

## CHAPTER THREE

## THEMES

## I

The theme of violence in the fiction of Crane and Hemingway is prominent and it shows that both the novelists were deeply interested in the theme of violence and war. Both the novelists try to explore the damaging impact of war and violence on man and his destiny. Commenting on the unique position of The Red Badge of Courage as a war-novel, Eric Solomon observes :

Stephen Crane's novel is the first work in English fiction of any length purely dedicated to an artistic reproduction of war and it has rarely been approached in scope or intensity since it was published in 1895.<sup>1</sup>

One likes to add that Hemingway seems to have followed in the foot-steps of Stephen Crane. The violent interaction between man and his hostile surroundings as depicted in their war fiction highlights the magnitude of destructive power of war and, by contrast, man's vulnerability. Philip Young, listing the similarities in the career and art of Crane and Hemingway observes : ".... each man found in warfare an absorbing formalization of violence and an essential metaphor for life."<sup>2</sup>

Crane's The Red Badge of Courage and the war-stories focus on the harsh actualities of war and the violent, emotional reactions of the combatants. In his Active Service, too, Crane has depicted the conditions of war and its destructiveness at some length. 'The Open Boat' highlights the magnitude of Nature's impersonal, ruthless violence engulfing the crew of a small boat as Hemingway does in The Old Man And the Sea and some sections of Islands in the Stream.

Both Crane and Hemingway offer elaborate descriptions of battle-field - characterized by bombs, bullets, shells, frantic human gestures, and the wide-ranging emotional reactions. In these descriptions, they emphasize the overpowering dominance of war-machines with their deafening sounds, endless and ominous columns of smoke, fire and flames, the hasty, frantic movements of the combatants, the grim atmosphere generated by exploding shells and the resultant human wretchedness. Commenting on Crane's graphic descriptions of the battlefields, Bettina Knapp observes :

Crane's visualizations of an army at war are unforgettable. The reader actually hears and sees cannon and bullet fire, the moans and agonizing cries of crushed soldiers, the whirling and paralyzing activity of the movement.<sup>3</sup>

Both Crane and Hemingway build up the contrast between the overwhelming violence and the wretched conditions of human existence. Abundance of such awe-inspiring descriptions in both Crane and Hemingway establish the tremendous destructive capacity of wars and the deep human misery. Their war-fiction harps on this contrast and seeks to communicate the grim reality. Crane in The Red Badge of Courage writes :

They were pursued by the sound of musketry fire. After a time the hot, dangerous flashes of the rifles were visible. Smoke clouds went slowly and insolently across the fields like observant phantoms. The din became crescendo, like the roar of an oncoming train.<sup>4</sup>

And,

(Presently he began to feel the effects of the war atmosphere - a blistering sweat, a sensation that his eye-balls were about to crack like hot stones. A burning roar filled his ears.<sup>5</sup>

Such scenes abound in Hemingway's war-fiction, too. The more striking instances in A Farewell to Arms are the moment of Passini's sudden death, the event of Frederic's getting wounded and the disorderly retreat at Caporetto. In For Whom the Bell Tolls, scenes such as the depiction of the liquidation of Sl Sordo and his band, and morally outrageous treatment of Maria and her parents by the fascists represent the motifs of indiscriminate violence and subsequent human suffering. Reinforcing this note in Hemingway, Warren French observes :

Hemingway's point is his old one that all warfare is vicious and dehumanizing, it brings out the worst in one's own side as well as the other side.<sup>6</sup>

Schematically, the scenes of intense fighting are followed by descriptions of human and material destruction on a large scale in the war-fiction of Crane and Hemingway. Both the novelists emphasize the tragic or pathetic motifs like the panic and fright of the retreating soldiers, the agony and anguish of the dying and the wounded and the sense of being trapped. References to the convulsive, spasmodic forms of death, grotesque gestures and expressions of the dying and the wounded recur in such descriptions. Elements of confusion, disorder and irrationality are underlined by the novelists. The ground is invariably littered with corpses and deserted vans. The depiction of the retreat in The Red Badge of Courage, with all its panic, excitement and disorder runs parallel to Hemingway's description of the military retreat at Caporetto in A Farewell to Arms with emphasis on the same material and emotional disorder. In both accounts, the notes of ravage, disorder and emotional disturbance are dominant.

Crane's The Red Badge of Courage, some sections of Active Service and his stories like 'An Episode of War',

'A Mystery of Heroism', 'The Upturned Face' and 'The Open Boat' show how the forces of destruction strike awe and terror into the mind of man and how they condition his responses and also his existence. These works are replete with the disturbing

accounts of the wounded and the dead, with their shattered hopes, their sense of loss and entrapment. In The Red Badge of Courage, Crane gives a deeply moving account of such horrors as embodied in the fate suffered by Jim Conklin, the tattered soldier and other anonymous ones. The treatment of Jim Conklin's death is highly suggestive. There is an unrelieved gloom and ominous halo about him and his movements. He is terribly wounded, in Crane's words, "chewed by wolves".<sup>7</sup> Desperate, he seeks Fleming's help in crossing the road. On reaching a safer place surrounded by shrubs, he enacts a poignant dance of death. Through emphasis on his weird gestures and staccato utterances, Crane tries to communicate his deep suffering, and his acute pain. Referring to his wounds, Crane writes :

As the flap of the blue jacket fell away from the body he could see that the side looked as if it had been chewed by wolves.<sup>8</sup>

In the depiction of the scenes of war and fighting, Crane usually focusses on the wretchedness of human existence. He highlights their hunger, thirst and exhaustion, thus emphasizing their loss of human identity and dignity. The following passage from The Red Badge of Courage sufficiently illustrates these points.

He discovered that he had a scorching thirst. His face was so dry and grimy that he thought he could feel his skin crackle. Each bone of his body had an ache in it and seemingly threatened to break with

each movement. His feet were like two sores. Also his body was calling for food.<sup>9</sup>

Such painful experience, coupled with their acute awareness of their predicament, leads to gestures of protest. In his war-fiction, Crane establishes the correspondence between the physical violence on the one hand and emotional violence on the other hand. This inter-relationship between external violence and the psychological violence is very well worked out in the behaviour of his protagonists like Fleming in The Red Badge of Courage, Fred Collins in 'A Mystery of Heroism' and the two officers in 'The Upturned Face'.

The same concern with war's damaging impact on human life and mind is exhibited by Hemingway in his war-novels. Malcolm Cowley, in his 1932 review of Death in the Afternoon observed that

the war to judge from his books, has been the central experience in his career, he shows the effects of it more completely than any other American novelist.<sup>10</sup>

This sounds like Eric Solomon's observations on The Red Badge of Courage quoted in the early part of this chapter.

(Hemingway's very first war-novel The Sun Also Rises presents a powerful image of war's destructiveness and the human suffering caused by the experience of war. The novel communicates the deep despair, frustrations and total meaninglessness in the lives of the principal characters. It

depicts at length the inertia which has seized their bodies and minds.

The same strain of human suffering and wretchedness is dominant in A Farewell to Arms. In the very first chapter, Hemingway refers to the damage done to the army by cholera and thus, sets the tone of the novel. At the beginning of the novel, the aura of dejection about Catherine can be explained by the fact that she has lost her lover in war. Thus, right from the beginning, Hemingway hints at war's destructive impact on human life. The same note is further intensified through references to syphilis suffered by Rinaldi, and psychological disorders suffered by other combatants. The traumatic experience of the retreat at Caporetto aggravates Frederic's mental health. In successive soliloquies, he pours out his anguish and his sense of disillusionment.

(For Whom the Bell Tolls, his next war-novel, represents Hemingway's intense response to war's destructiveness. Hemingway dwells longer on the atrocities committed on Maria by the fascists and the morbidity and dejection she suffers. There are numerous accounts of gruesome atrocities committed by the opposing factions on each other. Robert Jordan, an unflinching supporter of the Loyalist cause, is definitely agitated over the moral problem involved in the act of killing. The novel represents a landmark in the exercise of cold-blooded violence proceeding from war which leads to incalculable human loss and suffering.)

Across the River and Into the Trees is remarkable for the psychological insight it exhibits in the creation of the principal character, Col. Cantwell. It shows the extent to which war and violence can damage man's physical and mental health. The wounds suffered by Col. Cantwell leave behind deep scars on his mind and subsequently colour his thoughts and action. The intensity of his bitterness and resentment which characterizes his total behaviour bears a testimony to war's damaging impact on human body and mind.

Thus, in Crane and Hemingway, the emphasis on crude manifestations of war and its tremendous, damaging impact on human life and emotions is recurrent and pervasive. Both the novelists show war as a potent, ruthless force in causing human predicament re-inforced through the contrast they build up between precise, unfeeling machines and the highly vulnerable, sorely tried participants. Through such contrasts, Crane and Hemingway underline human vulnerability, helplessness and a tragic sense of waste.)

## II

Enumerating the identical points in the life and art of Crane and Hemingway, Philip Young observes :

Both journeyed widely to wars. Each was profoundly shocked by the death of his father; each childhood was marred by the experience of violence; each man



found in warfare an absorbing formalization of violence and an essential metaphor for life.<sup>11</sup>

Philip Young's suggestion that war represents a metaphor for life to both of them is worth studying in detail.

It was a conviction with both Crane and Hemingway that life is nothing but war in one form or the other. This conviction grows out of their exposure to varied forms of violence surrounding their lives. Alfred Kazin, like Philip Young, perceives temperamental affinity between Crane and Hemingway. He observes :

Like his future admirer Hemingway, Crane loved every example of the extreme in human affairs.<sup>12</sup>

Both Crane and Hemingway had unhappy childhood and both had experienced spells of uncertainty and insecurity at an early stage of their lives. Crane became an orphan at a fairly young age and had to move from place to place - Ashbury Park and New York mainly. As Hemingway came across expatriates and casualties of war in Paris after the first World War and got acquainted with their psychological problems, Crane, too, got familiar with large numbers of immigrants and their disturbing problems. Commenting on his subsequent suffering and anguish, Edwin Cady observes :

Whether pride or art or character caused it, Crane's suffering was real; and it produced important effects. It ruined his teeth, wracked his body and doubtless presented his tuberculosis which eventually killed

him. It also affected his psyche and imagination profoundly. If nothing else it confirmed emphatically his intellectual and perhaps temperamentally necessary conviction that the condition of human life is war at every level.<sup>13</sup>

Edwin Cady, in his observations, seems to share Philip Young's view of the early background of Crane and Hemingway. There seems to be a critical consensus that war represented a metaphor for life to both Crane and Hemingway.

Crane's first novel, Maggie : A Girl of the Streets concerns itself with the extremes of human situation. It highlights physical and psychological violence which generates bitterness, despair and disintegration in social relationships. All the baser emotions like greed, selfishness, calculation and callousness which characterize any war are rampant in the situation depicted by Crane in this novel. The kind of life, its motivations and actions depicted by Crane closely correspond to the realities of a battlefield. Crane's imagination perceives war, in one form or the other, to be at the centre of life.

The Red Badge of Courage dramatizes the conflict between Fleming's violent emotions and the stern, impersonal realities of the battle. Crane depicts practically no civilian life in his novel. In the initial pages of the novel, Crane refers to the general excitement caused by the outbreak of the Civil War and the existence of some war-hysteria which lead to

Fleming's enlistment in the army. This shows that life outside is indissolubly linked with the actual war and bears the imprint of it. Moreover, the singular emphasis on the violent emotions in the novel signifies war at psychological level. Crane, in The Red Badge of Courage is trying to suggest rather implicitly that the free exercise of such violent, corrosive emotions transforms every situation into war. The novel also suggests that such violent, base and predatory emotions belong not only to military life but to the life outside also. Eric Solomon observes in this connection.

The author, however, equates war to life and the reality of battle is made to parallel the reality of human existence where the mere passing of one test does not remove the possibility of other tests being imposed. In war, the process is speeded up.<sup>14</sup>

The structural pattern of The Red Badge of Courage has close correspondence to the rhythm of life. The periods of fighting are followed by intervals of lull. The narrative is interspersed with accounts of relaxed camp-life when the soldiers rest, discuss and argue, sometimes quite heatedly. The intention behind such structural design seems to establish parallels between war and life. It suggests that war and life are indistinguishable from each other.

Crane's presentation of Nature in The Red Badge of Courage strengthens the conviction that war in one form or the other is omnipresent. When Fleming, feeling the horrors of war, flees and

seeks refuge in the woods for comfort and solace. Nature administers a rude jolt to his consciousness by disclosing a pale, ant-eaten corpse in its midst. Towards the end of the novel when Fleming expresses his longing for peace and happiness, Nature assumes ambiguous posture :

Over the river, a golden ray of sun came through the hosts of leaden rain clouds.<sup>15</sup>

Through such treatment of Nature and its equivocal relationship with human life, Crane strengthens the feeling that life is a war at all levels.

(Active Service, a novel which combines the themes of love and war like Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms embodies the concept that life is war in one form or the other. The conception and presentation of love in the novel is in accordance with Crane's basic view of life as a series of crises. The motivations and action of the principal characters in the novel run parallel to the realities of war.

The treatment of love and the reactions it provokes in different characters in the novel is highly suggestive. Crane underlines an element of psychological violence in the responses and actions of the principal characters like Prof. Wainwright, Mrs. Wainwright and Nora Black. Their reactions strike as extreme and uncompromising and account, to a great extent, for individual suffering. These characters exhibit a marked degree of ruthlessness in the pursuit of their objectives.

Nora Black, a contender for Rufus Coleman, adopts the strategy of war to realize her goal-securing Rufus for herself and defeating her rival, Marjory. The sense of right or wrong never inhibits their actions. Crane shows violent crises cropping up at all levels and invests his characters with the psychology of warfare which manifests itself in emotional violence.

Like Crane's other works, his highly acclaimed story, 'The Open Boat' also deals with a crisis of high magnitude brought about by uncontrollable forces of Nature. By now it is clear that Crane's imagination is captivated by violent crises of life and he keeps recreating them in work after work. In 'The Open Boat', Crane portrays a breathtaking drama between the untameable Nature and the crew-members of a small boat. It is a story of their grim struggle for survival against violent Nature. It reminds us of Santiago's struggle in Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea and Henry Frederic's struggle against the same forces in A Farewell to Arms when he is trying to escape into the Swiss border. This struggle for survival in 'The Open Boat' is nothing short of a desperate fight against powerful opponents - the surging surf, the towering waves and the howling winds. They employ all their abilities and skill to outmanoeuvre the opposing forces of Nature and emerge badly shaken up, with the loss of the oiler, an impressively resolute and stoical character. This

conflict between man and Nature resembles war. It has all the necessary ingredients-physical, tactical and emotional - of a battlefield. It embodies Crane's perception that Nature, like war, poses grave dangers to the existence of man.

Crane's war-stories like 'An Episode of War' and 'A Mystery of Heroism', too, are singularly preoccupied with the grim actualities of war. 'An Episode of War' depicts the painful journey of a wounded lieutenant from place to place and person to person on the battlefield. It presents a panoramic view of a battlefield, humming with different activities and emotions. It is notable that Crane's imagination in these stories is not distracted by any thought of civilian life or civilian phenomenon. Going through Crane's war-fiction, we get the impression that the violent emotions experienced by his protagonists constitute an integral part of war-situation. The demonstration and indulgence in such high-pitched emotions symbolise war and such practices are amply present in general human behaviour. Thus, I find that Crane's fiction tries to establish that war and life are indistinguishable from each other.

(Hemingway's first war-novel, The Sun Also Rises, which depicts the unsettled mode of living on the part of war-casualties mirrors the distressing conditions of contemporary life in artistic manner. The nature of life - the recurrent violence among friends over women, instances of intentional or

unintentional cruelties inflicted on each other and the widespread immorality - corresponds to the conditions and practices of war. The prominently depicted scenes of bull fighting re-create the semblance of the realities of a battlefield.)

(Like The Sun Also Rises, Heming's other war-novels, namely A Farewell to Arms, For Whom the Bell Tolls, and Across the River and Into the Trees focus on the horrors of war and its devastating impact on human life. In these novels, Hemingway shows that wide exposure to war and violence creates violent psychological reactions which defy any solution or remedy and the afflicted persons who survive the wars, continue to suffer deeply. In A Farewell to Arms, For Whom the Bell Tolls, and Across the River and Into the Trees, the Hemingway-protagonists trace the source of wars in the areas of politics and profiteering. They hold the politicians and profiteers responsible for the outbreak of wars, and its intensification. They suggest that the society creates conditions which generate war and violence. Such conditions transform life into a kind of war. In A Farewell to Arms, most of the characters hate war and ardently wish that it would come to an end. They subscribe to the view that war is a handiwork of politicians. The following dialogue between Passini and Frederic in A Farewell to Arms illustrates this point.)

'There is a class that controls a country that is stupid and does not realize any thing and never can. That is why we have this war'.

'Also they make money out of it'.

'Most of them don't', said Passini. 'They are too stupid.

They do it for nothing. For stupidity'.<sup>16</sup>

There is a pervasive, bitter criticism of material and moral corruptions in Hemingway's Across the River and Into the Trees. Col. Cantwell is a vehement spokesman against corrupt politicians and profiteers. Modern life surrounded by the forces of greed, avarice, and cruelties, acquires the dimension of war. Frederic in A Farewell to Arms reflects on the arbitrary, and destructive tendencies operating in the world.

Now Catherine would die. That was what you did. You died. You did not know what it was about. You never had time to learn. They threw you in and told you the rules and the first time they caught you off base they killed you. Or they killed you gratuitously like Aymo. Or gave you the syphilis like Rinaldi. But they killed you in the end. You could count on that. Stay around and they would kill you.<sup>17</sup>

This realization dawns on Frederic's mind when he is through both war and life and hence it has the force of experience behind it. Frederic responds to the destructive conditions of life and their arbitrary, irrational way of



inflicting death and destruction on man. Life is a kind of war where man can expect either violent, abrupt death or deadly disease like Rinaldi's syphilis.

The conviction that life and war are indistinguishable is very ably and artistically embodied by Hemingway in his novel, The Old Man and the Sea. He projects a strange, old fisherman as the hero of the novel. He shows him as beset with formidable problems and challenges. His experience of thirst and hunger and his determined struggle against his opponents - the fish and the sharks - which compel him to deploy all his energies, abilities and skills to counter his formidable opponents is nothing short of a military engagement. Also, the military ethics, 'Kill or get killed' governs his world. Santiago strikes a kindred note :

Besides, he thought, everything kills every thing else in some way. Fishing kills me exactly as it keeps me alive.<sup>18</sup>

A close critical look at the professions and fate that Hemingway has worked out for his protagonists like Jake Barnes, Henry Frederic, Robert Jordan and Santiago in his novels of war and violence will go a long way in understanding Hemingway's view of the relationship between life and war. They are either a journalist like Barnes, or a teacher of Spanish like Robert Jordan or a fisherman like Santiago in The Old Man and the Sea. The fact emerges that his heroes who are committed to academic or social roles are

drawn by the contemporary turmoils into the arena of fighting. The first three novels, The Sun Also Rises, A Farewell to Arms and For Whom the Bell Tolls focus on the disturbing conditions of the contemporary life. The disturbing political and cultural conditions are shown, in these novels, as another form of war-fare. The deteriorating political and economic situations generate wars as the characters in A Farewell to Arms attribute war to political and economic motives. The novel, For Whom the Bell Tolls, through multiplicity of the scenes of violence and rivalries, proceeding from ideological fanaticism among local Spanish people, effectively illustrates the view that modern life is an equivalent of war. The novel portrays the Spanish society and landscape as riven by ideological fanaticism. It clearly underlines the intensity and ferocity of the political passions which divide the Spanish society, fill their minds with hatred of each other and lead to inhuman practices. The grim accounts of Pablo's atrocities and humiliations heaped on the local fascists and the brutal treatment of Maria and her parents by the fascists are quite representative of worsening political and moral realities in Spain in particular and the world in general. It requires hardly any effort to realize that such a life is hardly different from actual war.)

Hemingway's sociological novel, To Have and Have Not, like Crane's Maggie : A Girl of the Streets highlights

economic inequalities, subsequent moral depravity and their impact on individual fate. The novel depicts the story of Harry Morgan, whose course of action is determined by economic compulsions. Circumstances impose upon him the role of an outlaw who smuggles rum and men into the United States from Cuba. Initially, a well-meaning person, when he realizes that he can't support his wife and children through a decent vocation, he turns to illegal practices and loses his life. This sounds like a new version of Crane's Maggie : A Girl of the Streets. There are common motifs of economic compulsions, moral depravity and violence issuing from the harsh economic conditions.

Hemingway, in this novel, has invested the harsh economic realities with the capacity to destroy human life as Crane did in Maggie : A Girl of the Streets. The atmosphere of competition, criminality and violence which we come across in this novel is fairly representative of the contemporary moral realities. Such modern life with its ruthless violence and topsy-turvy order represents war in social terms.

The feeling that modern life is nothing but war is strengthened by the experiences of Santiago in The Old Man and the Sea as he realizes that life is surrounded by hostile forces. The grim necessity of dignified existence leads him to a deadly encounter with violent forces which deprive him of his hard-won prize and leave him with only the skeleton of

the fish. Also, his violent encounter involves a good deal of sacrifice, pain and blood. Talking to Manolin towards the end of the novel, Santiago admits that he was truly beaten by the sharks.

It can be concluded, therefore, that both Crane and Hemingway find life as surrounded by violence which makes life a kind of perpetual war. They hardly depict any civilian or peaceful mode of life characterized by harmony and order. They portray, in their war-fiction, extreme situations leading to violence and destruction. The coming together of such forces with their interaction with human life transforms life into war. For them, war is the most effective metaphor for life.

### III

The fiction of Stephen Crane and Ernest Hemingway shows a serious interest in the nature of reality in relation to the self-hood of the protagonists.

Henry Fleming in The Red Badge of Courage is projected as a vain, inexperienced lad whose awareness of the reality of life and self is strictly limited. The romantic view of war and heroism held by him reveals his ignorance of the contemporary reality. This corresponds to Frederic's idealism and romanticism regarding war in Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms.

Fleming's mother diagnoses his nature correctly and addresses these words to him.

Don't go a-thinking you can lick the hull rebel army at the start because yeh can't. Yer jest one little feller amongst a hull lot of others and yeh've got to keep quiet an do what they tell yeh. I know how you are, Henry.<sup>19</sup>

Despite this admonition, his romanticism persists for a while. Through emphasis on Fleming's mental agitation worked up by the fear of fighting, Crane underlines the terrible impact of war on his susceptible mind. The imminence of fighting divests him of his romanticism, to an extent. This exposure to violence leads him to self-discovery. His performance at the battlefield contrasts sharply with his earlier inflated views about himself. Panic-stricken, he seeks refuge into the woods, whose veneer of friendliness beguiles him for some time but it turns out to be only an apparent friendliness. Earlier, Fleming, in the midst of violence and commotion, looks at Nature and wonders at its composure and tranquility, Crane writes :

As he gazed around him the youth felt a flush of astonishment at the blue, pure sky and the sun gleaming on the trees and fields. It was surprising that Nature had gone tranquilly on with her golden process in the midst of so much devilment.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, Crane gradually initiates him into new knowledge of the reality of life.

With greater knowledge of Nature and its meanings, Fleming begins, quite ironically, his backward journey to the battlefield which fills up some missing gaps in his knowledge. He realizes, that unlike him, not everyone has succumbed to the fear of the unknown. On the contrary, some of his comrades, heedless of consequences, had persisted in their struggle against the hostile forces. This fact magnifies his sense of shame at the failure of courage on his part. A wound involuntarily inflicted on his head exorcises his negative mood and emotions and ensures his recognition and reception by his friends. Fleming learns, now like Fred Collins in 'A Mystery of Heroism', that mental rejection of fear is a requisite for heroism.<sup>21</sup> Like Hemingway's heroes, he realizes the importance of stoicism and skepticism in combatting the challenges of life.

Despite his painful experiences, some illusions still persist with him. In the subsequent encounters, he fights in a dogged manner, but does not get the expected appreciation from his officer. Crane keeps stripping him of his illusions and through repeated rebuffs, acquaints him with the mystery and complexity of life. Towards the end of the novel, the platoon, without registering any decisive victory, is ordered to retrace and occupy the original place. Crane in The Red Badge of Courage tries to establish that the human mind and the world we live in are complex and all attempts at knowing them prove to be inadequate.

Crane's 'An Episode of War' which incorporates scenes which involve a wounded lieutenant and his exposure to varying responses ranging from sympathy to indifference, tries to grapple with the reality of the world we live in. The story embodies Crane's conviction that the world we live in is basically callous and that the stoical approach to the problems of life alone is valid. Bettina Knapp rightly observes :

Crane's world is cruel, violent and visceral reminiscent of the huge war canvases of Gros, Gericault and Delacroix.<sup>32</sup>

It emerges then, that Crane launches his protagonists upon the quest for the ultimate knowledge of the self and the world. As a result of their experiences and encounters with the external world, they realize that the world which confronts them is violent, indifferent and too complex to understand it fully.

The journey motif is effectively used by Crane in his war-novels, The Red Badge of Courage and Active Service. Both Crane and Hemingway exploit the journey motif to explore the nature of external reality on a larger scale. Their protagonists set out to accomplish some difficult, possibly hazardous missions which necessitate their encounters with violent and destructive realities which severely test their physical and mental powers. Like Crane's heroes, Hemingway's Jake

Barnes, Frederic, Robert Jordan and Col. Cantwell, move from place to place, meet new dangers and challenges, try to cope with them by deploying their stoical qualities and in the process learn truths about the world and themselves.

It is true that Crane's protagonists do not pronounce so explicitly on the nature of life and the world as Hemingway's Frederic and Santiago do. But through his recurrent emphasis on violence, and the destructive interaction between man and the hostile surroundings and the pathetic or tragic fate suffered by his heroes, Crane communicates his awareness of reality. This is amply borne out by the fact that his heroes invariably come across formidable challenges and trials which exact high price from them. The fate suffered by Crane's Fleming, Fred Collins and the characters of 'The Open Boat' is represented in Frederic's perception :

The world breaks everyone and afterwards many are strong at the broken places. But those that will not break, it kills. It kills the very good and the very gentle and the very brave impartially.<sup>23</sup>

Both Crane and Hemingway share this ultimate knowledge regarding the fundamental realities. The quest on the part of the protagonists of Crane and Hemingway leads them to the realisation of the shattering knowledge - "The world breaks everyone".



## IV

Crane's and Hemingway's singular preoccupation with war and violence inevitably leads them to the treatment of death, in their war-fiction. Both focus on its omnipresence, its centrality, its violent manifestations and significance. Alfred Kazin's critical observation that

Like his future admirer Hemingway, Crane loved every example of the extreme in human affairs.<sup>24</sup>

establishes the similarity in the pursuits of Crane and Hemingway in their fiction. Both have extensively treated violent crises in their works and this predilection on their part limits their imagination to the artistic recreation of the extreme situations which confront modern man and threaten his existence. Death is a constant, perplexing presence in such situations. Their war-fiction bears testimony to their shared knowledge that war and death are close allies and they are closely intertwined with human fate. Death, its inscrutability and its terrors find fullest expression in their war-fiction. John Killinger's critical observation that

The most obviously recurrent motif in all of Hemingway's work has been the subject of death or of violence which as Frederic Hoffman has observed, is only another form of death in which the victim survives.<sup>25</sup>

is equally true of Stephen Crane and his literary practice. Crane's first novel, Maggie : A Girl of the Streets illustrates the blighting influence of the harsh socio-economic conditions on the life of Maggie, the hopelessly poor and desolate heroine of the novel and offers his version of contemporary living conditions as bleak, hopeless and life-denying. The novel strengthens the conviction that such blighted existence is nothing but death - death-in-life. This feeling is re-inforced by the subsequent death of Maggie in the novel.

Crane exhibits a comprehensive awareness of death, its varied forms, expressions and terrors in The Red Badge of Courage. The novel is replete with hideous corpses lying at unexpected places and also contingencies of violent death. Death appears, sometimes stealthily and sometimes outrageously at various stages of the narrative. Early in the novel, Fleming, newly enlisted, comes across the body of a dead soldier. The novel reads :

The youth looked keenly at the ashen face. The wind raised the tawny beard. It moved as if a hand were stroking it. He vaguely desired to walk around and around the body and stare; the impulse of the living to try to read in dead eyes the answer to the Question. 26

The novel abounds in highly moving and poignant descriptions of the dead and the dying. Quite often Crane's imagination

dwells on the eerie and grotesque elements in such horrible scenes. Jim Conklin's death in the early part of The Red Badge of Courage is treated by Crane in an elaborate, ritualistic manner. Hopelessly wounded, he goes through agonising death-throes and the intensity of his pain leads him to make frantic, unintelligible gestures. Instinctively, he chooses a quiet place for his rendezvous with death and dies in a mysterious manner. The whole episode is shrouded in mystery. Referring to his mutilated body, Crane writes :

As the flap of the blue jacket fell away from the body, he could see that the side looked as if it had been chewed by wolves.<sup>27</sup>

The juxtaposition of the dying Conklin, the wounded tattered soldier, and the deeply agitated Fleming strikes as the procession of the dying and the doomed. The battlefield has the looks of an inferno.

It may be clear that Crane's imagination invariably settles on the raw, crude, and grotesque elements underlying violent deaths occasioned by wars. Also, The Red Badge of Courage emphasizes the boundless potency, omnipresence and impersonality of death.

The Red Badge of Courage unwaveringly concentrates on the increasing mental agony suffered by Fleming. Right from the announcement of the imminence of fighting, Fleming's mind turns into a battleground where conflicting thoughts

clash with each other and multiply his miseries. Fleming seeks solitude in order to calm his highly agitated mind but gets additional dose of shock and bewilderment. The unexpected turn of developments immensely upsets his mind and calculations and intensifies his mental agony. He suffers the plight of a lunatic following his cowardly flight from the battlefield. He suffers so deeply as a result of this shameful flight from the battlefield that he desperately longs for a visible wound or death. Crane writes :

He now thought that he wished he was dead. He believed that he envied those men whose bodies lay strewn over the grass of the fields and on the fallen leaves of the forest.<sup>24</sup>

So deeply does Fleming suffer from the sense of shame and mortification that he welcomes death and envies the wounded and the dead. All his agony proceeds from his failure to cope with the violent realities of the battlefield. The psychological turmoil that Fleming experiences is more intense, more painful and darker than actual experience of death.

Crane's stories of war and violence are, like The Red Badge of Courage, mainly preoccupied with death. The violent ghastly forms of death, keep recurring in his war-fiction. In his stories of war and violence, he lets loose the forces of destruction which in their wake, fill up the atmosphere with death or the possibilities of violent death. In these stories, Crane builds up grim atmosphere through his singular

attention to the intimidating operations of shells, bullets and mortars with their passion, precision and impersonality duly noted by him. It sounds like a multitongued, destructive song of the angels of death. It is certainly implied by him that life is universally surrounded by such mortal forces and that life and death go on hand in hand. Death looms larger across the horizon of his war-fiction and its intrusions into human world are unpredictable, frequent and alarming.

A critical look at Crane's treatment of death, its manifestations and terrors may show that he conceives of death as a violent affair. Most of the death-scenes depicted by him are extremely violent, shocking and somewhat unnatural. Notable among them are the death of Jim Conklin, the rotting, ant-eaten corpse of an unidentified soldier and the death of the oiler in 'The Open Boat'. Crane usually highlights the convulsions, and the grim and gruesome elements about the dying and the dead. He strips the dead of any glory, and dignity and presents death as an extremely crude affair. He relates this massive recurrence of death to the callous operations of war and Nature which encompass the human life. The preponderance of the destructive conditions in his war-fiction leads to the recurrence of death on a large scale. The presence of unrelieved gloom about the events and the atmosphere of his war-fiction and the continuous process of disintegration highlighted in his fiction of war and violence impart a touch of inevitability to death.

Like Crane, Hemingway too, is, largely preoccupied with death and its forms and manifestations. Commenting on Hemingway's life-long preoccupation with death, Thomas Cash writes :

It would be difficult to find an author who has written of death as often and as consistently as Hemingway. At one time or another he has described the death of ants, salamanders, grasshoppers and fish; how hyenas die, how to kill kudu, the proper way to execute horses, how bulls are slain, how soldiers die, death in Italy, in Cuba, in Africa and in Spain, death in childhood and death by suicide, death alone and death in a group, selfish death, sacrificing death and graceful death.<sup>29</sup>

As Thomas Cash observes, Hemingway has given comprehensive treatment to different forms of death and the varying ways in which death is met with in his war-fiction. In his first war-novel, The Sun Also Rises he has presented the contemporary world as a wasteland, where war as a disintegrating force, has undone the lives of the whole generation at all levels and initiated them into a way of living which resembles a protracted death. The ritualistic, meaningless, and unavailing mode of living on the part of the principal characters strikes as symbolic of the condition of death. Through monotonous repetition of the same scenes, moods, and preoccupations, Hemingway has artistically embodied the central realities of such wretched existence -

boredom, inertia and hopelessness which amount to lifelessness or death.

Hemingway projects death as a pervasive and preponderant reality in the modern world. Apart from the identification of modern life with death and suicide, we come across numerous contingencies of death or gruesome accounts of death in Hemingway's war-novels. In A Farewell to Arms, we come across the death of Passini, the pacifist, some sergeants and finally the prolonged death of Catherine - the heroine of the novel. For Whom the Bell Tolls strikes as a concentrated study of death in all its forms and manners. We have many instances of death administered in a cold-blooded, cynical manner. We come across the ghastly form of death in the fate of El Sordo and his band. Robert Jordan, the hero of the novel, exposes himself to death in a voluntary manner. Maria, with her afflicted consciousness represents another kind of death. Islands in the Stream is replete with the recurrent instances of death which set the tone of the novel.

Like Crane, Hemingway exhibits a marked concern with the depiction of the physical manifestations of death like contortions, convulsions, and facial twitchings. By faithfully recording the physical expressions of death, Hemingway as well as Crane try to recreate the experience of dying in concrete terms. This is how Hemingway describes dying Passini in A Farewell to Arms :

It was Passini and when I touched him he screamed. His legs were towards me and I saw in the dark and the light that they were both smashed above the knee. One leg was gone and the other was held by tendons and part of the trouser and the stump twitched and jerked as though it were not connected.<sup>30</sup>

Crane, in The Red Badge of Courage, referring to the wounds suffered by Jim Conklin writes :

As the flap of the blue jacket fell away from the body, he could see that the side looked as if it had been chewed by wolves.<sup>31</sup>

In both passages, the emphasis on the horrible, physical manifestations of death is unmistakable. Such recurrent emphasis on the crudities of death signifies the impersonal, destructive capacity of wars in relation to man's helplessness.

War and violence generate strange, psychological states which compel the protagonists of these war-novels to contemplate death and mentally prepare for the willing acceptance of death. Both Crane and Hemingway emphasize the element of intense, mental anguish. The deeply agitated and tortured psychology with unbearable pain and anguish lodged within the suffering mind surpasses the experience of death with all its pain and sharpness. As this psychological agony gathers intensity, they move towards a longing for death. Fleming in The Red Badge of Courage, tortured by fears, and apprehensions, expresses his longing for death. One gets



the feeling that such unenviable psychological condition represents another form of death.

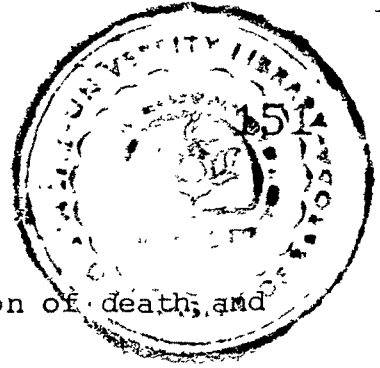
Fred Collins in 'A Mystery of Heroism', provoked by the mocking remarks on the part of his friends, works up such intense psychological condition which leads him to the defiance of death and destruction. During such psychological states they tend to think obsessively of death and shed the fears of death. The poignancy of their mental suffering mitigates the terror of death. It prompts them to welcome death as a redeemer from their unenviable position. Like Crane's Henry Fleming and Fred Collins, Hemingway's protagonists - Jake Barnes, Frederic and Col. Cantwell - experience disturbing psychological states which make death more palatable and acceptable to them. Jake Barnes in The Sun Also Rises and Frederic in A Farewell to Arms, on different occasions, experience exceptionally disturbing psychological states, without hope, and direction and their condition represents a shocking version of death.

Like Crane's Fleming in the The Red Badge of Courage, Frederic in Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms comes across the reversal of expectations and fortunes which largely account for the emotional wretchedness suffered by him. Frederic, who joins the war out of romanticism and idealism like his predecessor, Fleming in Crane's novel, comes to experience increasing brutalities of war and finally the illogic and

absurdity of it at Caporetto. His exposure to such forces afflicts his mind with tremendous power. His plunge into Tagliamento signifies his military death and rebirth as a fugitive civilian. Disillusioned with war, he turns to Catherine, the last anchor of his life. His idyllic spell of happiness in the Swiss town is cut short by the biological complications during the process of delivery which claim her life. The baby is still born. The image of Frederic as a lonely, heart-broken man with no direction in life signifies his symbolic death. Thus, the last section of the novel is completely suffused with death - actual and the metaphoric. It is certain that Hemingway's war-novels, particularly, The Sun Also Rises, A Farewell to Arms and For Whom the Bell Tolls explore the principle of death-in-life in the modern context. Here, I would like to quote Hemingway on the theme of death.

I was trying to learn to write, commencing with the simplest thing and one of the simplest things of all and the most fundamental is violent death.<sup>32</sup>

Hemingway in The Old Man and the Sea and Islands in the Stream represents violent Nature which becomes the incarnation of death and threatens human existence. In Crane's work, the enraged sea holds the crew of a small boat in captivity and undertakes the job of liquidating them. The dionysian dance of death with exceptional intensity by the furious



Nature embodies Crane's characteristic vision of death and destruction.

In The Old Man and the Sea, Hemingway portrays the realm of the sea as extremely predatory where everything kills everything else. The big species preys upon the small. The violent interaction among Santiago, the fish and the sharks illustrates the truth of this principle. Santiago articulates this truth in his direct simple style :

Besides, he thought, every thing kills every thing else in some way. Fishing kills me exactly as it keeps me alive.<sup>33</sup>

Inlands in the Stream, too, like Crane's 'The Open Boat' concerns itself with the dangers of the sea and a series of death particularly the deaths of Hudson's sons. It dramatizes the Santiago-like conflict between David and a big fish, full of grim possibilities of death. The novel treats rather prominently the death of Hudson's sons and its emotional and intellectual impact on Hudson's life and career. Hudson's participation in the war is a tactical gesture on his part to mitigate the deep pain and a sense of loss which he feels as a result of the death of his sons. Death keeps recurring at intervals and shapes the course of action in the novel. Hudson, the hero of the novel, with his long familiarity with death, formulates his response to it in the following words :

Now Tom was - the hell with that, he said to himself. It is something that happens to everybody. I should know about that by now. It is the only thing that is really final, though,

How do you know that ? he asked himself. Going away can be final. Walking out the door can be final. Any form of real betrayal can be final. Dishonesty can be final. Selling out is final. But you are just talking now. Death is what is really final.<sup>34</sup>

Towards the end of the novel, Hudson, a devoted artist, gets increasingly preoccupied with death and the philosophy of it as his unhappiness intensifies with the deaths of his sons.

From the critical analysis of the theme of death and its centrality in the fiction of Crane and Hemingway, it emerges that both treat death at the physical as well as symbolic level. Their war-fiction establishes that the modern world is a kind of wasteland. War and violence are shown as primary agents of death. Crane and Hemingway highlight the cruel, operations of machines and project them as engines of death and destruction. Their impersonality, precision and efficiency are referred to, rather ironically. They have an unflinching, massive capacity to administer death. The death-dominated situations excite stoical responses on the part of their protagonists. Crane's Fleming, after initial setback, exhibits stoical courage and exposes himself in a determined manner to the forces of death. This is equally true of Fred

Collins in 'A Mystery of Heroism' and the military officers in 'The Upturned Face' who defy the exploding shells and singing bullets. These protagonists of Crane's war-fiction strike as the precursors of Hemingway's heroes with their involvement in military situations, their stoical courage and heroic spirit.

The treatment of death, in Crane and Hemingway usually focusses on the shocking, unnatural postures and expressions of the dead and the dying. Accumulation of sombre and gruesome details in their war-fiction arouses a sense of revulsion against violence. The two authors represent death in all its psychological reality. The world of their war-fiction strikes us as a death-house. It looks like a metaphysical representation of the disturbed, and violent world.

Fleming in The Red Badge of Courage compares the battlefield with a monstrous machine which turns out dead bodies in large number. Hemingway invariably lays emphasis on the machines which shower death and destruction. The fighter planes in For Whom the Bell Tolls symbolize the tremendous destructive capacity of machines. These fighter-planes reduce El Sordo and his party to burnt stuff. Their war-fiction establishes the inevitability of death in human life.

Both the novelists create scenes wherein the hordes of the wounded and dying soldiers move, spectre-like, looking

for safety and solace. Their groans, screams, frantic moods and gestures darken the landscape. The unending processions of the tired, famished, and haggardly-looking lost souls constitute an integral part of the fiction of Crane and Hemingway. Such scenes impress upon our minds the sombreness and pathos of death which is as if it were the essence of modern life.'

# V

The themes of war, violence and death are intricately related to the world-views of Crane and Hemingway. The following passage from The Red Badge of Courage provides us clues to understanding Crane's vision of life.

The shadows of the woods were formidable. He was certain that in this vista there lurked fierce-eyed hosts. The swift thought came to him that the generals did not know what they were about. It was all a trap. Suddenly those close forests would bristle with rifle barrels. Iron like brigades would appear in the rear. They were all going to be sacrificed. The generals were stupid. The enemy would presently swallow the whole command. He glared about him, expecting to see the stealthy approach of his death.<sup>35</sup>

Here, in this passage, Henry Fleming apprehends mortal dangers all around him. The forest has become a trap for Fleming. And again, else where :

But he instantly saw that it would be impossible for him to escape from the regiment. It inclosed him. And there were iron laws of tradition and law on four sides. He was in a moving box.<sup>36</sup>

Here, Fleming looks upon the army as a moving box with no exits. This shows his sense of being trapped, without any hope of escape. He also perceives traditions, and conventions which govern human life impersonally and ruthlessly as an entrapment. The multiplicity of such perceptions in The Red Badge of Courage and the interactions between characters and hostile, ruthless forces and the unpleasant effects proceeding from such interactions as depicted in his war-fiction underline Crane's vision of life and the world. We begin to realize that Crane views the world as cold, callous, and violent place.

Crane's Maggie : A Girl of the Streets concerns itself with the cruel and unpleasant effects of socio-economic forces on the life of a poor girl who happens to be the heroine of the novel. Crane shows her as beset with harsh economic conditions which finally determine her destiny. Here in this novel, Crane relates human predicament to the socio-economic forces in his characteristic Naturalistic manner. Commenting on the novel, Martin Seymour-Smith observes :

Regardless of whether naturalism is a true philosophy or not, Crane gave an unforgettable account of one

poor creature whose life was quickly snuffed out by her environment.<sup>37</sup>

Martin Seymour-Smith, in his comments, underlines the destructive role of the harsh, external realities in shaping human destiny.

Right from the publication of Maggie : A Girl of the Streets, Crane seeks to express his vision of life and the world. In this vision, man is surrounded by callous, hostile forces that threaten his very existence and survival. He visualizes conflicts between man and his world at every step. Like Maggie : A Girl of the Streets, his other works treat extensively the external, disturbing conditions, their destructiveness and man's inextricable involvement with them. Invariably, man emerges as bruised, broken or dead out of such conflicts. The omnipresence of death and its grim potentialities as depicted in his war-novels and stories establish the violent, destructive character of our universe. The seemingly chapel-like Nature in The Red Badge of Courage contains nothing but death, rottenness and violent shocks. Fleming's expectations of respite, peace and happiness remain unfulfilled. He once more finds himself grappling with insurmountable challenges. The same notes of the unrelenting pressures and destructiveness are re-inforced by his widely acclaimed story, 'The Open Boat'. It shows the world as extremely violent, and unrelenting in its destructiveness. Crane's imagination compulsively reverts to the explosive



realities of the battlefield, to the tempestuous and unsettling operations of Nature and then, to extremely precarious human existence. The presence of certain symbols and imagery like iron and steel, woods and forests, hills and the seas and, the tempestuous, elemental forces figure prominently in his works especially, The Red Badge of Courage and 'The Open Boat'. The potentialities of these forces do not augur well for Crane's protagonists. The interaction between man and his hostile surroundings leads to tragic consequences.

Crane's treatment of Nature in his works is influenced by his basic vision of life and the world. There is nothing romantic or idealistic about his presentation of Nature in his war-fiction. Its veneer of simplicity and tranquility is shown as deceptive in The Red Badge of Courage. Sometimes, Nature's indifference can be cruel and baffling. Crane conceives of Nature as mysterious, violent, and treacherous as we find in 'the Open Boat' and The Red Badge of Courage.

(Hemingway, in his fiction of war and violence, seems to express kindred kind of vision. His fictional practice from The Sun Also Rises to Islands in the Stream implicitly or explicitly explores the ever shifting moods and varied forms of violence and their traumatic effects on human life and psyche. His fiction invariably depicts a crisis-ridden world wherein the extremes of social, political and natural life enmesh human beings and lead them to disastrous end. His

first war-novel, The Sun Also Rises reflects on the bleak and meaningless human existence brought about by war while A Farewell to Arms shows the early military fervour of Frederic fading into detachment and disillusionment with war. Towards the end of the novel, Frederic, as a result of his exposure to the brutalities of war and his increasing sense of human loss, makes a few significant observations about the basic destructiveness of the world.

Now Catherine would die. That was what you did. You died. You did not know what it was about. You never had time to learn. They threw you in and told you the rules and the first time they caught you off base they killed you. Or they killed you gratuitously like Aymo. Or gave you syphilis like Rinaldi. But they killed you in the end. You could count on that. Stay around and they would kill you.<sup>38</sup>

The highly meaningful anecdote of the burning log with ants desperately looking for an escape but doomed to destruction forcefully symbolizes the fate of Hemingway's protagonists and expresses his vision of human life and the world in highly artistic terms. This powerful anecdote runs parallel to Crane's 'The Open Boat' with its unsparing, destructive forces closing in on man from all sides and leaving no escape to the doomed members of a small boat. It is highly significant that Hemingway's novels come to an end with death real or symbolic.)

The Old Man and the Sea and Islands in the Stream embody Hemingway's vision much more explicitly. Santiago in The Old Man and the Sea, as a result of his impressive demonstration of heroic and stoical qualities, manages to hook an extraordinary fish which he truly deserves, but the sharks, the apostles of violence, subject the fish and the old fisherman to severe punishment and deprive him of his hard-won prize. It is as Santiago observes, 'Everything kills every thing else'. This is the central principle operating in our world, as Hemingway perceives.)

Hudson, the hero of Islands in the Stream, committed to his artistic work and wedded to loneliness, feels the ripples of violence floating into his self-imposed loneliness. He keeps hearing about the death of his sons, at intervals, which shatters his artistic concentration and suffuses his mind with pain and agony. He suffers a partial death in the form of the disruption of his work which he deeply loves. He joins the war in order to put his personal sorrows into the background. Continually disturbed by the thought of Tom's death, he observes philosophically :

Now Tom was - the hell with that, he said to himself. It is something that happens to everybody. I should know about that by now. It is the only thing that is really final, though.<sup>39</sup>

Hemingway in Islands in the Stream shows his hero as devoted to his work and solitude but traumatic events,

occurring outside his blessed domain, draw him out of it and throw him into more active and violent world which administers death to him as well as his artistic aspirations.

Commenting on Hemingway's vision as embodied in his fiction, Nageshwara Rao observes :

Hemingway's vision of the world is therefore, one of disorder, impersonal violence and gratuitous death. It is a vision in which chance in the form of luck or random combinations of circumstances, rather than any rational or easily comprehensible principle dominates and determines the course of events.<sup>40</sup>

Here, Nageshwara Rao points out the dominant motifs in Hemingway's fiction and stresses the lack of any rational order or principle in the world as Hemingway perceives it.

(From these observations it emerges that both Crane and Hemingway deeply concern themselves with highly explosive or dangerous situations and they narrate a tense, exciting interaction between their protagonists and their formidable, life-denying circumstances. They share close affinities in their conception of the external realities. Their world is always violent and this violence stems from wars or wild, untameable Nature, or a highly iniquitous world. As Alfred Kazin has observed, the extremes in human affairs have special appeal to both of them.<sup>41</sup> In their war-fiction, we come across a massive depiction of the extreme conditions prevailing in human world which invariably enmesh human beings in their not

and lead them to tragic or pathetic end. The protagonists of both the novelists struggle to cope with the forces of violence, - illogical and absurd - but get badly bruised or battered physically and psychologically as Crane's Fleming, Fred Collins, Maggie and Hemingway's Jake Barnes, Frederic and Col. Cantwell do. We come across increasing emphasis on physical and psychological suffering, pathos and violent death.

Both Crane and Hemingway emphasise the sense of being trapped on the part of their protagonists. In their vision, the world serves as a prison-house. Fleming in The Red Badge of Courage comes to regard the army as a moving box, enclosing him from all sides. The tired and famished hordes of soldiers keep struggling under compulsions, with no involvement of their heart and mind. They fail to find any escape or respite. The characters of Crane's 'The Open Boat' are enclosed by the wild, dionysian forces of Nature which impose unbearable strain on their bodies and minds. Any attempt on their part to escape from this callous prison-house is violently resisted by them.

We become conscious of some equivalence between modern life and a prison-house in Hemingway's fiction. Frederic in A Farewell to Arms, after his initial fervour is over, begins to experience the iron-laws of war which certainly imprison him against the wishes of his heart esp. after his experience

of the military retreat at Caporetto. Even after he has signed a 'separate peace', war does not leave him alone but pursues and torments him. It is as he later observes, man is trapped, anyway.<sup>42</sup> The characters of The Sun Also Rises, the victims of war, operate in their limited world of bars and restaurants. They are condemned to this limited, unchanging world of wine, woman and promiscuity. They have neither the will nor the hope to escape from this restricting world. Santiago in The Old Man and the Sea emphasizes the same sense of entrapment and imprisonment in the following words :

You were born to be a fisherman as the fish was born to be a fish.<sup>43</sup>

This underlines helplessness as the essential condition of the human existence. It also implies the impossibility of escape from the violent world. Thus, Hemingway depicts the external world as enclosing, gripping, and violent reality which offers no escape to anyone. It is through this world-view that Crane's Naturalism and Hemingway's Existentialism converge.

## VI

The consciousness of the harsh realities of life in Crane and Hemingway leads them to the realization that courage, the superlative kind of courage, has crucial significance in combatting the formidable challenges which threaten

human existence. That explains why we come across an emphasis on courage in their works. Referring to Crane's preoccupation with courage and its active demonstration, Alfred Kazin observes :

Just as Crane's adventurous and daredevil life may indeed have been his way of confronting this "fear", so Crane was fascinated by all professions of manhood and the large place that "courage" plays in the inner life of man.<sup>44</sup>

As Crane's personal life is replete with instances of impressive courage, so is his writings. His great novel, The Red Badge of Courage is named after courage. Fleming, in his imagination, conjures up heroic pictures of himself, rejoices in such exercises, and congratulates himself for his imaginary prowess. His disturbing mental agitation proceeds from the uncertainty as to whether he would exhibit sufficient courage or not in the forth-coming military engagements. In a way, courage or absence of it determines the plot of The Red Badge of Courage.

Crane subjects his hero to crucial tests of courage. The possession of it or lack of it matters a lot to Fleming and occupies his mind continuously. Despite his romantic professions of courage, he has a lurking doubt about his actual performance on the battlefield. The fact that Fleming does a lot of thinking and calculation, accounts to some extent for his failure in the beginning. It is worth while to

recall the marked aversion shown by Hemingway's heroes to thinking. Perhaps thinking cripples or paralyses human capacity for action or active courage. Fleming in the second half of the novel, avoids thinking and concentrates on action like Hemingway's heroes. His passionate longing for superlative act of courage at a later stage blinds him to the prospects of death and destruction and releases within him the necessary strength and energies to accomplish impressive feats of heroism.

Crane's Active Service, again, portrays human life as harsh or hostile. Against such background, courage is a necessary requisite for success and survival. Crane projects a hero, Rufus Coleman, who combines the qualities of romantic love and reckless courage which enable him to cope with the challenges of his life. He exhibits such courage in trying to extricate Prof. Wainwright and his party out of the hazards of war. In his war-stories, 'A Mystery of Heroism' and 'The Upturned Face', the protagonists exhibit unusual courage which amounts to a total defiance of death. In 'The Open Boat' he dramatizes the breath-taking conflict between the crew of a small boat and the extremely furious Nature. Beset with thoroughly unmanageable crisis, the crew-members demonstrate stoical courage and manage to escape death with the exception of the oiler. On examination of Crane's war-fiction, it becomes clear that some extreme kind of courage,



specifically reckless courage is a recurrent, thematic feature of his crisis-ridden fiction. Its predominance in his works signifies its crucial importance in view of the pervasive, disintegration. The situations which recur in Crane's war-fiction are extremely violent and they prove other attitudes and responses as inadequate and invalid. Crane, through the characteristic turn of developments, seems to suggest that an attitude of stoical courage alone can enable man to cope with the menacing forces of death and destruction. This is exactly what Hemingway does in his fiction. Heroic response to the negative forces of life enjoys sanctity in Hemingway's fiction. In this connection, Fred Collins' reflections on fear and heroism in 'A Mystery of Heroism' are highly relevant.

He wondered why he did not feel some keen agony of fear cutting his sense like a knife. He wondered at this because human expression had said loudly for centuries that men should feel afraid of certain things and that all men who did not feel this fear were phenomena-heroes.<sup>45</sup>

Fred Collins reminds us of the pathetic predicament of the early Fleming in The Red Badge of Courage whose heightened sense of fear works up deep anguish in his mind. His observation embodies the psychological truth that mental rejection of fear leads to the realization of courage or heroism. This is amply borne out by Fleming at a later stage. When he ceases to entertain fears, he accomplishes feats of heroism. It seems that Hemingway has imbibed this message from Crane's

fiction and evolved his concept of courage on the basis of Crane's "all men who did not feel this fear were phenomena-heroes."<sup>46</sup>

The nature of courage so extensively and repeatedly depicted by Crane has some distinctive qualities. First, there is a ruthless intensity about the courage displayed by his protagonists. The forces confronting them are always extreme, bent upon destroying their lives. The extremity of their situations calls for unusual demonstration of courage which alone enables them to resist the opposing forces and salvage their human dignity. This kind of courage is characterized by complete absorption in one's effort, deployment of total energies and sheer disregard for consequences. Crane's protagonists, like Fleming, Fred Collins and the characters of 'The Open Boat' exhibit such courage in extremely difficult situations. The fact that Crane's protagonists are left with no other option underlines the crucial significance of such courage in death-dominated situations.

It is needless to mention that the protagonists of Crane and Hemingway operate in more or less similar crisis-ridden situations. While in Crane, the courage exhibited by his characters has a psychological origin, in Hemingway, it is a willed, conscious phenomenon. Crane's protagonists, oppressed by the enormity and extremism of their situations, bring forth nervous, reckless kind of courage, while

Hemingway's heroes approach their gigantic problems, fully armed with courage.

The formulation of the heroic code and its active representation through Hemingway's heroes is highly significant in this connection. His protagonists like Jake Barnes, Robert Jordan, Col. Cantwell and Santiago represent and practise this heroic code. It means dignified, active demonstration of stoical courage coupled with the capacity for endurance and sacrifice in the face of extremely violent challenges. It means 'grace under pressure'<sup>47</sup> in Hemingway's words. Commenting on the distinctive qualities of a code hero, Philip Young observes :

The code hero, then, offers up and exemplifies certain principles of honor, courage and endurance which in a life of tension and pain make a man a man, as we say, and enable him to conduct himself well in the losing battle that is life. He shows, in the author's famous phrase for it, "grace under-pressure."<sup>48</sup>

Hemingway has repeatedly embodied this heroic code in the behaviour of his heroes in successive novels. He attaches great significance to courage and heroism as a means to secure dignity and meaning in life. His heroes rigorously practise the heroic code against odds and nothing deflects them from it.

The formulation of the heroic code and its representation through his protagonists is a distinctive feature of Hemingway's fictional practice. These code heroes like Jake Barnes, Robert Jordan, Col. Cantwell and Santiago display unflinching courage in the pursuit of their objectives against tremendous odds. Allegiance to the code is an article of faith with them, as religion was once a sustaining force in human struggle against mishaps and misfortunes. According to Hemingway, this crucial faith of courage can sustain one in one's struggle against the overwhelming challenges and enables salvaging some human dignity and honour. Their firm commitment to the heroic values fortifies them inwardly and helps them to regroup their physical and spiritual powers against the formidable challenges. The manner in which Jake Barnes, Robert Jordan and Santiago conduct themselves in their struggle bears testimony to the truth of Santiago's assertion that "man is not made for defeat. A Man can be destroyed but not defeated." <sup>49</sup>

We come across a multiplicity of heroic scenes in Hemingway's war-fiction. The rigorous discipline with which Jake Barnes meets all his problems and provocations is a classic example of stoical courage or 'grace under pressure'. He exhibits restraint, dignity, silent capacity for suffering and composure despite inner turmoils. Santiago and Robert Jordan repeat the same performance in essentially similar

situations. The names and contexts change but the basic qualities of courage and fortitude continue to persist in successive war-novels. The emphasis on such style of functioning underlines the crucial importance of courage in Hemingway's fiction.

For Whom the Bell Tolls is replete with examples of all shades of courage. Robert Jordan, an American Volunteer in the Spanish civil war, represents the climax of such courage. In pursuit of his objective - the blowing up of a bridge for strategic reasons - he contacts the guerilla leaders, operates in highly dangerous situations, spends restless days and nights with some romantic interlude and finally courts his death voluntarily. Despite strenuous trials, encounters with mortal dangers and unbearable hardships, he does not relax his gaze upon the bridge for a single moment nor does he alter his rigorous style of functioning. He does not reconsider his plan and gives an impressive example of stoical courage. Col. Cantwell in Across the River and Into the Trees accepts his death - without a whimper or a groan as if it were a routine affair. Stewart Sanderson observes in this connection :

The colonel's courage in the face of death is his final advantage over all his heroic predecessors ..... in the back seat of his powerfully engineered car, Richard, the Lion-hearted, colonel Cantwell completes the operation by dying with military precision and discipline.<sup>50</sup>

The critic acknowledges the quality of courage on the part of Cantwell's predecessors but he finds Col. Cantwell's courage much better qualitatively. I find that Robert Jordan too, in For Whom the Bell Tolls, shows equally impressive courage in the face of the certainty of death.

It is clear now that both Crane and Hemingway relate such extreme courage to the extreme situations they come across in the process of life. Their works seem to suggest that the critical situations they are beset with, necessitate the exercise of such courage in order to ensure human existence. Their war-fiction establishes the fact that the pervasiveness of the destructive forces leaves no decent options to man. Both Crane and Hemingway have given adequate expression to such conditions of life and set up courage to serve as armour or shield against the hostile forces. They share together this common affinity. Such stoical courage as depicted in their fiction seeks to tame or conquer physical horrors like war, violence, and seas and the howling winds. It is characterized by its total disregard for the consequences. This is true of the latter Fleming in The Red Badge of Courage, Fred Collins in 'A Mystery of Heroism' and the characters of 'The Open Boat' as well as Hemingway's Robert Jordan, Santiago and Hudson. In Crane, courage has its origin in the psychology of the opposing protagonists while in Hemingway, the protagonists display an awareness of their

critical situations and plunge into the fray fully armed with courage and stoicism. Another noticeable difference is that there is something absurd and disturbing about the courage displayed by Crane's protagonists while in Hemingway, it is a conscious, willed phenomenon. Thus, courage as depicted in their war-fiction amounts to ruthless defiance of death and rejection of fear following the realisation of the absurdity of the human life.

## VII

The characters of Crane and Hemingway are mostly soldiers, military officers, sailors and socially and economically oppressed beings. Crane's early novel, Maggie : A Girl of the Streets shows the devastating effects of the harsh social and economic conditions on the vulnerable life of a young girl. The novel tries to establish that the extremity of her situation causes extremely unpleasant effects. The novel illustrates Crane's awareness of harsh living conditions which crush human lives quite callously and deny any initiative or choice to man in the conduct of life. What Crane tries to establish further that man, working under such relentless pressures, cannot be held responsible for his actions. The traditional moral norms in such distinctly dehumanizing situations become irrelevant.

Crane's conviction that life is a violent affair, a war at all levels finds forceful expression in his novels and stories. As Maggie depicts life as a grim affair, war is the dominant reality in The Red Badge of Courage. Fleming, the hero of the novel, perceives general excitement around him as a result of the civil war. The atmosphere depicted in the novel is suffused with excitement regarding the military developments of the Civil War and this leads to his enlistment in the war.

He had burned several times to enlist. Tales of great movements shook the land. They might not be distinctly Homeric but there seemed to be much glory in them. He had read of marches, sieges, conflicts and he had longed to see it all.<sup>51</sup>

In the successive developments of the novel, Crane skillfully shows that impersonal cruelties, rivalries, emotional violence and disorders characterize the human life and constitute the stuff and the spirit of war. The spirit of war pervades Nature as well as human mind. The novel establishes violent death and indiscriminate violence as irrefutable realities. The universality of such cold-blooded, violent occurrences brings the moral problems into sharp focus.

The parting speeches of Fleming's mother serve as moral exhortations to Fleming. She says :



You must allus remember yer father, too, child an  
 'remember he never drunk a drop of licker in his  
 life and seldom swore a cross oath.<sup>52</sup>

Here, Fleming's mother puts emphasis on the moral chastity and purity of his father. Earlier, she cautions Fleming against bad company and harps on the traditional righteousness. She represents, in the novel, traditional moral norms and tries to impress upon Fleming's mind the sanctity and validity of traditional moral values which alone, in her eyes, are qualified to judge individual behaviour.

Crane, in the subsequent developments of the novel, portrays another kind of reality which contrasts sharply with her set of moral values. The dominant notes of this explosive reality are callousness, cold-blooded violence, nerve-racking tension, and infinite pain. Through increasing emphasis on such notes, Crane underlines the irrelevance or anachronism of conventional morality. The recurrence of intense, sporadic violence conducted with throat - garppling instinct, insatiable blood-lust and blind rage makes traditional morality not only irrelevant but highly ironical. The same conditions operate and confront life in Active Service and war-stories like 'An Episode of War', 'A Mystery of Heroism' and 'The Open Boat'.

The problem which confronts the characters of the war-story, 'The Upturned Face' - that of burying their dead

comrade in the face of exploding shells and flitting bullets - underlines the near impossibility of practising traditional morality. 'The Open Boat' exposes the protagonists to the untameably violent Nature which threatens their existence. All these violent situations depicted by Crane in his war-fiction underline the fact of the radically changed human scene wherein dangerous forces engage man in mortal conflicts. Such critical situations deny man any choice in determining the course of his actions. Deeply agitated, he finds it meaningless to weigh the pros and cons of his actions in moral terms. The instinct of self-preservation guides his thoughts and actions. Conscious of the fatal dangers to his life, he embarks upon a bloody course of action which amounts to the rejection of the traditional moral values. He develops faith in new expedient morality which is more likely to guarantee his existence.

(Like Crane's war-fiction, Hemingway's novels, too, dramatize the conflicts between his protagonists and the violent, external forces. All his protagonists, right from Jake Barnes in The Sun Also Rises to Hudson in Islands in the Stream come across shattering experiences which make it impossible for them to think and act in traditionally accepted moral terms. Through their total preoccupation with the superfluities of life in The Sun Also Rises, Hemingway tries to communicate their deep despair and disillusionment.

With conventional ethics. Amoral life is the inevitable response to their traumatic experience of war. The fact that they indulge, most of the time, in wine and women, gossip and quarrels over women shows their disenchantment with the accepted forms of life. Traditional moral behaviour is replaced by sexual promiscuity. Through their actions and speeches, they mock at the old concepts of morality and religion. Brett, the heroine of the novel, regularly indulges in sexual escapades with one lover after the other. Both Jake and Brett, the principal characters of the novel, show their marked aversion to the established religion. While kneeling in a Cathedral, he reflects :

And at all the time I was kneeling with my forehead on the wood in front of me and was thinking of myself as praying, I was a little ashamed and regretted that I was such a rotten Catholic but realized there was nothing I could do about it, at least for a while, and may be never.<sup>53</sup>

and then he comes out of it. Brett sounds more bitter. She says :

"Don't know why I get so nervy in church," Brett said "Never does me any good." <sup>54</sup>

Towards the end of the novel, guided by her instinctive morality, Brett rejects Romero, though he was willing to marry her. She justifies her decision on the basis of her intuitions. She says :

"You know it makes one feel rather good deciding not to be a bitch."

"Yes."

It's sort of what we have instead of God." 55

She does not want to ruin a young, heroic character. For her, ethics are not as important as the dictates of her conscience. In this respect, she is typical of Hemingway's character.

Thus, The sun Also Rises shows the irrelevance of the traditional moral values in drastically altered contexts. Their traumatic experience of war exposes the hollowness of the socially and morally accepted values. Browning's optimistic view of the world seems far removed from their world. The painful realization dawns on their minds that life is bereft of any order or meaning.

A Farewell to Arms carries further Hemingway's inquiry into the moral problems. A series of developments in the novel like Passini's abrupt death, large-scale massacres as a result of military engagements and the summary execution of the deserters raise serious doubts about the validity of the traditional moral values. In this connection, we can recall the highly suggestive treatment of the priest by Hemingway in the novel. Hemingway has placed him in the midst of indiscriminate violence and sexual degeneration. This juxtaposition of the traditional morality represented by the priest with

the actual realities of the battlefield is highly significant. The priest and his traditional ethics fail to provide an answer or solution to the barbaric practices of the war. He is shown as commanding no respect from the military personnel. His moral stance fails to make any impact on Rinaldi and others. They discuss sex and indulge in it and wine to the total discomfiture of the priest. Such scenes underline the inadequacy of conventional ethics in the contexts of war.

The Old Man and the Sea represents a crucial stage in Hemingway's apprehension of the moral reality operating in the modern world. It is a concentrated study of the radical moral realities surrounding human life. Hemingway's heroes are mostly soldiers, bull-fighters, fishermen and sportsmen who are committed to killing and violence. Through the recurrence of such professional roles in his fiction and to some extent, their glorification by him, Hemingway is trying to imply that only such roles have meaning and significance in modern violent contexts.

The world of The Old Man and the Sea with its denizens like fish, marlins, hawks, flying fish and the birds is highly predatory. The bigger fish swallows up the smaller one. Violence is the cardinal principle operating in the cosmos of the novel. Santiago, in a rather egoistic gesture, sets out farthest into the sea to realize his grand objective and in the pursuit of his objective he employs violence.

tricks and his expertise. The sharks, later, employ the same methods in defeating Santiago. All the protagonists of this violent drama - the fisherman, the fish and the sharks - inflict violence and incalculable pain on each other. As a result of this, the painful truth dawns on his mind. He reflects :

Besides, he thought, everything kills everything else in some way. Fishing kills me exactly as it keeps me alive.<sup>56</sup>

Here, Hemingway, through Santiago's experience shows a penetrating insight into the destructive nature of our world. Looking at the outcome of the violent interaction between the two opposing forces, there is little doubt about the veracity of Santiago's observation in The Old Man and the Sea. The problem of sin, too, agitates his mind for a while. He reflects :

Perhaps it was a sin to kill the fish. I suppose it was even though I did it to keep me alive and feed many people. But then everything is a sin. Do not think about sin. It is much too late for that and there are people who are paid to do it. Let them think about it. You were born to be a fisherman as the fish was born to be a fish.<sup>57</sup>

Here, Santiago is, for a while, agitated over the problem of sin consequent upon his killing of a big fish but then tries to settle it through rationalisation. He says everything is a sin. This shows his painful awareness of the pervasive

violence in the world. He is also conscious of the bitter truth that man does not enjoy any choice regarding the role he plays in life. Moreover, no conceivable human or natural activity enjoys sanctity because, as he comments earlier, everything kills everything else.

Thus, through recurrent depiction of the confrontation between his protagonists and the formidable external forces, Hemingway highlights the pervasive presence of grim dangers to man's existence and survival. His protagonists realize the inadequacy and incompetence of the traditional moral values in sustaining their battle against violence in life. With nothing to rely upon, they go about their hazardous jobs, armed with heroism and stoicism. In order to cope with the external dangers, they work out a new, expedient morality based on their unerring intuitions. Joseph Wood Krutch strikes a similar note in this connection.

They are stubbornly determined not to acknowledge their obligations to any system of conduct handed down to them by the professional moralists. They are determined to find out what they think for themselves and by actual experiment. They will start without assumptions and learn inductively.<sup>58</sup>

Joseph Wood Krutch draws our attention to the important fact that Hemingway's protagonists disown conventions.

Michael Friedberg's comments on war and its impact on modern works have some relevance to Hemingway's fiction. He writes :

The war in its unprecedented and technological carnage and prolonged stupid brutality seemed to reflect the moral and spiritual degradation of the new age. No wonder that bitter disenchantment, disgust and disillusionment should be the predominant attitude as conveyed in the works of the writers of the period.<sup>59</sup>

In these observations, the critic seems to list major strains of Hemingway's war-fiction. The moral and spiritual degradation he refers to, is one of the major concerns of Hemingway's war-fiction.

Both Crane and Hemingway study the moral problems in relation to the violent contexts we live in. They recognize the decisively destructive influence of the harsh living conditions on life and morality as seen in Crane's Maggie : A Girl of the Streets and Hemingway's To Have and Have Not. Both the novels attribute the increasing moral deterioration of Maggie and Harry Morgan respectively to their harsh social and economic circumstances. Under their negative influence they sink deeper into the abyss and commit morally undesirable acts.

Crane and Hemingway, through their repeated portrayal of crisis - ridden situations examine the impact of such conditions on their moral behaviour. The very fact that their protagonists accept violence as a mode of living is highly suggestive from moral point of view. Their ruthless exposure



to the violent experiences is responsible for the hardening of attitudes on their part. They come to repose faith in stoicism and cynicism rather than traditions and ethics. Both the novelists stress the qualities of ruthlessness in actions and thoughts and growing moral insensitivity in the pursuit of objectives. The omnipresence of violence surrounding their lives initiates them into a new way of living and thinking characterized by callousness and disbelief towards sacrosanct moral values in our world. They no longer suffer from any moral qualms regarding their practice of killing. It is as Santiago says, the job of people who are paid for it.

But Crane and Hemingway celebrate the comradely brotherhood and affection for each other in their war-fiction. In The Red Badge of Courage, Wilson bestows motherly care and affection on wounded Fleming and nurses him back to health. In Hemingway, we have such warm-hearted relationships between Frederic and Rinaldi in A Farewell to Arms and Santiago and Manolin in The Old Man and the Sea. Such warm-hearted relationships in violent contexts reflect a new moral significance. It is something concrete, immensely relevant and meaningful in their circumstances and entirely trustworthy. Such comradely relations contrast sharply with pious abstractions in theology and ethics.

The conception of the world as destructive, predatory and irrational implies their awareness of the invalidity of

Christian or conventional moral values. Crane in The Red Badge of Courage makes a few ironical references to Christianity and the Christian concepts and Hemingway, too, through Jake, Brett and others, offers criticism of the inadequacy and inefficiency of Christian ethics in contexts of the violence in modern life.

One remarkable difference in their aesthetic treatment of morality and moral problems is that Crane does not make any direct comments on moral problems but tries to recreate the external reality and its devastating impact on total human behaviour as objectively as possible and allows the situations to speak out for themselves. On the other hand, Hemingway and his protagonists discuss moral problems explicitly and voice their disillusionment with them in unambiguous terms. This reticence on the part of Crane's protagonists about the moral issues involved in their life and their world can be attributed to their prior knowledge of the topsy-turvy moral order in the modern context. There is a world where the principle of "kill or get killed" reigns supreme which compels them to relegate the traditionally moral and the sacred to the low rank. The overwhelming dangers surrounding their lives make it impossible for them to act or think in moral terms. Their highly charged atmosphere leads them to commit physical and verbal blasphemies which become a recurrent pattern of their lives.

## VIII

There are marked similarities in the conception and treatment of Nature in Crane and Hemingway. Both give ample space to Nature, its moods and attitudes. Hills, mountains, rivers, forests and stellar objects figure rather prominently and their works try to probe into the meanings, mysteries and attitudes of Nature. Quite often, Nature serves as a stage for the violent conflicts between human beings and the formidable realities.

The opening paragraphs of Crane's The Red Badge of Courage and Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms introduce hills, rivers and war in one breath. Both have a touch of ominous suggestion about them. Crane writes :

The cold passed reluctantly from the earth and the retiring fogs revealed an army stretched out on the hills. A river, amber-tinted in the shadow of its banks purred at the army's feet and at night when the stream had become of a sorrowful blackness, one could see across it, the red, eye-like gleam of hostile camp-fires set in the low brows of distant hills.<sup>60</sup>

The first paragraph of A Farewell to Arms has some close correspondences to Crane's paragraph.

In the late summer, we lived in a house in a village that looked across the river and the plain to the mountains. In the bed of the river, there were

pebbles and boulders, dry and white in the sun and the water was clear and swiftly moving and blue in the channels. Troops went by the house and down the road and the dust they raised powdered the leaves of the trees. The trunks of the trees too, were dusty and the leaves fell early that year and we saw the troops marching along the road.<sup>61</sup>

In both the opening paragraphs, Nature equires a personality antithetical to the human activity described. Both hint at Nature's attitude to human presence in its midst.

Crane in The Red Badge of Courage quite often locates bloody, human conflicts in the midst of Nature and then focuses his attention on the interaction between Nature and the combatants. For example,

presently the army again sat down to think. The odor of the peaceful pines was in the men's nostrils. The sound of monotonous axe blows rang through the forest and the insects nodding upon their perches crooned like old women.<sup>62</sup>

The passage draws our attention to the independent ways of Nature without being influenced by human commotion or action. This indifference of Nature turns to muted hostility when Fleming, after his cowardly flight from the battlefield, seeks refuge in Nature. Initially, it appears to him sensitive like a woman, "with deep aversion to tragedy". But later, Nature shocks him beyond belief, by exposing an ant-eaten corpse to his eyes. This experience undercuts his faith in the beneficence

of Nature and impresses upon his mind, the horror of it. As the novel progresses, Crane makes further revelations about Nature. He takes the veil off the face of Nature and shows the forces of death and destruction lurking and operating in its midst. 'The Open Boat', shows, in Crane's characteristic style, the unrelenting, destructive power of Nature and its grim threat to human existence. In 'The Open Boat', Crane dramatizes the destructive passions of the untameable Nature - the towering waves of water, surging surf and the howling winds. Crane writes :

But the next crest crashed also. The tumbling, boiling flood of white water caught the boat and whirled it almost perpendicular, water swarmed in from all sides.<sup>63</sup>

From such imaginative treatment of Nature's moods and attitudes in Crane's war-fiction, one realizes that Crane had sound awareness of Nature's complex personality. Its responses to human predicament range from deceptive friendliness, sheer indifference to callous ruthlessness as evidenced in 'The Open Boat'.

Hemingway's first war-novel, The Sun Also Rises, preoccupied with the existential problems of the war-blasted generation, incorporates a spacious section dealing with the effects war. The novel builds up a contrast between urban characters and Nature. The second half of the novel is replete with the lyrical and exhilarating descriptions of the Spanish

landscape with a marked emphasis on its beauty, purity and wholesomeness which contrast sharply with the dull, drab living conditions in urban centres like Paris. One is certainly impressed by the recreation of the subliminal beauty of Pamplona. Such representation of Nature by Hemingway has its parallel in Crane's The Red Badge of Courage. Crane writes :

He lay down in the grass. The blades pressed tenderly against his cheek. The moon had been lighted and was hung in a tree top. The liquid stillness of the night enveloping him made him feel vast pity for himself. There was a caress in the soft winds, and the whole mood of the darkness, he thought, was one of sympathy for himself in his distress.<sup>64</sup>

Crane, in this passage, shows his awareness of the sensuous beauty of Nature, its raptures and its healing power. Nature as depicted by Hemingway in The Sun Also Rises shares some of these qualities.

There are passages, both in Crane and in Hemingway, which evoke Nature's beauty and its charms. But Crane and Hemingway demonstrate that this is one of the many masks worn by Nature and that it has the capacity to surprise, mystify and hurt deeply. The indifference and ruthless violence in Nature found in Crane is to be found in Hemingway, too, particularly in A Farewell to Arms, The Old Man and the Sea and Islands in the Stream. As in Crane, Nature quite often becomes stage for the bloody human conflicts in Hemingway's

war-fiction and it provides a hiding place for mortal dangers in its woods and hills. As Crane's Fleming, frightened by the fears of war, seeks refuge in Nature for solace and comfort, Hemingway's Frederic in A Farewell to Arms and Hudson in Islands in the Stream turn to Nature for solace, comfort and sustenance. But like Crane's Fleming, they have their moment of disillusionment with Nature. They discover that Nature has the capacity to charm as well as the capacity to mystify and wound deeply. Frederic in A Farewell to Arms seeks refuge in the Swiss landscape but after a short, idyllic spell, he is overtaken by the biological complications developed by Catherine during the process of delivering their baby. Nature beguiles both Fleming and Frederic with its promises initially; but subsequently destroys their illusions. Crane's conviction regarding Nature as extremely violent, mysterious and dangerous is shared by Hemingway. The Old Man and the Sea and Islands in the Stream share some affinities with Crane's 'The Open Boat'. In these works, both the artists present Nature's ruthlessness.

## IX

Crane and Hemingway depict the world of violence, disorder and disintegration and expose their characters to abnormal physical and mental conditions. It is quite natural for them to find their world as alien and unaccustomed. They

come across complex problems of adjustment, safety and survival. Outwardly, their behaviour tries to conform to the military norms, but quite often, in their moments of loneliness, they express their emotions and thoughts. A close examination of these may reveal that alienation is one of the central themes in the works of the two novelists.

Eric Fromm defines an alienated person as such :

He has become, one might say, estranged from himself. He does not experience himself as the centre of his world, as the creator of his own acts but his acts and consequences have become his masters whom he obeys or whom he may even worship. The alienated person is out of touch with himself as he is out of reach with any person. He like the others is experienced as things are experienced with the senses and with common sense but at the same time without being related to oneself and to the world outside productively.<sup>65</sup>

Eric Fromm, a Marxist exponent of alienation defines the alienated being as one who is reduced to the status of a commodity. His utilitarian value is acknowledged by the society, not his whole being. He has no authority over his acts, he is worked upon by powerful, economic forces. People who are perpetually exploited, feel alienated from the work as well as the society.

Gwynn Nottler's definition of an alienated being is somewhat different. It is rendered in psychological terms.



Alienation is a certain psychological state of a normal person and she describes the alienated person as one who has been estranged from, made unfriendly towards his society and the culture it carries.<sup>66</sup>

Alienation is a state of mind of a person who finds it difficult to communicate to the society, to the fellow human beings because no communication is possible. Something has gone wrong either with himself or with his society. The alienated person is acutely conscious of the unbridgeable gulf in moral and spiritual terms.

Alienation is a multi-faceted phenomenon. As observed above, alienation experienced by workers is economically determined while the sense of alienation experienced by intellectuals and the sensitive persons who perceive drastic dislocation of moral and spiritual values, has an existential quality about it which renders life absurd and meaningless.

The brutalities of wars causing drastic dislocation of life and relationships give rise to alienation. Those affected by such traumatic events suffered a good deal physically and psychologically. As a result, their consciousness undergoes a radical change. Such afflicted consciousness shows greater degree of skepticism towards social, moral and spiritual structures of meaning.

After this realisation they can never be the same. Their initial illusions give way to the shattering knowledge of darkness - both inner and external. Their disturbed consciousness can no longer reconcile itself to the accepted structures of meanings. Their predicament sets them off from society, emotionally and intellectually and they keep drifting like exiles. The theme of alienation in the war-fiction of Crane and Hemingway had this Existential backdrop.

Stephen Crane, in The Red Badge of Courage is largely preoccupied with the ever-shifting consciousness of Henry Fleming. Crane subjects his inexperienced hero to violent action and examines his mental states. The imminent possibility of fighting stirs up deeply agitating and vexing thoughts, which he cannot reveal to his friends without loss of pride and dignity. His mental uncertainty regarding his possible response - courage or cowardice - sets him apart from other comrades. He anxiously tries to fathom their minds and comes to know the gulf between them. His over-worked consciousness looks upon him as a mental outcast.

He felt alone in space when his injured comrade had disappeared. His failure to discover any mite of resemblance in their view points made him more miserable than before. None seemed to be wrestling with such a terrific personal problem. He was a mental outcast.<sup>67</sup>

Crane repeatedly emphasizes Fleming's mental loneliness, his feeling of alienation. Fleming, conscious of the mental

barriers between him and his friends and full of fears inspired by actual fighting, retreats into the woods in search of peace and comfort. Nature beguiles him for a while and then reveals its horrible reality to his disturbed consciousness. Instead of sympathy and understanding, Nature aggravates his mental health and compels him to sort out his problems all alone. His backward journey to the battlefield intensifies his sense of loneliness and emotional wretchedness. He finds that most of his comrades have stuck to the ground, resisted the enemy with stoicism and earned the red badge of courage. His consciousness of his cowardly act subjects him to indefinable torture which he suffers all alone. It becomes all the more painful for Fleming because he can't discuss his problems with others and he cannot reveal his mental agony to anyone. Even after his restoration and reception by his comrades, such painful secrets keep torturing his mind. Such knowledge acts as an insurmountable barrier which separates him from others mentally and spiritually.

Throughout the novel, Crane keeps contrasting Fleming's thoughts and actions with those of others and shows the wide gulf between them. Most of the time, we find him lonely on the physical and mental level. His relationship with the external world is shaky, vicarious and undependable. Crane underlines Fleming's inability to adjust to the pressures of the external world and inability to think and act with the

others. The Red Badge of Courage depicts an agonised consciousness that is ill at ease with both itself and the external world.

This note of basic human loneliness, the impossibility of any meaningful communication between man and man is suggested by Crane through Jim Conklin's death and the relationship between Fleming and the tattered soldier. Crane's dramatic treatment of Conklin's death is highly significant. We see him going through convulsions of death as a result of his terribly wounded condition. Something eerie, eccentric and unnatural has taken possession of his mind. He makes frenzied gestures and movements. Fleming and the tattered soldier, deeply moved, offer help but the dying Conklin rejects them as well as their expressions of sympathy. He chooses a lonely corner and dies in a mysterious, ritualistic manner. Through emphasis on his terrible wounds, his deathly hysteria and his reluctance to suffer the presence of Fleming and the tattered soldier, Crane is trying to suggest the impossibility of communicating his agony and anguish and the impossibility of anyone partaking of such an experience. Conklin's impatience to suffer any human presence at his intensely critical moment implies his intuitive knowledge that he is condemned to lonely suffering.

The episode of the tattered soldier has considerable thematic significance. Loneliness marks the

beginning and the end of this character. He makes a sudden appearance in the procession of the wounded. Deeply wounded, he keeps wandering with no one to care or bother about him. His innocent question to Fleming deeply upsets Fleming and he deserts him to die alone. "The youth went on. Turning at a distance he saw the tattered man wandering about helplessly in the field.<sup>68</sup> Earlier, he brushes aside the thought of his death saying that he has many dependents. He simply can't afford to die. He represents the state of a completely estranged man, cut off from the family, society and comrades. Basically, a well-meaning, warm-hearted man, he fails to communicate anything to Fleming. His good intentions are misinterpreted by Fleming and he inflicts undeserved pain and punishment on the tattered soldier. Fleming denies to him the human sympathy he perhaps needed the most at his crucial hour.

Crane's Active Service, a minor work of war-fiction does not study the problem of alienation in an outstanding manner. In the novel, psychological barriers serve as alienating forces which separate one character from the other character and cause many unpleasant effects. The mental barriers make it difficult for them to communicate meaningfully. They wander from place to place - a kind of nomadic existence. Unrelatedness is the essence of their lives.

However, the predicament suffered by the characters of 'The Open Boat' deserves our critical attention. It tells of a crew of a small boat who, confronted with the overwhelmingly destructive elements of Nature, wage a desperate struggle to reach the shore. The intimidating forces of the sea act as insurmountable barrier between them and their intense wish for the re-union with the land. As the situation stands, they are lonely, far removed from human society in the midst of alien, hostile forces. They react violently to the increasing possibility of getting drowned. They feel that, in their hour of trial, they are let down by Nature and God. They lash out against the injustice of gods.

If I am going to be drowned - if I am going to be drowned - if I am going to be drowned, why in the name of the seven mad gods who rule the Sea, was I allowed to come thus far and contemplate sand and trees ? Was I brought here merely to have my nose dragged away as I was about to nibble the sacred cheese of life ? 69

They suspect some treachery on the part of the mad gods conspiring against man. The situation wherein the crew of a small boat, cut off from human scene and society, and bereft of any help from nature or gods, finds itself exposed to merciless dangers of the sea is a fine example of a kind of alienation. Going through Crane's fiction of war and violence, we find that man invariably comes across overwhelming, disintegrating forces which throw him out of the normal paths of life into alien circumstances and experiences.

The fact that most of Crane's characters in his war-fiction happen to be soldiers who come across dislocating forces which compel them to move from place to place signifies their alienation. The characters of The Red Badge of Courage, Active Service and 'The Open Boat' keep moving continuously. Quite often, they exhibit an acute sense of separation from their dear ones as Fleming keeps recalling the pleasant images of home-life and the tattered soldier refuses to die as he is painfully conscious of his children who are dependent on him. R.W. Stallman's comments are quite relevant here. He writes :

When disengaged from the external tumult, Henry's mind recollects domestic scenes. Pictures of — childhood and nursery imagery of babes recur at almost every interval of withdrawal.<sup>70</sup>

These recollections of the home life on their part contrast sharply with the brutalities of the military life and accentuate their sense of alienation. The characters of 'The Open Boat', too, desperately long for their re-union with the land. Crane's characters show their painful awareness that they are divorced from Nature and Fate. Donald Gibson observes :

It has been Crane's view all along that nature is alien to man. Having read the novel upto the last page no sensitive reader is going to accept the signs from nature as meaningful.<sup>71</sup>

Hemingway, like Crane, has seriously responded to the problem of alienation confronting modern man and has embodied the conditions of alienation and the predicament of the alienated beings in his war-fiction. He studies the impact of violence on human mind and life. His war-fiction gives ample expression to the psychological unrest experienced by his protagonists. The feeling of alienation, a psychological consequence of their encounter with war and violence, is pervasive in Hemingway's fiction. His early protagonist, Krebs strikes as good example of an alienated being. Having experienced the worst on the battlefield, when he comes home, on leave, he is taken aback by the persistency of old moral faith. He finds it difficult to communicate to them the naked truth about war and gradually withdraws into himself. Later, he returns to the front, leaving his people wallowing in their illusions. Hemingway, here, recreates the unbearable plight of a man who has experienced the horrors of life and has realized the invalidity of traditional values and experiences painful strains in his relationship with the society as a result of the vast gulf separating him from the smug-minded, complacent civilians.

The Sun Also Rises is largely preoccupied with the unenviable plight of the alienated characters as a result of their traumatic war-experience. In this novel, Hemingway depicts the wretched, rootless existence of the characters



who have suffered the war. War has undone them in all respects. They move from place to place, aimlessly. Theirs is a nomadic existence. Most of the characters are expatriates and displaced persons. Their inability and disinclination to adjust to the conventional mode of life which is based on outmoded values is very well brought out by the novelist. With their radically altered consciousness, they can no longer establish any meaningful relationship with the conventional society. Consciously, they reject traditional norms of behaviour and indulge in sex and wine. They represent the state of completely alienated beings.

Frederic Henry and his comrades in 'A Farewell to Arms' represent the same mood and experience as depicted in The Sun Also Rises. Frederic, Rinaldi and other officers display disturbed consciousness and indulge in the same morally depraved pursuits in consonance with their knowledge of the reality. Women and wine are their major preoccupations and pleasures of the body come to absorb their interest. They act and think like social outcasts. Their constant baiting of the priest implies their disenchantment with the moral values he represents. The exciting world of women and wine is the world in which Frederic, Rinaldi and other officers live at the beginning of the novel. Their morally outrageous behaviour sets them apart from the normal world. They suffer alienation in social and moral terms. At a later stage,

Frederic's 'separate peace' marks his disillusionment with the army and the military values. With Catherine's death, he is cut off from the society and the army, his vocation and life too. Now he has no one and nothing to turn to. Dazed and bewildered, he says good-bye to dead Catherine and walks down the lane in the dark, terribly lonely, accompanied by rain - the ominous motif in the novel. His life is now reduced to aimless drifting.

The Old Man and the Sea seems to be a concentrated study of alienation. The novel opens with the sentence :

He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream and he had gone eighty-four days now without taking a fish.<sup>72</sup>

Right from the beginning the novel emphasizes Santiago's old age and loneliness. It is well-known that Hemingway's fiction of war and violence mainly concerns itself with the fate of expatriates, soldiers, hunters, fishermen and virile sportsmen. The choice of such professional roles for his heroes implies lack of faith in the validity and meaningfulness of other roles. The conception and creation of characters like soldiers, fishermen, and hunters requires him to create correspondingly alien worlds - battlefields, mountains, forests and seas - far removed from the normal human society. The towering presence of such phenomena accentuates the human loneliness.

The title, The Old Man and the Sea emphasizes the old man's remoteness from the normal human society and closeness to the vast, mysterious world of the sea. Even, within his limited fishing community, he leads a secluded life. Other unidentified fishermen are critical of the old man and leave him alone. His estrangement from his fishing community is heightened by his sense of bereavement. The following lines from the novel bring out his acute sense of loneliness :

Once there had been a tinted photograph of his wife on the wall but he had taken it down because it made him too lonely to see it and it was on the shelf in the corner under his clean shirt.<sup>73</sup>

During his grim struggle against the fish and the sharks, Santiago becomes painfully aware of his loneliness and his lonely world. He handles the gravest problem of his existence all alone. At the critical moments, he remembers Manolin who is separated from the old man by his parents. How deeply his loneliness impinges upon his consciousness is suggested by the following utterance on the part of Santiago:

No one should be alone in their old age, he thought.  
But it is unavoidable.<sup>74</sup>

With the painful awareness of his loss and mortification, when he returns to his shack, the fishermen are agog with excitement over the big size of the skeleton of the fish, but no one genuinely cares for the tired old man except Manolin.

Right from the beginning, Hemingway has referred to the difference between Santiago and other fishermen. As a result, the old fisherman is deprived of any human company. He fights his battles and suffers all alone. It is worth noting that the novel does not incorporate any dialogue or conversation between Santiago and other fishermen excepting Manolin.

The most powerful, alienating force in Hemingway's war-fiction is the contingency of wars and violence in the modern world. The brutalities of wars experienced by his protagonists generate intensely agonised consciousness which compels them to withdraw from the conventional society. Their traumatic realisation of the reality of life initiates them into the process of perpetual drifting which leads nowhere. Utter disenchantment takes them farther from society. The mode of life they choose by way of reaction is completely opposed to the traditional way of life. They think and act as exiles.

Both Crane and Hemingway perceive war and violence as major alienating forces. As a result of their encounters with the dislocating forces, their characters find themselves cut off from their familiar world and their dear ones. They are acutely conscious of their remoteness from them. Quite often, their exposure to the absurd, meaningless violence makes them loathe their presence and participation in the bloody dramas, which amounts to a mental rejection of wars. Fleming in The Red Badge of Courage looks upon the army as an enclosing box

which leaves no exits. He also voices his sense of being trapped. Frederic in A Farewell to Arms, after his initial fervour wears off, comes to realize the callous, impersonal character of war, begins to drift from the theatre of war and finally makes a 'separate peace'. Both Fleming and Frederic grow inward-looking.

Both Crane and Hemingway locate the struggles of their protagonists in alien surroundings. Hills, mountains, forests and seas serve as a stage for violent dramas. The very settings and locales build up the aura of loneliness round their lives. Often, they turn out to be hostile forces seeking man's extinction. Fleming, Frederic, Santiago and Hudson feel divorced from Nature and Gods. Both Crane and Hemingway emphasize their total estrangement from the loved ones, the society and Nature.

Crane's Fleming and Hemingway's protagonists exhibit a tendency to set themselves apart from others. They seek out lonely places and quiet moments. They turn more and more to soliloquies and monologues which they can't share with others. Realizing the difficulty of meaningful communication, they grow lonely and inward-looking. Their exposure to traumatic experiences generates highly afflicted consciousness which acts as a barrier between them and the world.

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