

“Fiesta (The Sun Also Rises)”, Analysis of the Novel by Ernest Hemingway

The novel “Fiesta (And the Sun Also Rises)” was written by Hemingway within a few months. This literary piece is based on real events from the author’s life: his third visit to Pamplona bullfight in 1925 with his friends and rivals seeking love of Lady Daff Twisden. The latter became the inspiration for Lady Brett Ashley, “Fiesta’s” main heroine.

Lady Twisden’s lover Pat Gary is depicted in the novel as Mike Campbell; Harold Leb, enchanted by the lady, became Robert Cohn; the writer’s childhood friend Bill Smith is shown as Bill Gorton, and Hemingway himself is presented as the main character of his work – an American journalist working for a Parisian edition, Jacob Barnes.

A young matador, the star of Pamplona fiesta Pedro Romero, received his name in honour of the famous Spanish toreador of the XVIII century. The young man’s prototype was Kaetano Rivera, and Hemingway admired his skill so much that he wanted to write a complete factual book devoted to Spanish bullfight. But real life made corrections in the writer’s plans and appeared to be more powerful than his love of this murderous art. It inspired the work of fiction, which was printed practically immediately after it had been written in 1926.

“Fiesta’s” artistic problems are defined by two epigraphs: on the lost generation and on the cycle nature of all things. The main characters of the novel are young people who survived World War I having been seriously injured and having lost their spiritual life values.

The central character Jake Barnes is an impotent. Notwithstanding the true integrity of his nature and his inner talent to love and be loved, he is incapable of providing his woman with physical satisfaction of her passions. Jake’s beloved and charming Lady Brett Ashley knows deep in her heart that she truly loves only the protagonist; however, each time she sees a pleasant and admiring man she cannot help a short affair with him.

Brett’s fiancé Mike Campbell explains his girlfriend’s flightiness by her extremely unsatisfactory first marriage. Lady Ashley’s husband suffered from serious psychiatric deviations and brutalized her. This fact was the reason of Mike’s sympathy for Brett; he tended to forgive all her infidelities, as she had seen too few good things in her life. As for Jake, he not only forgives Brett, he tries to be her real friend: he is not intrusive when not wanted and he is always at hand when Lady Ashley needs help.

The protagonist’s love for Brett is so strong that he can arrange her affairs himself, for instance with Pedro Romero, and all this for the sake of her happiness. At that nothing keeps Jake’s jealousy for luckier rivals. Thus, having learned that Lady Ashley was in San-Sebastian with Robert Cohn, the main character develops hatred for his former friend. None the less, the personages belonging to “Brett’s circle” feel some inner affinity for each other, as they all refer to that “lost generation” which tries to find individuality in an endless succession of drinking sprees and entertainments, love affairs and trips round Europe.

Brett’s incidental acquaintance Count Mippipopolous explains this continuous jogging by the wish ‘to enjoy everything thoroughly’ after their bitter experience. And the count manages it, unlike Robert Cohn whose nature is too deep for shallow delights. At the very beginning of the novel Cohn tries to talk Jake into following him to South America in the hope that the change of scene could introduce alterations into his life. But the protagonist is not so optimistic: he knows for sure that “you can’t get away from yourself by moving from one place to another.” According to Jake, “nobody ever lives their

life all the way up except bull-fighters.” However, the story further relates that even bull-fighters had long ago shifted away from the classical school of bull-fight.

Present-day matadors prefer to work with the animal not directly, as it was practiced before, but in a detached manner, only creating the outward appearance of danger. The public, inexperienced in Spanish bull-fight, does not always realize the difference between a real and a stylized art of bull-fight. The same in real life: the majority prefer to exist without a second thought as to how honestly they are living.

According to Hemingway, people get corrupted not only because they are affected by indiscriminate circumstances, but also under other people’s influence. When the hotel master Montoya, whose love of bull-fight is passionate, asks Jake whether he should transfer the American ambassador’s invitation to Pedro Romero or not, the main character’s answer is clear and categorical: “No”. As it is usual with Hemingway, a developed criticism of the problem is absent here. A life-wise reader is supposed to understand everything without explanation.

Hemingway is famously laconic when speaking about important issues. He avoids detailed descriptions and tends rather to enumerate things and events than to introduce their multifacet revelations. The characters’ dialogues are very laconic and quite clear. For instance, Jake’s and Brett’s feelings for each other can be clearly seen from these four simple phrases:

“It’s good to see each other.”

“No. I don’t think it is.”

“Don’t you want to?”

“I have to.”

Perhaps, this is the reason why everything comes full circle; when people truly and really love each other they sooner or later come together, and realize that being together constitutes their real happiness.