

The Hero that Kills his Writer

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Abstract:

This paper initiates with stating the causes of the phenomenon of suicide. Unlike in Semitic religions, in America tends to be regarded as a psychological or sociological phenomenon. However, some suicidologists have asserted that the mere act of suicide provides sources of pleasure and therefore of motivation. Examples of atypical suicide are stated through 'the largest suicide in a community'. Then the position of literature towards suicide. Then, International novels about the suicide of the heroes. such as Anna Karenina, Mrs. Dalloway, Veronica decides to die, Beware of pity. After that, the paper states some of famous writers and their suicide such as Kurt Vonnegut, Jack London, Hunter S. Thompson, Sylvia Plath, Raymond Chandler, David Foster Wallace. The bulk of this article ink has been shed on the 'The Hero that kills his writer' taking Ernest Hemingway as a vivid example. Avoiding the temptation to fill up the paper with theoretical arguments on the various causes of the suicide of a person, even with the presence of common factors, the aim of the paper is to initiate a debate on the concerns regarding the death of literature writers and their characters. Examples of some prominent writers who committed suicide and how death haunted them in whatever they wrote. The conclusion shows the author's point of view towards the suicide of the writers and opens a window to a further debate by asking rhetorical questions.

Keywords: Character, Hero, Suicide, Thoughts, Writers

1.Introduction

It stands to reason that suicide is a chief health problem and a ineluctable way of death worldwide Recent reports inform that 'around a million people die by suicide annually, representing an annual global age-standardized suicide rate of 11.4 per 100,000 populations (15.0 for males and 8.0 for females). Considering a time perspective from 2000 through 2016, the age-adjusted suicide rate has grown by 30. Every time we hear of incidents where someone commits suicide or tries to take

their own life an act that many people encounter with angry and deplorable reactions, even though suicide does no harm, but itself and never seeks to harm others, but in literature the picture looks completely different The reader's reaction often varies between sadness or shock, and suicide often gets a lot of sympathy from the reader, maybe because he looks at the photo in all its aspects.

The phenomenon of suicide has reasons, including: the bad economic situation that people experience at a certain stage of life;

the difficult economic situation may put pressure on people, especially when they find themselves unable to meet the requirements of life and secure the sustenance of their families. They fall prey to weakness and mental illnesses that lead them to think of committing suicide and getting rid of life. In fact suicide is not new, it has always existed at all times and in all cultures, humans have wanted to have this right for themselves. Examples date back to ancient times. In India, wise men in search of nirvana (1) commit suicide during religious festivals and widows follow them to their cremation pyre. In Athens, suicide is punished: the corpse is deprived of burial; his right hand is cut off and buried elsewhere. Cynical and skeptical philosophers are in favor of suicide, for example Diogenes. In Rome, suicides became numerous during the so-called decadent period, under the influence of philosophers, such as Seneca, according to whom "to think of death is to think of freedom", or of men of letters, such as Lucain "poet of suicide. ". The policy also tends to encourage suicide since the important personages in disgrace with the emperor commit suicide to remove their goods from the greed of the tyrant (Moron, 1975). From the 5th to the 19th century, suicidal behavior was condemned by religions monotheists and by Western States: suicidal persons are prosecuted by penal sanctions and suicides are prohibited from certain funeral rites. In France, Saint Louis established the first secular sentence. Despite these repressive convictions, waves of suicides or thoughts against the condemnation can be observed at certain periods: in the 12th and 13th centuries, the

Cathar heresy incites certain members, the "perfect", to carry out "suicide".

In his article entitled "Existential Escapism" Frankl declares: What threatens man is his death in the future and his guilt in the past. Both are inescapable, both he must accept. Thus man is confronted with the human condition which is both fallible and mortal. The acceptance of this two fold human finiteness adds to life's being worthwhile, since only in the face of guilt does it make sense to improve, and only in the face of death is it meaningful to act (Frankl, 1970, p308).

It was, common among Romans and Vikings, less so with the Creeks, to praise suicide as the noblest form of death. However, Semitic religions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam condemn it unanimously and with abhorrence, although they praise martyrdom. It is worth saying that there is a nuance between suicide and martyrdom.

In America, suicide tends to be regarded as a psychological or sociological phenomenon; it is likened to depression, mental illness, anomie⁵, egoism, social ostracism, self-consciousness, boredom. Whereas the French, even though they gave us Durkheim, are also capable of understanding the phenomenon metaphysically, in terms of being, representation, consciousness, absurdity, fate. However, some suicidologists have asserted that the mere act of suicide provides sources of pleasure and therefore of motivation.

2. The largest suicide in John Town:

"Jones Town Community" is the place founded by the American "Jim Jones" and witnessed the largest mass suicide in history, on November 18, 1978 AD, what is the story?

Father Jim Jones' group is an extremist Protestant sect that was founded in California in 1963 and numbered thirty thousand members.

Father Jones received recommendations from a number of congressmen, from the mayor of San Francisco, and from President Carter's wife, which encouraged the Governor of Guyana to grant him a plot of 27,000 acres on which to build his colony and on which to realize his alleged dream of a society of love, cooperation, brotherhood and erasing classes. The colony, which ended in a terrible murder and suicide of children, youth, men and women, who exceeded four hundred in number, headed by the head of the cult, Father Jones himself, who led the mass suicide as if it was a prayer or a religious ritual. And the recommendations presented by Congressmen, the Mayor of San Francisco and the wife of President Carter indicate that we are in front of a brilliant, influential, eloquent and advocate of magnetic personalities, and he spoke out in evidence of this man's ability to do what he did to thousands of young people whom he, their families and children pushed them to death in blind obedience. And a terrible dictatorship, as if the one God who does not discuss.

How did Father Jones destroy his group, until 913 people die, including 200 children, this happened after they were persuaded to take poison through cyanide, mixed with

grape juice, claiming that this was a revolutionary suicide, and the leaders of the group injected the young children with cyanide, and all but two left, Jones and his followers called it "revolutionary suicide" in an audiotape of the event and before the events.

3. "Suicide", how literature deals with it?:

3.1. International novels about the suicide of the heroes:

From the trenches of despair, to the triumph of survival; daily we come into contact with suicide Heroes. This is a compilation of stories written by heroes who have battled the darkest of their souls, who have battled suicidal thoughts and attempts. They live a life under the stigma of mental illness with no where to turn.

Suicide in literature is a common theme. The character's act of deliberately killing himself. This theme is very widespread and commonly met in many important works of literature. Authors use the suicide of a character to depict, frustration, boredom, despair, love, or honor. All these feelings result either from devotion or depression, the act of suicide was and is a prevailing a within literatures.

Great writers always withdraw their essence from their own experience. They write about their youth, their fear, their hopes and their desire and their despair.

"Never man instinctively hated human life, our human life...more than Melville did. And never was a man so filled with the sense of vastness and mystery of live which is non-human. He was mad to look

over our horizon...to get away, out...o cross a horizon into another life. Away from humanity. To the sea..to go to sea, to escape humanity." Lawrence p.142.

3.2. Anna Karenina:

"All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." (Joel Carmichael. Anna Karenina.p.2).

The novel "Anna Karenina" was first published in serial in 1877, and it is considered the conclusion of the great works of the Russian writer "Tolstoy", translated into many languages and reprinted several hundred times over the years, many cinematographic works have been cited.

Anna muses on the Moscow skyline and the reality that Vronsky's affection has faded along the road. She believes he merely feels responsibility toward her, not love. Anna is puzzled at the station, focused on the phoniness of the individuals in the crowd and unsure why she is there or what destination to request. She boards the train and resents her fellow passengers' artificiality. Anna walks down the platform in a dismal fog as the train arrives at Obiralovka, eventually deciding to hurl herself beneath an incoming train to punish Vronsky and be "free of everybody and of herself." When a train comes, Anna hurls herself beneath the wheels, begging for mercy.

3.3. Mrs. Dalloway:

"It might be possible that the world itself is without meaning." Woolf, Virginia. Mrs. Dalloway.p.154

The novel, in brief, relates to the story of the life of the beautiful girl "Nana Karenina", who marries a statesman who is much older than her and does not feel valued for his life with her, until she collided with Count Alexei Vronski, a cavalry officer, and lived with him a love affair forbidden by Russian religion and customs. Within her, there is a relentless struggle between the knot of guilt toward her husband and her desire for "Vronsky" and her change over him when a girl appears in one part of the novel, which is related to him, until she decides to end her life at the end of the novel with a suicide.

Of course, if we're talking about novels that dealt with suicide through their heroes, we can't overlook the novel "Mrs. Dalloway" by English author Virginia Woolf, who took her own life by drowning in the Oss River.

The novel details the life of a day in the life of "Clarissa Dalloway", a fictional character of a high society woman in postwar England, and this is one of Woolf's best-known novels. Since it was first released in 1923. The novel has also been repeatedly converted into a film.

3.4. Veronica decides to die:

"You don't seem mad at all," she said.

But I am, although I'm undergoing a cure, because my problem is that I lack a particular chemical. However, while I hope that the chemical gets rid of my chronic depression, I want to continue being mad, living life the way I dream it, and not the way other people want it to be. Do you know what exists out there, beyond the walls of

Villete?" (Paulo Coelho, *Veronica Decides to Die* p.66)

In contrast to the other novels on our list, "Veronica Decides to Die" by Brazilian writer Paulo Coelho begins with suicide! The heroine "Veronica" is a young girl who has everything everyone could wish for, but she decides to take her own life. For her life is utterly empty, always turning into a constant boring routine.

She decides to kill herself with enough sleeping pills, but she is shocked when she wakes up in a mental hospital where doctors tell her that her life was saved from the effects of hypnotic medication, but unfortunately she has a constant problem in her heart and that all she has left in her life is only a week! Over the course of this week, Veronica experiences many feelings that she did not experience in her life, which makes her appreciate the value of being alive!

3.5. Beware of pity:

"I realized that there was no point in denying oneself a pleasure because it was denied another, in refusing to allow oneself to be happy because someone else was unhappy." Stefan Zweig, *Beware of Pity* p.102).

Personally, I adore the novel "Beware of Pity" and love all the works of the Austrian writer Stefan Zweig, perhaps because the novel represents a struggle between two commendable values in life, namely love and compassion, and how one can overwhelm the other in one way or another. The masterpiece, "Beware of pity," is one of the most famous and best of what I have read about suicide.

The novel tells the story of an impossible love between a poor young soldier and the daughter of a wealthy Austrian who suffers from a health problem that she hides from him until the end of the novel. Their love story meets with the anger of society due to customs and traditions until a tragic end ends with the heroine's suicide.

Characters who willfully courted death at their own hands and those who died by default when they lost their will to live are equally important. Therefore, Emile Durkheim's late-nineteenth-century definition of suicide seems most appropriate: "the term suicide is applied to all cases of death resulting directly or indirectly from a positive or negative act of the victim himself, which he knows will produce this result" Durkheim, Emile. *Suicide; a Study in Sociology*. Trans. John A. Spaulding and George Simpson. (Glencoe, 1911.: The Free Press, 1951). p.44

3.6. Suicide in Henry James's Fiction:

In her Book 'Suicide in Henry James's Fiction', Mary Joseph examines all occurrences of suicide in the James canon as well as a generous selection of critical commentaries devoted to them and relates the author's handling of this taboo to what she calls "the greater Jamesian myth"—that is, a three-part amalgam of "thinly veiled autobiography, the well-known international theme and the quest for the self" (Ibid. p.12). For this study, Joseph uses a late nineteenth-century definition of suicide that includes both active and passive modes: "those who willfully courted death at their own hands and those who died by default when they lost their will to live"

(ibid.p.22. Mary Joseph adds that « James, “who habitually illuminates the internal worlds of his characters, is strikingly reticent on the workings of the minds of his suicides” (ibid.p.27)

4. Famous writers and suicide:

Here is a list of some famous authors who either committed or attempted suicide.

There is a tragedy under every suicide or temptation of suicide story of these writers. I leave the reader the pleasure to find them out:

4.1.Kurt Vonnegut:

Kurt Vonnegut, known for his book *Slaughterhouse-Five*, a satire about his own experiences during World War II. Kurt Vonnegut’s mother committed suicide in 1944, overdosing on sleeping pills. Vonnegut considered himself a humanist and avoided religion in most of his works. He suffered from depression and attempted to kill himself in 1984. His own son Mark was diagnosed with bipolar disorder and some elements of schizophrenia.

4.2.Jack London:

Jack London, *The Call of the Wild* and *White Fang* tales Jack London was a fierce man and addicted to socialist ideas. When his mother was pregnant with him, she tried to commit suicide by taking an overdose of laudanum and shooting herself in the head. The pistol misfired. London grew up to be a revolutionary – pushing for political assassinations and calling for the genocide of various races depending on his mood. It is believed London was bipolar – he was also an alcoholic, and frequently suicidal. He

may or may not have killed himself with a morphine overdose.

4.3.Hunter S. Thompson:

Hunter S. Thompson, The founder of Gonzo Journalism, His book *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* put him on a high pedestal. He was reckless to the point of suicide, indeed getting his start by riding with the Hell’s Angels and doing an expose. When they realized his intentions, they beat him down. In his later years, Thompson lived in a rural compound in Colorado. He succumbed to a self-inflicted gunshot wound in 2005. His suicide note read: “No More Games. No More Bombs. No More Walking. No More Fun.

4.4. Sylvia Plath:

Sylvia Plath suffered terribly from depression; during her college years she had both electroconvulsive and insulin shock therapy, and attempted suicide. She poured many of these experiences into her semi-autobiographical novel, *The Bell Jar*. She attempted suicide again in a car accident, and left her husband after she caught him cheating with another woman. She finally succeeded in killing herself, inhaling dioxide fumes from her oven. She was only 30, and left behind two small children.

4.5.John Kennedy Toole:

John Kennedy Toole. All Toole’s work was released posthumously. A professor at Tulane University, he attempted to sell his novel, the manuscript was not sufficiently plot driven to attract interest. Toole took his rejection dreadfully, gaining an enormous amount of weight, he quickly lost wit and good humor. After an argument with his

mother, he went on a road trip, culminating in his suicide. In Biloxi, Mississippi, he ran a garden hose from the exhaust of his car in through the window and died. Years later, his mother convinced novelist Walker Percy to read *A Confederacy of Dunces*. Percy was blown away by the enormous potential of the manuscript, and used his influence to have it published. The book, a comic masterpiece, won the 1981 Pulitzer Prize for fiction.

4.6. Edgar Allan Poe:

Edgar Allan Poe, having lived through a great deal of personal tragedy, including the death of his wife in her early twenties. He turned to drugs and alcohol, and his intense melancholy and obsession with death can clearly be seen in his work, especially perhaps *The Raven*, a dirge of lost love that brought him to national prominence. He attempted suicide in 1848. He was found delirious in a Baltimore tavern. He died on October 7, 1849. The cause of his death has remained a mystery to this day, with theories as unlikely as rabies considered.

4.7. Virginia Woolf:

Virginia Woolf, Woolf's most famous work was *Mrs. Dalloway*, a well praised novel that explored themes of mental illness, homosexuality, and existence itself. She suffered a number of nervous breakdowns, and was briefly institutionalized in 1904, after her father died. She later reported sexual abuse at the hands of her half brothers that likely contributed to her psychological issues. World War II fueled her pain – her London home was destroyed by the Germans during the Lightning War. On March 28, 1941, she drowned herself in the River Ouse, the pockets of her coat

laden down with stones. Her body wasn't found for nearly a month. She left a heartbreaking suicide note for her husband.

4.8. Raymond Chandler:

Raymond Chandler was the father of Philip Marlowe. *The Big Sleep*. He didn't publish his first novel until he was in his fifties. He was a hard drinking, somewhat irritable man who had a tendency toward clinical depression. When his wife, who was 18 years his senior, died in 1954, he went off the deep end, attempting suicide in 1955. His mettlesome, minimalist prose has long been celebrated since his death in 1959.

4.9. David Foster Wallace:

David Foster Wallace, Wallace, a personal favorite, is best known for his novel *Infinite Jest*, a massive magnum opus of nearly half a million words. His work is not easily approached, but his keen perception and understanding has the uncommon ability to make readers feel less alone. Wallace suffered from crippling depression his entire life, and it was only through use of medication that he was able to operate. After experiencing bad side effects from his antidepressant, he attempted to wean himself off the drug. Unfortunately, his depression returned, and despite electroconvulsive therapy, the pain was too much for him to bear. He hung himself on September 12, 2008. Fragments of a novel he was working on for years were assembled posthumously and published under the title *The Pale King*.

5. The Hero that kills his writer:

Some authors who have devised characters and made them commit suicide have committed suicide themselves. Ernest Hemingway shot himself in 1961. That is why, no wonder that some of his short

stories included suicidal themes. The poet Sylvia Plath committed suicide by self-sphyxiation in 1963.

Hemingway's life can be considered not only a tragedy, but also as story of triumph. Hemingway wrote these fitting words of conclusion in *The Old Man and the Sea* "But man is not made for defeat...A man can be destroyed but not defeated.

Hemingway was destroyed, even by his own hand, but not defeated"(Hemingway, 1952, p.114).

In 1960, Hemingway began to lose his battle with depression and suicide. He wrote to his friend E.A.E. Hotchner, "I'll tell you, Hotch, it is like being in a Kafka nightmare. I act like cheerful like always but am not. I am bone tired and very beat up emotionally"(Lynn, 1987, p.581). He began to worry that his friends were plotting to kill him and that the FBI was monitoring him.

Depression was not the only abnormal mood state that Hemingway experienced. Hemingway's first major biographer, a man who knew him in life, referred to him as a "temperamental manic depressive"(Baker, 1969, p.viii) and wrote that "the pendulum in his nervous system swung periodically through the full arc from megalomaniac melancholy"(Baker, 1969, p. 291). Later, another wrote, "his mood swung so fast from low to high and back down again that one could almost say he was simultaneously exhilarated and depressed"(Lynn, 1987, p.135).

The best characters, for Hemingway, are men who deal with death and get ready to its risk. To understand the reason why Hemingway makes his characters spiraling down in the cavernous vortex of violence, we, beforehand, should look at his own life

and how the essence of death haunted Hemingway himself.

In his doctorate thesis Dr ABDELHAKEM noted that «Hemingway life was characterized by emotional turmoil, constant travel, frequent illness and accidents. There were both physical and psychological reasons for Hemingway's numerous accidents; he was huge, clumsy man with a bad temper, behaved recklessly and irrationally, drank heavily and was frequently out of control. He deliberately placed himself in risky situations in driving, boxing, skiing, hunting and war. He was also extremely strong and able to take punishment, felt that he was indestructible and had amazing powers. He willingly tested his body, to the point of self-destruction, in a self-hardening process that proved he was indifferent to wounds and pain, eager for the extremes of experience. The idea of suicide is certainly in Hemingway's mind that he pours in his writings. In *Nick Adams* written in 1933 and the angst of death and suicide remains all along the years and appears in 1929 in *A Farewell to Arms*. When in his 44, the idea is reinforced through the *Nick Adams* but still an inner conflict to get an answer.

Ernest Hemingway protagonists fight to kill with deadly seriousness exactly as some people eat or read or go to church. Fighting was their obligation and their duty and their joy. It would be better, for Ernest Hemingway to stand behind the protagonists in stories, where defeated and oppressed, humiliated and squeezed or waiting their turn to be executed or standing on the line to get thrown into gas chamber. It would be better for him to depict the mother's feelings when their babies are

burnt alive Hemingway, I guess, was on the same wave length with the ancient Greeks who placed great importance in the belief that a mortal man could secure immortality for himself by "entering into close contact during his life with the powers of death"(Farnell 1921).

Or perhaps he was haunted by the popular beliefs that warriors risking their own lives were meant to show their "superhuman status" and power over death.

ABDELHAKEM states: 'Life is a constant struggle and the paradox in all that is that we all fight to destroy ourselves. Yet we know that we are seeking a mirage that leads us to the unknown. Life is Meaningless and only those who think they are aware of that reality jump into suicide to meet a meaningless another life. We live to die and we die to live but the manner of how we live and how we die that makes the individual different from one another. Only the heroes, whatever their realm is, are able to trace the way to the other people to have access to the other world but they abandon them in halfway that another usher conduct them to where, even the pioneers heroes who were believed to know the way, themselves feel the destruction and despair. So neither the follower nor the followed are aware of the essence of life and only when they die that will the plain truth be naked for all of them. And those who commit suicide will be smashed by despair when they realize nothing of that will be a quenched answer to the utter absurdity of their lives. Hemingway in his writing uses a unique style to tell hard stories. He depicts characters in his stories such as bloodied prize fighters, hire killers, bull fighters, crippled soldiers, hunters of wild animals

and deep sea fisherman. Hemingway wanted his characters being heroes, but they all in some way dealt with the perception of death. Every main episode, in many of his novel, end in evidence, in physical brutality, and usually in death. An abusing exposure to violence and death produced first a compulsive fascination with dying, and ideal symbols for it. Death is the recurrent theme in many of his novels. The perception of death is obvious and eminent in many of his novels along with his own biographical background.

Hemingway wrote about characters that in some way or another dealt with death because Hemingway himself wanted to die. He has been deeply depressed by the deaths of his good friend. Ernest had written to the family in 1918, after being wounded, that dying was a very simple thing, for he had looked at death and he knew. He said that it was undoubtedly better to die in the happy period of youth, going out in a blaze of light, rather than having one's body worn out and old, and illusions shattered.

The universe of Hemingway is then a world of violence and death. Frederick in Farewell to Arms says: "We always feel trapped" this means that all the ways are blocked, they are blocked by death. He continues: "It's always like that we die." This awareness of the futility of human existence led Hemingway to deal with the themes of violence, darkness and death in his novels.

Søren Keirkegaard Considered the forerunner of existentialism, He has summarized that absurdity as follow:

"Whether you are man or woman, rich or poor, dependent or free, happy or unhappy; whether you bore in your elevation the

splendor of the crown or in humble obscurity only the toil and heat of the day; whether your name will be remembered for as long as the world lasts, and so will have been remembered as long as it lasted, or you are without a name and run namelessly with the numberless multitude; whether the glory that surrounded you surpassed all human description, or the severest and most ignominious human judgment was passed on you -- eternity asks you and every one of these millions of millions, just one thing: whether you have lived in despair or not, whether so in despair that you did not know that you were in despair, or in such a way that you bore this sickness concealed deep inside you as your gnawing secret, under your heart like the fruit of a sinful love, or in such a way that, a terror to others, you raged in despair. If then, if you have lived in despair, then whatever else you won or lost, for you everything is lost, eternity does not acknowledge you, it never knew you, or, still more dreadful, it knows you as you are known, it manacles you to yourself in despair!" (Kierkegaard, 1941.p.16).

4. Conclusion:

By committing suicide, I guess, the weary writer sum up the deformities and vices of a world adrift. If he turns to the idea of tolerance, he does not find in it the excitement he needs. He is the first victim. He won't complain but through his character. He begs the sordid world to free him .He wants to be oneself; but he is tired of being himself walking in uncertainty, and wandering lonely seeking for truths. He is not comfortable in life. He has trouble standing up. He has imbalances, anguish of

living. And he has to write to survive. He kills himself because he sees the invisible truths but can't reach any. Thus, he will throw himself headlong into any maze that assures him the protection and sooth. Declining the honor of assuming his own anxieties, he will commit himself to undertakings from which he will obtain sensations that he would not know how to obtain from himself, so that the excesses of his tiredness will reinforce the thought of suicide. Thus, without claiming to exhaust the subject, rather than closing with concluding thoughts, some rhetorical questions are formulated to continue the reflection on the phenomenon of suicide:

- Does the literary writer live in constant search for lost objects and not finding them, can't stand it and commits suicide?
- Did the literary writer fail in his desire to make himself significant in the universe of others, or of the fantasized self, and therefore commit suicide?
- Did the literary writer exhaust his questions and his thinking spirit, and because of this he commits suicide?

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