such stories. Such a connector was necessary due to the oral storytelling tradition that persisted until fairly recently. On the secular front, the Antihero has fared better, used at times as a mirror for social commentary and political critique. The

protagonist's spot may be used, but more often an antihero is relegated to a secondary or fatal role in the story, skirting potentially negative attention. Swift's Gulliver had his fatal personality flaws and yet held fast to his attitudes, but although he could easily represent any person buffeted by life's harshness, he is not exactly a character to model one's future life on. In later times, authors have been bolder in their use of flawed heroes and even villains as key characters, perhaps as the threat of retribution has lessened somewhat. An Antihero is the principal character of a modern literary or dramatic work who lacks the attributes of the traditional protagonist or hero. The anti-hero's lack of courage, honesty, or grace, his weaknesses and confusions, often reflect modern man's ambivalence toward traditional moral and social virtues. According to the Wikipedia-

In fiction, an **anti-hero** is a protagonist who is lacking the traditional heroic attributes and qualities, and instead possesses character traits that are antithetical to heroism. Typically, the anti-hero acts heroically, in scale and daring, but by methods, manners, and intentions both fair and foul, even underhanded and deceitful. The word *anti-hero*, itself, is fairly recent, its principal definition has changed through the years. The 1940 edition of Merriam-Webster New International Dictionary listed *anti-hero*, but did not define it. Later sources would call the anti-hero a persona characterized by a lack of "traditional" heroic qualities.¹

The resolution of external conflict was tied to attaining internal balance and peace. Odysseus, for example, begins his "Odyssey" torn as to whether to brave the seas

1. <http://www.wikipedia.com/EBchecked/topic/689212/anti-hero>

and reclaim his throne or to remain on a blissful island in the passionate arms of a woman who is not his wife. Through a truly legendary series of trials, he comes to the conclusion that home is where his heart and mind can be at peace. Certainly, the adventurous journey is alluring to reader-listeners, but the emotional travails of Odysseus (and his wife & son, who have their own problems) is probably what kept Homer's audiences clamoring for more. The push for conformity of stories and ideas that came with the growth of powerful, organized religious movements and reliable, affordable printing yielded less conflicted protagonists, with little of the bloodlust of their assumed predecessors. But even then protagonists like Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn was present. He was a self-described rascal, causing all manner of trouble and even committing the crime according to the American law of the time of helping Jim, the runaway slave. Coming together with the increased use of emotionally unsettled characters, the propensity to leave a story incomplete with respect to characters' morality also increased. The Antiheroes often possess some criminal behavior and are both self-absorbed and depressed. Mid-20th century playwrights such as Samuel Beckett and Tom Stoppard showcased anti-heroic protagonists recognizable by their lack of identity and determination. Yet his frank portrait resonates with many people, despite the lack of any last-minute salvation or even a final resolution of his many conflicts. In short it can be said that an Antihero is anything but a simple cardboard cutout character. In works featuring these types of protagonists there usually is no cut-and-dried, good-or-evil characters.

Chapter- 1

Notes from Underground is a short novel by the famous Russian proto-existentialist author, Fyodor Dostoevsky. It is considered by many to be the world's first existentialist novel. It presents itself as an excerpt from the rambling memoirs of a bitter, isolated, unnamed narrator, generally referred to by critics as the Underground Man. He is an impoverished retired civil servant of forty, living in St. Petersburg. The Underground Man represents the radical existential beliefs of Dostoevsky and stands out as an anti-social and deviant being, whose existence is refused by the society.

The book is divided into two broad parts; the first part is titled "The Mousehole" and the second part is called, "Brought to Mind by a Fall of Wet Snow". The first part deals with the brainstorming of the Underground Man, where his innermost thoughts are revealed. His life is compared to a mouse hole, where he lives like a mouse, alienated from the ordinary people of the society. In the second part, he recalls his youth and some events that substantiate his state of mind. We meet the Underground Man when, at the age of forty he has retired from his civil service job and has secluded himself in a shabby apartment in St. Petersburg. By this point, he is a complete nihilist- he has no desire to interact with others and has total contempt for society along with everyone who is a part of it. Dostoevsky claims that the Underground Man is the representative of certain people who not only may but must exist in our society, taking under consideration the circumstances under which our society has generally been formed. As Edward Wasiolek stated-

The underground man is Dostoyevsky's totally free man. He carries revolt against limitation to its extreme and raises it to a philosophical principle.

Like the existentialists who were to follow three-quarters of a century later, he is *en marge*; he is in revolt not only against society but also against himself, not once, not only today or tomorrow, but eternally. (411)¹

The Underground Man is extremely alienated from the society in which he lives. He feels himself to be much more intelligent and “conscious” than any of the people he meets. However, he is aware that his consciousness often manifests itself as a skepticism that prevents him from having confidence in any of his actions. This skepticism cripples him and keeps him from participating in ‘life’ as other people do. He writes, “But how can I help it if it is the inescapable fate of every intelligent man to chatter, like filling an empty glass from an empty bottle?” (*Notes From Underground*, 98)

The Underground Man is preoccupied with the idea of “l’homme de la nature et de la vérité,” which is French for “the man of nature and truth.” The phrase is a distortion of a sentence from the *Confessions* by Rousseau. *Confessions* is a kind of autobiography meant to present a portrait of its author “exactly from nature and in all its truth.” In *Notes from Underground*, this “man of nature and truth” becomes the “unconscious man,” the man of action against whom the Underground Man opposes himself. This active man is healthy, single-minded and narrow-minded, according to the Underground Man. Such a man acts according to the laws of nature and reason. The Underground Man disdains this type of man for his blind faith, yet he also feels inferior to such a man, considering himself a “mouse” or an “insect” in comparison. Among the characters in the novel,

1. Edward Wasiolek, “Dostoyevsky, Fyodor Mikhailovich,” *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. (411-412)

Zverkov and the unnamed officer both share characteristics of *l'homme de la nature et de la vérité*.

Feeling himself to be inferior to more active, less intelligent people, the Underground Man goes through a life full of shame and self-loathing. This feeling of inadequacy before others is enhanced by the fact that, as an orphan, he has never had normal, loving relationships with other people. His regret is expressed as, "And so I might be frothing at the mouth, but if you had brought me a doll to play with or had offered me a nice cup of tea with sugar, chances are I would have calmed down. I'd even have been deeply touched, although, angry at myself, I would be certain to gnash my teeth later and be unable to sleep for several months. But that's the way it was." (85)

Moreover, throughout the novel, the Underground Man makes a convincing case against the "rational egoists" and utopian socialists of his era, who claimed that the application of reason alone could perfect the world. Believing that destructive behavior results from a misguided sense of profit, these theorists thought that if everyone in the world understood what was really in their best interests, they would never do anything irrational or destructive. If the natural laws that governed human behavior could be understood, through reason, utopia would indeed be attainable. His mockery of reason is shown in passages like, "I exercise my power of reasoning, and in my case, every time I think I have found a primary cause I see another cause that seems to be truly primary...And what happens in the end? The same thing over again." (97)

Dostoyevsky's radical contemporaries, particularly N. G. Chernyshevski in "The Anthropological Principle in Philosophy" (1860), asserted that it was merely a matter of time until the laws of man's moral nature were

discovered. Then the rational man would necessarily choose according to these laws. The underground man is Dostoyevsky's bitter answer to these assertions of the rational organization of man's happiness. The underground man refuses to accept the laws of nature. Against science, against the laws of reason, against the whole movement of man's systematic accumulation of knowledge, against the ideal of Chernyshevski's "Crystal Palace," against all that man pursues and dreads, the underground man opposes his unique, whimsical, subjective world: wish, dream, hope, cruelty, suffering, pettiness, viciousness. If the laws of nature (defined by reason) really exist, then "free will" is an illusion that will be dispelled by reason. But the underground man asserts that man will reject the laws of nature and the rational organization of happiness because he will prefer to follow his whims and stick gold pins into others or have them stuck into himself. (412)¹

The Underground Man opposes such a view because he believes that it underestimates the human desire for free will. His view is potent when he writes, "Ah ladies and gentlemen, don't talk to me of free will when it comes to timetables and arithmetic, when everything will be deducible from twice two makes four! There's no need for free will to find that twice two is four. That's not what I call free will!" (109)

Man, for Dostoyevsky, is limited by society, economic conditions, laws, history, the church, and especially by God. He is classified, defined, and

1. Edward Wasiolek, "Dostoyevsky, Fyodor Mikhailovich," *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. (411-412)

fixed by a hundred institutions and a thousand conditions. Man, however, does not want to be defined and limited; he wants to be free and he wants to be totally free. According to Dostoyevsky he is right in wanting to be free, for freedom is the essential attribute of his identity. (411)¹

He argues that humans value the ability to exert their own will—even if it runs contrary to their best interests—more than they value reason. The Underground Man's masochistic tendencies illustrate this theory. Rather than submit to the “law of reason” that dictates that only doctors and dentists can cure liver disease and toothaches, the Underground Man prefers to suffer his ailments in silence, even though this decision only brings him more pain. He writes, “So my liver hurts? Good, let it hurt even more!” (85)

The total freedom of the underground man brought Dostoyevsky to the total terror of a universe without truth or principle, good or evil, virtue or vice. This nihilistic vision of the universe was to send philosophers like L. I. Shestov and Nietzsche into dark ecstasy over the naked power of the will, and it was also to bring Dostoyevsky to what seemed to be an irresolvable dilemma: Freedom is the supreme good because man is not man unless he is free, but freedom is also a supreme evil because man is free to do anything, including illimitable destruction. (412)²

This example is absurd, almost but it emphasizes the Underground Man's point about human nature. Dostoevsky himself was highly suspicious of utopian socialists,

1. Edward Wasiolek, “Dostoyevsky, Fyodor Mikhailovich,” *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. (411-412)

2. Edward Wasiolek, “Dostoyevsky, Fyodor Mikhailovich,” *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. (411-412)

worrying that their desire to codify rational human behavior ignored the complex nature of human beings. The freedom these utopian socialists preached could too easily lead to total uniformity—a uniformity that could lead to totalitarianism. In such a disposition, when the Underground Man is writing page after page for the world to tell his story, he can claim, “It makes you uncomfortable to listen to my cowardly moaning? Well, be uncomfortable.” (95)

Do the laws of nature exist? Is man a function of some infinite calculus, or is he free to follow the sweet curve of his foolish will? Whatever the answer may be, we know that the underground man and Dostoyevsky do not believe that the laws of nature exist. For Dostoyevsky these laws do not exist because reason itself, as an objective entity, does not exist. There is no “reason” in Dostoyevsky’s world, only reasoners. In Dostoyevsky’s world there are no “ideas” apart from the men who carry them. An idea for Dostoyevsky is always someone’s idea, and reason is always someone’s reasoning. Every act of reason is a covert act of will. (412)¹

Throughout the novel we see that the Underground Man is unable to make decisions with confidence. His very introduction in the novel shows the amount of self-contradictory thoughts he has. The opening lines in the novel, written by the Underground Man are: “I’m a sick man...a mean man. there’s nothing attractive about me. I think there’s something wrong with my liver. But, actually, I don’t understand a damn thing about my sickness. I’m not even too sure what it is that’s ailing me. I’m not

1. Edward Wasiolek, “Dostoyevsky, Fyodor Mikhailovich,” *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. (411-412)

under treatment and never have been although I have great respect for medicine and doctors. Moreover, I'm morbidly superstitious-enough, at least, to respect medicine. With my education I shouldn't be superstitious, but I am just the same..." (84)

He explains that this inability is due to his intense consciousness. The Underground Man is able to imagine the variety of consequences that every action could have, he is aware of the possible arguments that can be made against every statement, and he is conscious of the multiplicity of different motives that inform every decision he makes. As a result, the Underground Man sees that every choice a person makes is more complicated than it may seem on the surface. This complexity throws every decision into doubt. Action becomes impossible because it is impossible to determine the best course of action to take. The Underground Man constantly analyzes and second-guesses every thought and feeling he has. He is therefore incapable of making decisions about anything.

In earlier times, when religious and moral imperatives existed, people allayed any doubts about action and decision by following these imperatives in absolute confidence. In the modern era, however, most of these absolutes have dissolved. The only people who can act with confidence, according to the Underground Man, are narrow-minded people who are too stupid to question themselves. The one remaining absolute, according to the Underground Man, is reason. Even educated men pursue the laws of science and reason without questioning them. The Underground Man—along with Dostoevsky himself—believes that such mindless adherence to the laws of reason is misguided. Dostoevsky does not necessarily believe, however, that total inaction is the best strategy for conscious people. He does believe, though, that an active person with a totally fixed mind—one that

is not open to different possibilities—is more dangerous than an inactive person whose mind moves and changes.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the Russian social and intellectual elite had been imitating western European culture. A nineteenth-century Russian man was considered “developed” and “educated” if he was familiar with the literary and philosophical traditions of Germany, France, and England. The Underground Man, with his intelligence, consciousness, and sense of the “beautiful and lofty”, considers himself a “developed man of the nineteenth century.” He tells us that, in his youth, he tried rather earnestly to live by the ideals he found in European literature and philosophy. The Underground Man's European influences are partially responsible for driving him ‘underground’, as his attempts to live by a foreign set of values meet with failure and frustration.

The Underground Man lacks the feeling of belongingness and is completely detached from any sort of relationship, whatsoever. The only emotional interactions he can have with others involve anger, bitterness, revenge, and humiliation. He can conceive of love only as the total domination of one person over another. In order to feel that he has participated in life in some way, he often instigates conflict with others and subjects himself to profound humiliation. This humiliation actually gives the Underground Man a sense of satisfaction and power, as he has brought about the humiliation himself. As long as he can exercise his will, he does not care if the outcome is positive or negative.

It always seems to be snowing in the world the Underground Man inhabits. The falling wet snow is more than simply an element of setting: the monotony of the weather and the dreariness of the snow echo the changelessness and dreariness of the

Underground Man's alienated life. The wet snow also serves to link the parts of the novel that take place in the 1860s (primarily Part I) with the parts that take place in the 1840s (primarily Part II). The Underground Man recalls the story of the dinner with Zverkov and his encounter with Liza because the same wet snow that fell on those days is falling as he composes his notes from underground, after which the second part of the book is titled.

In the second part of the novel, however, the Underground Man describes himself as he was sixteen years earlier, at the age of twenty-four. As a young man, the Underground Man is already misanthropic, proud, self-effacing, and bitter, but he also still clings to certain ideals. It is stated as, "I was twenty-four, but even then I led the gloomy, disorganized, solitary existence of a recluse. I stayed away from people, avoided even speaking to them, and kept more and more to my hole." (117) He is passionate about literature, craves human attention, and wants others to respect and admire him for his intelligence and passion. He is also occasionally subject to fits of idealism. In the course of the second part of the novel, however, we see how the Underground Man's inability to interact with other people causes his attempts to form relationships and participate in life to end in disaster, and drives him deeper underground.

Having no real life experiences upon which to base his hopes and expectations, he often relies on the conventions of novels and drama. The contrast between his expectations for life—which are based on literature—and the realities of the world he lives in is often great, and this divide further alienates the Underground Man from society. The influence of literature in his life is apparent in the beginning of the second part, where part of a poem is incorporated to show his involvement with literature when

he was young. He recalls, "When my passionate, ardent plea, From a wilderness of sea...Bitter tears in wild cascade Marked you infinite disgrace...etc., etc., etc. –From the poetry of N.A. Nekrasov."

The theme of the redeemed prostitute was popular in progressive novels, poems, and plays of the mid-nineteenth century. These works frequently involved variations on a standard plot: an altruistic hero rescues a young prostitute from a lifetime of degradation, using rhetoric to awaken the noble instincts that have been buried in her soul. In short, the hero appeals to the prostitute's sense of the "beautiful and lofty."

The Underground Man has absorbed this literary convention, and, wanting to imagine himself the hero of his own story, attempts to rescue the prostitute Liza. This attempt is an ironic one, however. First, it is symptomatic of the Underground Man's desire to "live out" literature in the real world. Moreover, the Underground Man is hardly an appropriate person to rescue anyone, as his own life is as miserable and empty as the lowliest prostitute's. He himself realizes his inabilities and builds up a self-hatred. He writes, "After all, how can a man with my lucidity of perception respect himself?" (95)

Dostoevsky has also been called one of the founding fathers of the philosophical movement known as existentialism. In particular, this novel- *Notes from Underground* has been depicted as a founding work of existentialism. As we have seen throughout the novel, the Underground Man represents some of the thoughts and beliefs of Dostoevsky himself. He becomes Dostoevsky's spokesperson, to pass on the philosophies that he formed in his life in exile. Being an existentialist, the Underground Man rejects all the established norms of the society, on which, the rules and regulations of human existence are based. He resists against all the thoughts and activities that modern societies circulate.

He rejects all the binaries like truth/untruth, rationality/irrationality, love/hatred, pain/enjoyment and so on and so forth, just to show the meaninglessness of life. He feels that reason and faith are both constructed by human beings to uphold a certain archaic lifestyle. The Underground Man fails to live up to these Utopian notions and chooses an alternative lifestyle, consciously or unconsciously. His intuitions and helplessness again cannot be distinguished that easily as these binaries are also merged in the novel.

Chapter- 2

After Dostoevsky's *Underground Man* evolves another breed of anti heroes- the Absurd Hero. Albert Camus inducted the idea of absurdity into the realm of existentialism and a new era for the anti heroes began. To him absurdity springs from man's relation to the world and to exist as a human being in society is unfathomable and wholly absurd. The philosophy of *The Outsider* is a philosophy of the absurd. Its protagonist, Monsieur Meursault, a bachelor with a painfully simple life, is viewed as indifferent in the eyes of society. He does not care and is not ashamed of it. But his indifference is not one of callousness but stems instead from the 'benign indifference of the universe' in relations to his own existence. Camus has wittingly created his main character as a reflection of his own moral axiom: that life is absurd and nothing else matters besides one's own conscious existence. Meursault is a stranger, an outsider, one who is at constant odds with the absurd society he inhabits. Yet the circumstances he faces mold his perceptions of society and life and shape his consciousness, compelling him to come to terms with his own philosophy of life and to finally make peace with himself. As Colin Wilson has stated-

The Outsider tends to express himself in Existentialist terms. He is not very concerned with the distinction between body and spirit, or man and nature; these ideas produce theological thinking and philosophy; he rejects both. For him, the only important distinction is between being and nothingness. Barbusse's hero: 'Death, that is the most important of all ideas.'...Albert Camus's Outsider is even more of an empiricist than

Barbusse's. He thinks even less; has 'no genius, no unusual feelings to bestow'; in fact he has hardly any feelings at all. (37)¹

"Mother died today. Or maybe yesterday; I don't know. I had a telegram from the home: 'Mother passed away. Funeral tomorrow. Yours sincerely.' That doesn't mean anything. It may have been yesterday." (*The Outsider*, 9) Here, we see Meursault's shocking indifference to his mother's death and his event stating quality.

From the early part of the book, the reader sees a Meursault devoid of a spoken consciousness and one who feels total adversity towards society and vice versa. Camus has juxtaposed his character against the norms of society to bring out his stark differences through the usage of Meursault's uncanny ability to register cold, hard facts. Meursault refuses to spend the time and effort required in connecting these facts. He merely recounts the dubious facts of his mother's death as plainly as the telegram had stated it. The whole process of his attending the funeral is treated with the same jarring coldness. Events and conversations are retold with a journalistic frankness, he is chronologically precise from the moment he catches the bus to time when he crawls into bed. Colin Wilson mentions-

This is not to say that he is disillusioned or world-weary. His type of light-headedness bears more relation to P.G. Wodehouse's 'Young men in spats'. He enjoys eating and drinking, sunbathing, going to the cinema. He lives in the present. He tells of his mother funeral, objectively but unfeelingly; it exhausted him because he had to sit up all night, but did not

1. Colin Wilson, "World Without Values" *The Outsider* (37-41)

otherwise affect him. The next day he goes swimming and begins an affair with a girl. In half a page he outlines the development of the relation. (38)¹

Meursault is also one who has virtually no emotion, detached from basic human experiences of love and affection. This can be seen when his fiancée, Marie, provokes an answer, "She asked me again if I loved her. I replied, much before, that her question meant nothing or next to nothing- but I supposed I didn't." Curious, she then asks, "Suppose another girl had asked you to marry her- mean, a girl you liked in the same way as you like me- would you have said "yes" to her too?" To which he replies in total honesty, "Naturally." (*The Outsider*, 44) This honesty of his springs out of indifference to issue of feelings; he does not attach importance to anything; why should he lie? According to Colin Wilson-

This is the atmosphere of Eliot's 'Waste Land'...What surprises us by comparison, is the lack of moral disapproval in Camus's book; there is no suggestion that the author intends us to condemn Meursault as a futile idler. (38)²

His inability to feel love is coupled with his almost animalistic mating qualities where it is a question of when, not whom. When Marie leaves, he lies in bed and tries to get the salty smell of her hair from the pillow. Yet all these things are tactile; Meursault derives physical satisfaction from them, but there is no emotion attached. His indifference, lack of emotion, and his way of reporting his impressions factually shows little involvement in society, as if he were an outsider, a spectator, who must judge

1. Colin Wilson, "World Without Values" *The Outsider* (37-41)

2. Colin Wilson, "World Without Values" *The Outsider* (37-41)

objectively and it is from this that his estrangement from society can be felt.

Despite the stark language, the whole first section of the book is riddled with symbolism expressive of his unspoken adversity to society. Camus has chosen the element of sunlight and heat as a metaphor of Meursault's unsubstantiated uncomfortability with society. Both sunlight and heat affects Meursault tremendously in the literal sense. Meursault is 'dazed', feels a 'thudding in my head' and 'waves of heat lapping at my back', and how 'with everything shimmering in the heat-haze, there was something inhuman, discouraging, about this landscape'. All are comments about how society affects him with such unbearable, drastic effect. He laments, "The sky was so dazzling that I dared not raise my eyes." (*The Outsider*, 25) This could mean a deliberate shunning away from society on his part as a reaction to something that bears such a torture to him that the subject itself eclipses the rational explanation of it. Meursault goes on to say, "A shimmer of heat played over the road, leaving bright black gashes. It gave one a queer, dreamlike impression. In front, the coachman's glossy black hat looked like a lump of some sticky substance. I found my eyes and thoughts growing blurred." (*The Outsider*, 54) Here we see a metaphorical interpretation of the effects the conditioning of society has on the individual. Meursault, who finds his thoughts altered by the trickery of the 'sun', is actually commenting on how society changes one's perception of things to the point of blinding one's vision. Thus through these, Meursault's voluntary estrangement from society is conveyed to the reader.

The murder which marks the end of Part One, commits Meursault to the laws of society. He suddenly finds himself a victim of societal norms, the very thing he shunned. Here Meursault is obliged to accustom himself to society for his impending fate depends

on it. He finds society absurd and it is through this experience that the reader comes to sympathize with Meursault's point of view and evaluates the absurdity of society. While being held, the prison guard converses with him:

'But that's the whole point of it', he said; 'that's why you fellows are kept in prison.' -I don't follow.' – 'Liberty,' he said, 'means that. You're being deprived of your liberty.' It had never before struck me in that light, but I saw his point. 'That's true,' I said. 'Otherwise it wouldn't be a punishment.' (76)

Meursault finds all this completely baffling to the point that he has to talk with the warden to find out that prison deprives one of freedom which totally defeats the initial purpose of putting him in jail. While society tries to enforce its ideals on Meursault, he acts in honest aloofness. In a conversation with the magistrate, "In the same weary tone he asked me a last question: Did I regret what I had done? After thinking a bit, I said that what I felt was less regret than a kind of vexation. But he didn't seem to understand." (96) The magistrate wants to hear that Meursault feels guilty and sorry for what he has done. Instead, Meursault feels annoyance rather than regret, to the frustration of the magistrate. Colin Wilson states-

And it is now that his strange qualities as an outsider are against him...the magistrate is a humane and religious man who would be certainly too happy to find grounds for acquitting Meursault, for 'There is more joy over one sinner that repenteth...' With tears in his eyes, he shows Meursault a crucifix and exhorts him to repent. But Meursault looks on

with mild surprise. All this is meaningless. It is so completely beside the point. Repent of what? (38-39)¹

Faced with these challenges, Meursault attempts to make sense of what is happening around him and through it, tries to understand society. In his cell, he makes a conscious effort to 'learn' about his new surroundings, "I made a point of visualizing every piece of furniture, and each article upon it, and then every detail, so to speak: a tiny dent or incrustation, or a chipped edge, and the exact grain and colour of the woodwork." (77) This symbolizes his willingness to acquaint himself with an entrapment which is alien to him: society and its workings. However, even on close inspection, he fails to make sense of it and this drives him further away from society. This is evident from a confrontation he has with his lawyer:

'You won't do your case any good by talking,' he had warned me. In fact there seemed to be a conspiracy to exclude me from the proceedings; I wasn't to have any say and my fate was to be decided out of hand. It was quite an effort at times for me to refrain from cutting them all short, and saying: 'But damn it all, who's on trial in this court, I'd like to know? It's a serious matter for a man, being accused of murder. And I've something really important to tell you.' (85)

Meursault clearly feels frustration from this rift which fuels even more dislike of society and its traditions. Through this, he garners experiential evidence that society is indeed absurd and it does one no good to be a part of it, hence forging an even greater alienation from it.

1. Colin Wilson, "World Without Values" *The Outsider* (37-41)

In the concluding chapters, Meursault accepts his fate which enables him to squarely face death and come to terms with his position in this world. While undergoing this metamorphosis, Meursault discovers his independent consciousness. In a prison soliloquy, he relates,

“...I heard something that I hadn’t heard for months. It was the sound of a voice; my own voice, there was no mistaking it. And I recognized it as the voice that for many a day of late had been buzzing in my ears.” (75) This ‘voice’ he speaks of is his consciousness, spoken freely, unrestricted, and wholly accessible to his thoughts. This sudden enlightenment allows Meursault the grace of accepting his death. He rationalizes for the first time:

‘...it’s common knowledge that life isn’t worth living anyhow’. (109) And, on a wide view, I could see that it makes little difference whether one dies at the age of thirty or three-score and ten- since, in either case, other men and women would go on living, the world would go on as before. Although he does not wish his death, he embraces it as an end. It did not matter how or when he achieved this end for to him, all ends ended the same- in death.

In the final moments before his death, the absurdity of society no longer bothers Meursault for now he deals with the greater elements of truth and reality. Meursault makes peace with himself, but not without a sudden purging of controlled convictions. He gets tangled in an argument with the prison chaplain who in the last moments of his doom, tries to convert him. In his rage, he lets loose a stream of tenets:

“It might look as if my hands were empty... Actually, I was sure of myself, sure about everything, far surer than he; sure of my present life and of death that was coming. That, no doubt, was all I had; but at least that certainty was something I could get my teeth into- just as it had got its teeth into me. I’d been right, I was still right, I was always right. I’d pass my life in a certain way, and I might have passed it in a different way, if I’d felt like it”. (115)

Meursault develops such a rational consciousness that it becomes his moral belief, his immovable truth. This sudden outburst gradually forces the felt but unspoken philosophy of his existence to emerge into the open, and to finally expresses itself in words. It was necessary too for it gave him a new sense of direction:

“I, too, felt ready to start life over again. It was as if that great gush of anger had washed me clean, emptied me of hope, and, gazing up at the dark sky spangled with its signs and stars, for the first time, the first, I laid my heart open to the benign indifference of the universe. To feel it so like myself, indeed so brotherly, made me realize that I’d been happy, and I was happy still.” (117)

Meursault at last finds peace within himself. Alienated from society and life itself, he finds honor in death, taking nothing from this world with him, for it gave him nothing. The only hope he gains flourished from his newly found consciousness, which will carry him into the unknown. Thus, Meursault’s journey towards discovery and demise can be seen as a celebration of the human consciousness, grounded in the human spirit and its ability to overcome the absurd, to triumph when failure seems so immanent. Meursault

finally realizes his estrangement from society and disregards what society thinks about him- as long as he is happy with who he is and what he had done. At the end of it all, Camus' fundamental principle is revealed: Apart from ones own conscious being, all else is otherness, from which one is alienated.

Chapter- 3

From the absurd anti hero of Camus we now move on to the two characters of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. Existentialists essentially believe that to rationalize man's existence is an absurd endeavor, for life itself is absurd. In essence, living is merely a passage of time, terminated by an inevitable death. The human desire to ascribe a decadent meaning to life is a futile passion, our only salvation being the extent to which we fulfill ourselves. Therefore, in the briefness of existence, one must fervently pursue their own individual choices and convictions. Both Albert Camus in *The Outsider* and Samuel Beckett in *Waiting for Godot*, expose the sheer randomness of life and its cruel indifference to humanity. In *The Outsider*, Meursault assumes an almost stoic existence, remaining indifferent to life's trials and tribulations. In *Waiting for Godot*, Vladimir and Estragon try to stay preoccupied while waiting for an entity named Godot, who will perhaps never come. Although both authors deliver a rather bleak perspective of human existence, the characters are redeemed by their own personal sense of authenticity and commitment.

The plot of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* is simple to relate- almost too simplistic. Two tramps- Vladimir and Estragon are waiting by a sickly looking tree for the arrival of M. Godot. They quarrel, make up, contemplate suicide, try to sleep, eat a carrot and gnaw on some chicken bones. Two other characters appear, a master and a slave, who perform a grotesque scene in the middle of the play. A young boy arrives to say that M. Godot will not come today, but that he will come tomorrow. The play is a development of the title, *Waiting for Godot*. He does not come and the two tramps resume their vigil by the tree, which between the first and second day has sprouted a few

leaves, the only symbol of a possible order in a thoroughly alienated world. Vivian Mercier described *Waiting for Godot* as a play which

Has achieved a theoretical impossibility—a play in which nothing happens, that yet keeps audiences glued to their seats. What's more, since the second act is a subtly different reprise of the first, he has written a play in which nothing happens, twice. (6)¹

The two tramps of Beckett, in their total disposition and in their antics with hats and tight shoes, are reminiscent of the American burlesque comedy team. The purely comic aspect of the play involves traditional routines that come from the entire history of farce, from the Romans and the Italians, and the red-nosed clown of the modern circus. The language of the play has gravity, intensity, and conciseness which goes totally against the sheer meaninglessness it tries to portray. The long speech of Lucky, an exceptional passage that is seemingly meaningless, is strongly reminiscent of Joyce and the stream of consciousness effects in *Finnegans Wake*. But the play is far from being a pastiche. It has its own beauty and suggestiveness, and it makes its own comment on man's absurd hope and most importantly on the absurd insignificance of man himself. Time, in this play, is equivalent to what is announced in the title- the act of waiting. Time is really immobility, although a few minor changes do take place during the play- the tree grows some leaves and one of the characters, Pozzo, becomes blind. The act of waiting is never over, and yet it mysteriously starts up again each day. The action, in the same way, describes a circle. Each day is the return to the beginning. Nothing is completed because

1. Vivian Mercier, Irish Times, 18 February 1956.

nothing can be completed. The characters of the play face the sheer despair, which is never defined as such but which pervades all the lack of action and gives the play its metaphysical color, is the fact that the two tramps cannot not wait for Godot, and the consequent fact that he cannot come. Thus in scene after scene the permanent absurdity of the world is stressed. The two tramps, the absurd heroes of this play, in a seemingly improvised dialogue arouse laughter in their audience, despite their alienation from the social norm and despite the total pessimism of their philosophy.

Many ingenious theories have been advanced to provide satisfactory interpretations for the characters of Beckett's play. Religious or mythical interpretations prevail. The two tramps Estragon (Gogo) and Vladimir (Didi) may be Everyman and his conscience. Gogo is less confident and at one moment is ready to hang himself. Vladimir is more hopeful, more even in temperament. One thinks of the medieval debate between the body and the soul, between the intellectual and the non-rational in man. When Beckett started writing he did not have a visual image of Vladimir and Estragon. They are never referred to as tramps in the text. Deirdre Bair states-

Beckett heard their voices, but he couldn't describe his characters to me.

[He said]: 'The only thing I'm sure of is that they're wearing bowlers.'

The bowler hat was of course de rigueur for male persons in many social contexts when Beckett was growing up. (24)¹

There are no physical descriptions of either of the two characters however the text indicates that Vladimir is likely the heavier of the pair. They have been together for fifty

1. Deirdre Bair *Samuel Beckett: A Biography* (P: 1-167)

years but when asked – by Pozzo – they don't reveal their actual ages. Vladimir stands through most of the play whereas Estragon sits down numerous times and even dozes off. Estragon is inert and Vladimir is restless. Vladimir looks at the sky and muses on religious or philosophical matters. Estragon literally 'belongs to the stone,' preoccupied with mundane things, what he can get to eat and how to ease his physical aches and pains; he is direct, intuitive. He finds it hard to remember but can recall certain things when prompted, such as, when Vladimir asks: "Do you remember the Gospels?"(27) Estragon tells him about the coloured maps of the Holy Land and that he planned to honeymoon by the Dead Sea; it is his short-term memory that is poorest and points to the fact that he may, in fact, be suffering from Alzheimer's disease. Deirdre Bair writes-

But perhaps Estragon's forgetfulness is the cement binding their relationship together. He continually forgets, Vladimir continually reminds him; between them they pass the time. (29)¹

Vladimir's life is not without its discomforts too but he is the more resilient of the pair. Vladimir's pain is primarily mental anguish, which would thus account for his voluntary exchange of his hat for Lucky's, thus signifying Vladimir's symbolic desire for another person's thoughts. Throughout the play the couple refers to each other by pet names, "Didi" and "Gogo" although one of the boys addresses Vladimir as "Mister Albert".

Estragon is one of the two protagonists or anti heroes. He is a bum and sleeps in a ditch where he is beaten each night. He has no memory beyond what is immediately said to him, and relies on Vladimir to remember for him. Estragon is impatient and constantly

1. Deirdre Bair *Samuel Beckett: A Biography* (P: 67)

wants to leave Vladimir, but is restrained from leaving by the fact that he needs Vladimir. It is Estragon's idea for the bums to pass their time by hanging themselves. Estragon has been compared to a body without an intellect, which therefore needs Vladimir to provide the intellect. Vladimir is the other of the two protagonists. He is a bum like Estragon, but retains a memory of most events. However, he is often unsure whether his memory is playing tricks on him. Vladimir is friends with Estragon because Estragon provides him with the chance to remember past events. Vladimir is the one who makes Estragon wait with him for Mr. Godot's imminent arrival throughout the play. Vladimir has been compared to the intellect which provides for the body, represented by Estragon. But in a play that is claimed to be absurd, what is the point of trying to theorize so much about the characters or the plot? In order to seek an answer to that question we need to understand the term 'absurd.' Ionesco defines the term in the modernist literary context-

Absurd is that which is devoid of purpose... cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots man is lost; all his actions become senseless, useless, absurd. (18)¹

M. H. Abrams describes and traces this particular tendency-

The term is applied to a number of works in drama and prose fiction which have in common the sense that the human condition is essentially absurd, and that this condition can be adequately represented only in works of literature that are themselves absurd... The current movement, however,

1. Qouted in Martin Esslin's *The Theatre of the Absurd* from Eugène Ionesco's *Dans les armes de la Ville*

emerged in France after the horrors of World War II, as a rebellion against essential beliefs and values of traditional culture and traditional literature.

(1)¹

The drive behind all these was to show the impertinence of any value, upset the validity of any convention, emphasize the fundamental meaninglessness and precariousness of life, and making man aware of his insignificance by shocking them out of the existence that has become trite and futilely complacent. Camus in his *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*, a milestone in Absurd literature, has observed-

A world that can be explained by reasoning, however faulty, is a familiar world. But in a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. He is an irremediable exile, because he is deprived of memories of a lost homeland as much as he lacks the hope of a promised land to come. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of Absurdity. (18)²

This drama violently opposes Hegel's teleological theory of the chronological progression of history by raising the question- what is the point of doing anything in this Godless world? This is an inner contradiction that the dramatists of the Absurd are trying, by instinct and intuition rather than by conscious effort, to overcome and resolve. With this point of view they have come up with a shockingly absurd form-

The Theatre of the Absurd has renounced arguing *about* the absurdity of

1. M. H. Abrams "Literature of the Absurd" *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (1-2)

2. Qouted in Martin Esslin's *The Theatre of the Absurd* from Albert Camus *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*

the human condition; it merely *presents* it in being- that is, in terms of concrete stage images... it focuses on the differences between theory and experience and strives for an integration between the subject matter and the form in which it is expressed. (25)¹

The waiting of the two anti heroes of *Waiting for Godot* can be regarded as a relentless quest for a form which would fully incarnate the experience that they wished to express. Beckett was very impressed by Joyce's perfect fusion of structure and content. "Here form is content, content is form... His is not about something: it is that something itself"—was his comment for Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. *Waiting for Godot* is Beckett's first successful attempt at this kind of writing in drama which has been talked about a lot-

Samuel Beckett has achieved the feat of composing plays which disintegrate into silence as they unfold, crucified on the paradox that 'you must either lie or hold your peace,' a convention common to all fiction but explored with particularly obsessive logic by Beckett. (399)²

Waiting for Godot, for all its haphazardness, is conceived with great deal of attention to detail. The ending of this play offers the ultimate balance between the existential anguish and slapstick comedy. Two men (Vladimir and Estragon) have just botched an attempt at suicide: their rope has snapped. Unfortunately the rope that was supposed to hang them also serves as the belt holding up Estragon's trousers. At one of the most somber moments in the history of drama in this century- at a time when all hope, even of easeful

1. Martin Esslin's "The Absurdity of the Absurd" *The Theatre of the Absurd* (P: 19-29)

2. John Fletcher and Malcolm Bradbury "The Introverted" *Modernism 1890-1930* (P: 394-415)

death, has evaporated- the victim's trousers concertina around his ankles. "Pull on your trousers," his comrade tells him. But this is not the whole joke. Because Estragon somehow gets it all wrong and asks in a weird voice- "You want me to pull off my trousers?"

Throughout the two Act drama there is a colossal emptiness in those vital places- plot, character, dramatic speech, setting. The word 'simple' is an understatement for Beckett's stage direction- "*A country road. A tree. Evening.*" The two tramps wait for this entity referred to as 'Godot' does not ones appear in the play but whose absence is the most vital element of it and who can be any one of God, opportunity, authority, or death. Meanwhile the two tramps keep waiting and the themes of 'waiting' along with 'inactivity' are the two most prominent themes of the drama-

In Beckett's play, the theme of waiting is an ingenious combination of expectations and let-downs... The expectations of Estragon and Vladimir seem to be both limitless and irrational; and the various climaxes and pseudo-climaxes, or non-arrivals, do not change their condition while they suffer from a lack of destination. (511)¹

The absurdity of this drama strikes us with such force only because Beckett has stripped it down to such stark nakedness. Even in Shakespeare's dramas we see fools, clowns, mad or feigning to be mad characters which portray deeper meanings and thoughts through absurdity. But in that case it is only a fragment of a whole, while Beckett does away with everything else but the absurdity of it.

1. John Fletcher and James McFarlane "Modernist Drama: Origins and Patterns" *Modernism 1890-1930* (P: 499-513)

But who is Godot? What is his purpose? Can he be seen as an anti hero as well? In a sense he can be because the two protagonists are waiting for this entity in all sincerity and reverence. He is supposed to be the savior, the solver of all problems. But the fact that he does not show up diminishes his heroic stature and thus turns him into an anti hero. The most obvious interpretation of Godot is that he is God. As the name Pierrot comes from Pierre, so Godot may come from God. But these simplistic interpretations seemed to disappoint Beckett greatly. He said that he regretted calling the absent character 'Godot', because of all the theories involving God to which this had given rise. He also insisted that if by Godot he wanted to mean God, he would have said God, and not Godot. Another interpretation of Godot is that it is hope. The absurd heroes' lives may seem to be devoid of all expectations but as Esslin has stated-

Still Vladimir and Estragon live in hope: they wait for Godot, whose coming will bring the flow of time to a stop. 'Tonight perhaps we shall sleep in his place, in the warmth, dry, our bellies full, on the straw. It is worth waiting for that, is it not?' This passage clearly suggests the peace, the rest from waiting the sense of having arrived in a heaven that Godot represents to the two tramps. They are hoping to be saved from the evanescence and instability of the illusion of time, and to find peace and permanence outside it. Then they will no longer be tramps, homeless, wanderers, but will have arrived home. (52-53)¹

1. Martin Esslin's "Samuel Beckett: The Search for the Self" *The Theatre of the Absurd* (29-92)

But the fact remains that Godot never arrives. Thus the routine of waiting for Godot stands for a habit, a habit that prevents us from reaching the painful but fruitful awareness of the full reality of being. In that sense Godot along with Vladimir and Estragon resumes the position of an anti hero.

Chapter- 4

Another author who focuses on atypical characters as heroes rather than typical 'heroic' characters is Ernest Hemingway. Hemingway is a renowned American author of the twentieth century who centers his novels on personal experiences and affections. He is one of the authors of the so-called "Lost Generation." He could not cope with post-war America, and therefore he introduced two new types of character in writing called the "Hemingway hero" and the "Code hero" But his creations were not above criticism. As Kaiser Haq has stated-

To Hemingway's detractors the code is a naïve response to complex situation and not without its humorous aspects. In their eyes it is an attempt to face (or, rather, escape) the turbulence of our age with the help of a put-on toughness and a philosophy of life based on the maxim 'Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die'. . . To his admirers, on the other hand, the code is a noble, heroic, tragic response to an age devoid of nobility and heroism and more conducive to grotesque comedy of black humour than genuine tragedy. (79)¹

The works of Ernest Hemingway generally center around the concept of heroism. Each of his novels contains a "Hemingway hero" -a man of honor and integrity who expresses himself not with words, but in action. However the Hemingway hero is not motivated by glory or fortune. Hemingway's heroic figures are driven by a need to find inner peace in a modernized world that cannot provide them with the answers they seek.

1. Kaiser Haq, "The Hemingway Code," *The Dacca University Studies*. (79-89)

The Hemingway hero is not a godlike figure, but an ordinary, often flawed mortal who must look to himself for strength. According to Kaiser Haq-

In the typical Hemingway hero stoicism and Epicureanism are neatly balanced. He has a stiff upper lip in the face of pain; at the same time he is a connoisseur of food and drink. In a world where the old noble values have collapsed and works like sacred 'sound obscene', value is imparted to simple functions like eating and drinking. (81)¹

Hemingway is known to focus his novels around heroes who struggle with the mixture of their tragic faults and the surrounding environment. Traits of a typical Hemingway Hero are a love of good times, discarding all previous heroic moral values and creating their own set of values, high endurance of pain, remaining calm in the face of any large catastrophe, strength, bravery and resilience, control over surroundings. The Hemingway hero always exhibits some form of a physical wound that serves as his tragic flaw and the weakness of his character. In Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* Jake Barnes is the character who maintains the typical Hemingway hero qualities; while Robert Cohn provides the antithesis.

Hemingway defined his hero as a man who lives correctly, following the ideals of honor, courage and endurance in a world that is sometimes chaotic, often stressful, and always painful. His heroes measure themselves by how well they handle the difficult situations that life throws at him. In the end the hero will lose because we are all mortal, but the true measure is how a person faces death. They cannot help thinking, and in particular thinking about the great nothingness that awaits them after death and

1. Kaiser Haq, "The Hemingway Code," *The Dacca University Studies*. (79-89)

consequently renders life devoid of meaning.

It is important to understand the concept of “Nada,” a Spanish word meaning nothing. As Kaiser Haq says:

A key word in understanding this process is ‘nada’, Spanish for nothingness. Nada is the meaninglessness that has the world in its grip. Any attempt at creating meaning has to confront nada unflinchingly, as the matador confronts the bull. (80)¹

Along with this, there is no after life. The Hemingway hero is typically an individualist and free-willed. Although he believes in the ideals of courage and honor he has his own set of morals and principles based on his beliefs in honor, courage and endurance. He never shows emotions; showing emotions and having a commitment to women shows weakness. Qualities such as bravery, being adventurous and passion for traveling are also some defining characteristics. A final trait is his dislike of the dark. It symbolizes death and is a source of fear for him. The rite of manhood for the Hemingway hero is facing death. However, once he faces death bravely and becomes a man he must continue the struggle and constantly prove himself to retain his manhood. Kaiser Haq sums up the characteristics as-

Despite the differences in readers’ attitudes to the code its basic elements can be easily identified; a hardboiled attitude to life even under severe physical and psychic stress, and delight in simple, pleasurable activities, like eating and drinking. Taking its humorous manifestations in

1. Kaiser Haq, “The Hemingway Code,” *The Dacca University Studies*. (79-89)

Hemingway's fiction into account it may be defined in philosophical terms as an ethical system and a life style founded on a combination of stoicism and Epicureanism, designed to act as a stay against the violence, anarchy, nihilism, absurdity and crisis of values in modern life. (79)¹

Jake Barnes, the narrator and main character of *The Sun Also Rises*, is left impotent by an ambiguous accident during World War I. Jake's wound is the first of many Hemingway hero traits that he features. This physical wound, however, transcends into an emotional one by preventing Jake from ever consummating his love with Lady Brett Ashley. The resulting emotional suffering takes its toll on Jake Barnes. Despite the deep love between Jake and Lady Brett, Jake is forced to keep the relationship strictly platonic and stand watch as different men float in and out of Lady Ashley's life and bed. No one other than Jake and Brett ever learn the complexity of their relationship because Jake's hopeless love for Brett and the agony it entails are restricted to scenes known to them alone. Therefore, Jake suffers in silence because he has learned to trust and rely only upon himself, which is conducive to the Hemingway Code as well. As Kaiser Haq says:

Man, and not nature, is the measure of all things in *The Sun Also Rises*; and 'man' covers a broad spectrum of humanity between the polar opposites Robert Cohn and Pedro Romero. Between the two stands the protagonist, Jacob or Jake Barnes. He is opposed to Cohn and draws his strength from what Romero stands for. Because of a wound suffered in the

1. Kaiser Haq, "The Hemingway Code," *The Dacca University Studies*. (79-89)

first World War, he cannot consummate his sexual desires which are otherwise quiet normal. His exact opposite in this respect is the female protagonist, Lady Brett Ashley, who is leading a phenomenally promiscuous life. The two are as close to being lovers as circumstances permit. The result is that both, but especially Jake, suffer extreme anguish. Jake's response to such agonizing circumstances is to take it not lying down but standing up, without flinching. He keeps self-pity at bay by adopting a hard boiled, stoic attitude, even treating his wounding as a joke. (82)¹

Jake is an American who travels to Europe to satiate his appetite for exotic landscapes and to escape his pain. Jake tries to live his life to the fullest with drinking, partying, and sporting with friends. With these pastimes, Jake hopes to hide from his fault and get on with the life he has been made to suffer. Watching and participating in sports help accentuate his masculinity and provide the sense of pride Jake has lost. This gain of pride is essential in the Hemingway Code. Jake attends fishing trips with friends, he visits Pamplona, Spain to witness the running of the bulls, and he acts as a mediator between arguing friends. These characteristics reveal his strong character built of courage and grace. Jake, as with any Hemingway hero, is a man of action who spends more time achieving goals than talking about them.

Jake's friend, Robert Cohn violates everything a Hemingway Code Hero represents. He is rich, gifted, and skillful and is ready to discuss his emotions in detail. Robert refuses to admit defeat when Brett rejects him repeatedly. Unlike Jake, when

1. Kaiser Haq, "The Hemingway Code," *The Dacca University Studies*. (79-89)

Cohn is hurt, he insists on complaining to everyone instead of suffering in silence. Cohn does nothing to assert his masculinity, either. He allows people, especially women to ridicule him and knock down his self-esteem. Cohn obviously cannot stand up for himself and does not take action when he should. Consequently, Robert has no self-control. When a matador sleeps with Brett, whom Cohn is in love with, he takes out his jealousy by knocking him down repeatedly. Although a man of action, Jake, the quintessential Hemingway Hero, knows when to control himself, Robert Cohn does not.

On the whole, Jake Barnes strictly adheres to the qualities of the typical Hemingway Hero. He relies solely on himself, utilizes his assets, and enjoys bullfights and other activities. He is an individual of action and speaks not of what he believes; rather he just does what he believes to be right subtly without any fanfare. Jake has lived with disappointment and frustration all his life, yet he overcomes it and uses the lesson to his advantage. On the other hand, Robert Cohn, who has had the easy life, is the failed character. He allows people to walk all over him and continually feels sorry for himself. Robert Cohn is the false knight, who, in theory should be the victorious protagonist but will always turn out to be a shallow person who lives on the fringes of life. In the end, the person who does not possess the Hemingway hero's qualities can never discover himself truly. The Hemingway Heroes are struggling to create a place, a standard, a new set of values for themselves. Heroes have come a long way from the epic standards to the absurd type. The Hemingway hero stands between the two extremes. They are not the larger than life characters we see in epics and neither are they the absurd heroes who follow the complete nihilist ideology. They are the more in between, more humane heroes of our time.

Conclusion

The line between an antihero and a villain has always been hazy and open to discussion, but lately the distinction has become debatable in some cases. In certain long dramas that evoke the epic spirit of the earliest stories, characters that initially appear as villains evolve and develop only to be absorbed into the storyline as antiheroes. The modern author's renewed awareness that readers are likely to be familiar with a story's entire history permits them the freedom to develop more elaborate and complex characters, some of whom fit readily into the antihero mold which is essentially multi-layered and thus highly interesting.

In modern times, heroes have demonstrated an increased moral complexity. From this, one could say that the popularity of the anti-hero has seemingly boomed but this is part of the continual evolution and redefinition of the hero. Antiheroes lacked the glorious appeal of previous heroic figures, and due to the shift in readers' tastes, became popular. The values surrounding the characterization of an anti-hero have arguably changed. In the postmodern era, traditionally defined heroic qualities, akin to the classic "knight in shining armor" type, have given way to the "gritty truth" of life, and authority in general is being questioned. The brooding vigilante or "noble criminal" archetype seen in different works is slowly becoming part of the popular conception of heroic valor rather than being characteristics that are deemed un-heroic. Many modern anti-heroes possess, or even encapsulate, the postmodern rejection of traditional values symptomatic of Modernist literature in general, as well as the disillusion felt after World War II and the coming of the Nuclear Age. It has been argued that the continuing popularity of the anti-hero in modern literature and popular culture may be based on the recognition that a

person is fraught with human frailties, unlike the archetypes of the 'white-hatted' cowboy and the noble warrior, and is therefore more accessible to readers and viewers. This popularity may also be symptomatic of the rejection by the avant-garde of traditional values after the counter-culture revolution of the 1960s. All anti-heroes are flawed in some way, either because they have bad purposes and good methods, or bad methods and good purposes. The anti-hero protagonist might be bad in both his methods and his objectives, but still draw sympathy from the audience because the modern audience find it easier to relate to a more humane, earthy hero than the previous larger-than-life heroes.

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