

Cognitive Interpretation of Hemingway's "Up in Michigan"

Yujie Su^{1, 2, *}

¹College of Humanities, Wenzhou University, Wenzhou, China

²English Department of Yeosu Campus, Chonnam National University, Gwangju, South Korea

Abstract

Hemingway's "Up in Michigan" ends with no more information after Liz's seduction, which leaves the readers much possibility of interpretation. Hemingway himself says that the story is not dirty, but sad. The mist seems to entail some hints about the coming drastic changes taking place in Liz's life after the seduction. Besides, though the whole story develops in the seemingly mode of a love story or a romance between a woman and a man, there seems some mismatches between the protagonists. The present paper interprets the relations between Liz and Jim in terms of the cultural model or schemas of romance, showing the disparity between Liz and Jim concerning love and sex and offering a deeper and reasonable understanding of what Liz might suffer after the seduction.

Keywords

Cognitive Interpretation, Cultural Model, Romance, Love, Sex

Received: April 2, 2018 / Accepted: April 24, 2018 / Published online: June 6, 2018

@ 2018 The Authors. Published by American Institute of Science. This Open Access article is under the CC BY license.

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

1. Introduction

Hemingway's "Up in Michigan" was one short story collected in *Three Stories and Ten Poems*, which was published in 1923 and had underwent several times of rewriting and revision. It portrays in great detail Liz's infatuation for Jim and the coarse sexual seduction. Petry [1] stated that "the primary sources of the story's excellence are Hemingway's sympathetic etching of Liz, the gentle, ingenuous kitchen maid whose sexual initiation he so graphically records, and his powerful depiction of the glaring disparity between male and female attitudes toward love and sex". Just as Hemingway mentioned in his letter to the editor, "It is an important story in my work...it is not dirty but is very sad". [2] In general, the distinct sex attitudes to love and sex leads to the glaring psychological and physical hurt to Liz after the unprepared or enforced sexual intercourse on the warehouse dock, making the sadness of the so-called love story more prominent.

The story is told essentially from Liz's perspective. It begins with very factual description of Jim's appearance, his occupation, and his daily life habit. There is nothing more special about him, except that he was from Canada. But the kitchen maid was attracted to Jim out of no special reasons. She just liked his way of walking, his mustache, his white teeth when he smiled, and his not looking like a blacksmith. She seemed to like everything associated with Jim, which she felt funny. The town Hortons Bay where they were living was small with only 5 houses, a general store, a post office, a Methodist church and the township school.

Before the deer hunting trip, Liz wanted to do something special for Jim but she was afraid to be caught cooking by Mrs. Smith. And when Jim was gone on the trip she could not fall asleep and she experienced a violent emotional torture inside. She had some expectance for Jim: '*When she saw the wagon coming down the road she felt weak and sick sort of inside. She couldn't wait till she saw Jim and it seemed as though*

* Corresponding author
E-mail address: 424185224@qq.com

everything would be all right when he came...Liz hadn't known just what would happen when Jim got back but she was sure it would be something. Nothing had happened.'[3]

Finally, after Jim had the dinner and drank some whiskey, he came to kiss and fondle Liz. At Jim’s invitation of going out for a walk, Liz walked along with Jim down to the dock and the warehouse on the bay. Over there, Jim forced a sexual intercourse with Liz even though Liz kept saying to him not to do that. And Jim soon passed over on Liz after the seduction, leaving Liz feeling cold, miserable and painful. In the end of the story, Liz covered and tucked Jim with her coat and walked back to sleep in a cold mist.

Love is unusual and complex, because it involves the attachment, caregiving, and sexual systems. [4] Hemingway’s “Up in Michigan” is, on the one hand, a love story, while on the other hand, it is a sad story. The present study approaches this story by cognitively addressing the different love model of Liz and Jim, aiming to show the theme and make it better understood.

2. Cultural Model of Romance

Generally, whenever we speak of a romance or a love affair, it is very likely to follow the similar routine: a woman and a man meet each other, fall in love and get married. This is called the cultural model of romance. But when taking into the matters of time and individuals into consideration, the real schemas of the model may vary to some degree.

Konx and Sporkowski [5] wrote in their paper Attitudes of College Students toward Love that love can be distinguished into two types: romantic love and conjugal love. When two are in a romantic love, then one lover tends to idealize the other by amplifying his or her merits, ignoring his or her weakness or shortcomings. Conjugal love does just the opposite. Sternberg [6] [7] defines love as having 3 components: intimacy, passion, and commitment. Clearly, Sternberg separate likes from loves. And liking has the same notion of attraction and included in the scope of love according to researchers like Fisher and Poonen.

Fisher [8] says that romantic love consists of two emotional

stages, attraction and attachment, which is cultural universal. Sexual attraction may take place naturally and unavoidably in the way of paying an increased attention to one’s clothes, general appearance or a self-consciously more graceful attitude in the presence of the opposite sex. [9] During the stage of attraction, there is a non-sexual love relationship between the two opposite sexes, or in other words, platonic love takes the domination. They need to have mutual communication, common experiences and feelings. They desire for each other’s intimate acts like touches, kisses, caresses, and so on. Different from Fisher, Gonzaga et al. [10] exclude sex from romantic love. Similarly, in Holland and Skinner’s cultural model of romance, they do not include sex and attach much importance to the attraction and the detailed romantic activities between the two opposite sexes. This corresponds to the concerned discussion of love and sex in the cultural model of romance. Fisher [8] believes that when two people have sex for the first time, their hearts beat fast with great passion. After a period of sex relationship, they may not feel nervous or too excited, but they continue to love each other in a warm and dependable way into the phase of attachment.

Love is a universal emotion which is innate in human nature and also applies to people of all cultures on the basis of universal biological process. In the romantic relationship, sex is the essential and indispensable part. But sex is also an issue concerning morals and disciplines. For example, sex is usually not allowed for some morals, social customs, and taboos. The Methodist church hold on to the universality of God’s grace for all, the effect of faith on character and the possibility of perfection in love during this life. The Methodist church values chastity before marriage and teaches the followers that sex is wrong unless it takes place between husband and wife. [11] In other words, sex without marriage or before marriage is forbidden and considered as running against the morals or the general religious discipline.

Thus taking the matter of morals like religious discipline into consideration, romantic love falls into two types: platonic love and sexual love, and a general model of romance arises on the ground of the discussion of love and sex and combining with Holland and Skinner’s model, shown as follows:

Table 1. The Universal Cultural Model of Romance.

Cultural Model	Cultural Schemas	Stages	Action or Behaviors
romance	platonic love	attraction	eye contact, communicate, etc
	romantic love:	attachment	
	1) platonic love;	1) attachment without sex	1) kiss, caress, etc
	2) sexual love	2) attachment with sex	2) kiss, caress, sex, etc
	marriage	attachment with sex	wed, live together, etc

Romance here has a broader meaning, including 3 cultural schemas: platonic love, romantic love and sexual love. It consists of two stages: attraction, attachment. Romantic love

and platonic love are distinct in the aspect of sexual desire or caresses.

3. The Interpretation of Liz's Cultural Romance Model

The story *Up in Michigan* develops mainly with Liz's growing sexual desire for Jim, at first Liz's attention to Jim, then Liz's desperate miss of Jim when he went away on the hunting trip, Liz's ecstasy at Jim's approaching and at last sudden feeling of loss after the seduction. If we compare the story to be a stage, Liz plays a central role on the front stage, while Jim like the other characters in the story such as Mrs. Smith, D. J. Smith, and Charley Wyman stands all the time at the back stage and only comes to the front when it comes to the scene of seduction.

3.1. Attraction

From Liz's perspective, their relationship can be interpreted in terms of the cultural model of romance. Firstly, in the cultural schema of platonic love, a man and woman are attracted to each other by their appearance as shown in the introduction of Liz and Jim.

"Jim Gilmore came to Hortons Bay from Canada. He bought the blacksmith shop from old man Horton. Jim was short and dark with big mustaches and big hands. He was a good horseshoer and did not look much like a blacksmith even with his leather apron on. He lived upstairs above the blacksmith shop and took his meals at D. J. Smith's."

In this part of description, the adjective "big" is repeated twice, which conveys a muscular male image of Jim. While in the case of Liz, her "neat" feature is stressed in the eyes of Mrs. Smith's and Jim's.

"Liz Coates worked for Smith's. Mrs. Smith, who was a very large clean woman,, said Liz Coates was the neatest girl she'd ever seen. Liz had good legs and always wore clean gingham aprons and Jim noticed that her hair was always neat behind. He liked her because it was so jolly but he never thought about her."

Regarding the way to describe Jim and Liz, the striking feature of Jim is "big" while that of Liz is "neat"; the remarkable body parts of Jim are "mustaches" and "hands" while those of Liz are "legs" and "hair". The body parts and their features are metonymic and metaphorical extensions that reflect the embodied nature of cognition as situated in the cultural model of romance. There are corresponding contrasts between "mustache" and "hair", "hands" and "legs". "Big mustaches and big hands" indicate that Jim is manly and masculine as well as experienced, and "good legs and neat hair" symbolize her innocence and chastity. The particular stresses on the appearance and body parts are distinguished in terms of sex differences but also foretell the disparity between Liz and Jim.

The constant repetition of the word "like" metaphorically means the growing degrees of Jim's attraction to Liz on her

side. She pays attention to everything related with Jim but Liz's appreciation of Jim is not related to Jim's personality, values or intelligence, which suggests the noncommittal quality of her interest.

Secondly, according to Holland and Skinner's cultural model of romance, man's attitude to the woman he appreciates is of great significance. However, in the story, Jim *"didn't seem to notice her much, He talked about the shop to D. J. Smith and about the Republican Party and about James G. Blaine. In the evening he read or went spearing fish in the bay with a jacklight with D. J. Smith. In the fall he and Smith and Charley Wyman took a wagon and tent, grub, axes, their rifles and two dogs and went on a trip to the pine plains beyond Vanderbilt deer hunting."* Evidently, in Jim's personal emotional world, Liz plays no role or part and "Jim never thought about her". In other words, Liz is romantically in love with Jim but Jim is not, and more precisely, Jim lacks any personal interest in Liz.

3.2. Attachment

In terms of the cultural model of romance, sexual desire separates Platonic love and Romantic love. Liz's sexual desire of Jim is represented in terms of her inability to sleep when Jim was away on the hunting trip. Metaphorically, the word "sleep" is closely associated with sexual desire or sex, especially with sb. to whom one is not married. [12]

"She couldn't sleep well from thinking about him but she discovered it was fun to think about him too. If she let herself go it was better. The night before they were to come back she didn't sleep at all, that she didn't think she slept because it was all mixed up in a dream about not sleeping and really not sleeping."

Such metaphors indicate that her lust for Jim remains strong and makes her expect something from Jim: *"when she saw the wagon coming down the road she felt weak and sick sort of inside. She couldn't wait till she saw Jim and it seemed as though everything would be all right when he came."* But she is not sure what she was expecting: *"Liz hadn't known just what would happen when Jim got back but she was sure it would be something. Nothing happened. The men were just home, that was all"*. "Romantic love relates to an interest in being close to a partner and encourages self-disclosure." [10] Here "something" can be inferred as sexual desires like hugging, kissing, etc, which remains unknown to innocent Liz.

Therefore, readers are fully aware that Liz has taken Jim as the object of her love while Jim has not. The asymmetry of Liz and Jim's attitude to the relationship is also evident in the seduction. Sexual relationship before marriage is a form of fornication in Hortons Bay. According to the discipline of the Methodist church, it is sinful to have sex before marriage and God will judge. Though Liz desires Jim physically, she still

knows for sure that having sex without marriage is forbidden.

Before the pre-seduction scene, "*She was thinking about him hard and then Jim came out. His eyes were shining and his hair was a little ruffled. Liz looked down at her book. Jim came over back of her chair and stood there and she could feel him breathing and then he put his arms around her. Her breast felt plump and firm and the nipples were erect under his hands.*" contains many metonymical expressions giving rise to the metaphor "LOVE IS PHYSICAL INTIMACY" such as looking at each other face to face in an attentive way, being sensitive in the presence of the opposite sex, heart beating fast, which can occur when two are in romantic love. Liz's feelings are emphasized here with the emphasis on Jim's acts as well. And in the cultural model of romance, "kisses usually mean the confirmation and representation of love," [13]. As far as Liz is concerned, Jim's kisses mean to her Jim's confirmation of love to her, reflecting her recognition and approval of Jim's guidance in the romance.

Another cultural metaphor LOVE IS HEAT is also evident in the sentences "*It was cold but Liz was hot all over from being with Jim*", "*She was cold and miserable and everything felt gone*". Here displays the contrast of the heat shifts before and after the seduction. Before the seduction, Liz was filled with love, thus in spite of the cold weather, she was heated with love or passion inside. However, after the seduction she came to understand the difference between her love and Jim's 'love'. She felt a sudden loss of love, as if heat was taken away.

When Jim is engaging in sexual intercourse, Liz seemed to be divided into two selves. On the one hand, she is frightened and tries to stop him. On the other hand, she is overwhelmed with the passion related with her unconscious sexual desire, so her rejection is mostly verbal, but not in action. Liz was fairly aware of the taboo about sex before marriage, so she kept on rejecting orally to Jim "*don't; you mustn't; no we haven't; we ain't got to; it isn't right; you can't...*". There are four times of repetition of "you mustn't". Those negative expressions are metaphorically rejection of sex here, for according to the Bible, these negations mean taboos. Thus, the metaphor SEX BEFORE MARRIAGE IS TABOO falls into the cultural model of marriage.

And the metaphor SEX IS INJURY can also be seen in the expressions like "*He had hurt her; she was uncomfortable and cramped.*" And the hurt can be both physically and spiritually. So it is much likely that she felt miserable and a sense of loss. It means she lost both her love and her chastity.

4. An Interpretation of Jim's Cultural Model of Romance

Jim is known as a man with big mustache and big hands. Jim

likes Liz, but his liking is not the same as Liz's: Liz likes him as a man while Jim likes Liz only as the target for sex, as shown in the sentences such as "*Liz had good legs and always wore clean gingham aprons and Jim noticed that her hair was always neat behind. He liked her face because it was so jolly but he never thought about her.*", "*He didn't seem to notice her much*". There are two cases of repetition here, negations "*never, not...much*" and the verb "notice" emphasizes Jim's distinct attitudes toward Liz.

Between Jim and Liz, both rarely communicate with each other. On Liz's side, Liz desires to talk with him but she is afraid or seldom has the chance to do that. However, on Jim's side, there's no need to talk with her or he never thinks of her as the target of his romance. The lack of mutual communication again manifests Jim's different attitudes toward Liz.

In terms of the cultural romance model, it is clear that Jim's romance schemas fail to match Liz's. This disparity predicts the tragic ending or Liz's fall after the seduction. The two people's cultural romance models only meet when the pursuit of sex occurs to Jim after having a full stomach and drinking a lot of whiskey.

However, there is no successful match between their two cultural models of romance. Jim approaches Liz with an apparent aim for sex, while Liz is longing for intimacy because of her love. "*Jim came over back of her and stood there and she could feel him breathing and then he put his arms around her. Her breasts felt plump and firm and the nipples were erect under his hands. Liz was terribly frightened, no one had ever touched her; but she thought, 'He's come to me finally. He's really come.'*" In this part, Liz's inner struggles and sensuous experience are the focus and Jim acts on Liz with no hints relating to his feelings. Such contrastive description of Liz's mixed feelings and Jim's straightforward caress also forebears the coming drastic turn in Liz's destiny. From Jim's perspective, the metaphor SEX IS MATERIAL DESIRE is self-evident.

On the basis of the model, having sex is something which happens naturally eating and drinking. In other words, sex falls into the same category of material desires like eating and drinking, without any association with anything spiritual. If it is defined as Jim's love philosophy, then Jim's love is sexual love, reflecting the metaphor LOVE IS SEX. So it is comprehensible that Jim says to Liz when he's engaging the seduction to her, "*I got to. I'm going to. You know we got to*".

5. Conclusion

As Hemingway has said, "Up in Michigan" is sad, but not dirty. The sadness, in terms of the cultural model of romance,

is displayed in the fact that Liz is the one who has fallen in love with Jim so that she pays a lot of attention to Jim, his appearance, his behavior, and his social activities. Her love evolves from platonic love to romantic love, as she can't help thinking about Jim, especially when Jim is away on the hunting trip. On the other hand, her love does not receive any response from Jim. Jim finally comes to her only when he has had a big dinner and a lot of drinking. She is in fact his target of sex objects. According to Liz, sex is related with marriage. But this is not in the case of Jim. For him, sex is just an impulse, emerging after the satisfaction of his stomach, and sex is as common and casual as dinner. That is the reason why he falls asleep right after the sex intercourse with Liz. In a word, sex is not a big deal and not a cause of disaster, just a material desire which has to be fulfilled by finding a woman and having sex.

In the end of the story, "a cold mist was coming up through the woods from the bay" metaphorically symbolizes that what is going to happen to Liz, but not to Jim, will soon spread throughout Hortons Bay, as if the curtain or the veil was drawn up to be seen clearly and be exposed to the outsiders. It also implies that the aftermath of the seduction is certain to be fatal to Liz.

References

- [1] Petry, A. H. "Coming of Age in Hortons Bay: Hemingway's 'Up in Michigan'." *New Critical approaches to the short stories of Ernest Hemingway*. Ed. Benson, J. J. Durham: Duke University Press 1990.353-359.
- [2] Smith, P. *New Essays on Hemingway's Short Fiction*. Beijing: Peking University Press, 2007.
- [3] Hemingway, E. "Up in Michigan." *The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway (The Finca Vigia Edition)*. New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1987: 59-62.
- [4] Shaver, P. R., Morgan, H. J. and Shelley Wu. Is Love a "Basic" Emotion. *Personal Relationships*. 3 (1996): 81-96.
- [5] Konx, D. H., & Sporakowaski, M. J. "Attitudes of College Students toward Love." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 30.4 (1968): 638-642. Web. 30 May 2016.
- [6] Sternberg, R. J. "A Triangular Theory of Love." *Psychological Review* 93 (1986): 119-135.
- [7] Sternberg, R. J. "Triangular Love." *The Psychology of Love*. Ed. Sternberg, R. J. and M. L. Barnes. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press. 1988. 119-138.
- [8] Fisher, H. "The Nature of Romantic Love." *The Journal of NIH Research* 6.4 (1994): 59-64.
- [9] Zac Poonen. *Sex, Love & Marriage*. <http://www.cfcindia.com/books/sex-love-marriage>. Web. May 24, 2016.
- [10] Gonzaga, Gian C., Rebecca A. Turner, D. Keltner, B. Campos, and Margaret Altemus. "Romantic Love and Sexual Desire in Close Relationships." *Emotion, The American Psychological Association* 6. 2 (2006): 163-179.
- [11] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Methodist_Church_of_Great_Britain. web. May 23, 2016.
- [12] *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (the 7th edition)*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- [13] Li, Xue-wu, and Xiang Li. "Analysis on Patrick Kong's Romantic Films." *Journal of Jinan University (Philosophy and Social Sciences)* 6 (2011): 91-94, 161.