

**Exploration of War Trauma in Modernist Literature: A Study of Ernest Hemingway's
Selected Works through the Lens of Ecological Discourse Analysis**

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the representation of war trauma in modernist literature, focusing specifically on the selected works of Ernest Hemingway. War trauma, as depicted in modernist texts, reveals not only the psychological and emotional scars of conflicts but also the fragmented and often alienating experiences of soldiers returning home. This research portrays the inner turmoil and disillusionment of his characters, looking through the lens of ecological discourse analysis (EDA) into the major works of Ernest Hemingway, viz. "A Farewell to Arms and Whom the Bell Tolls." In major findings of the study, main themes are highlighted such as isolation, post-traumatic stress, and the struggle to reintegrate into civilian life. Correspondingly, the current study provides deeper understanding into the complex relationship between war and the human psyche in modernist literature. Additionally, this paper considers the broader cultural and historical context of the post-World War I era and ecology of war by demonstrating how Hemingway's portrayal of war trauma contributed to the evolving narrative of modernist writing. Finally, the study recommends that future research may be conducted on the other works of Ernest Hemingway while employing the comparative analysis.

Keywords/Phrases: War Trauma; Modernist Literature; Ernest Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms and Whom the Bell Tolls; Ecological Discourse.

INTRODUCTION

Literature is the reflection of its time and serves as a record that preserves the essence of human experiences, societal norms, and values, religion, virtues and vices. Literature mirrors historical events in the cover of fiction across various periods, tell us real stories and events. The world has witness too much destruction since World War I. Such events have permanently changed the life of the human population. War creates a sense of despair and hopelessness among people. The two World Wars are a important example of such an event, with about 120 million casualties due to these wars. It has a massive impact on literature and reflects the devastating and harsh realities of war and conflicts. World War I was a paradigm shift in the direction of raising the depiction of psychological trauma, emotional shocks, fear, notions of anxiety, tensions, loss, alienation, absurdity and pessimism in literature. Diseases of the nervous system like After the war, PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) has become part and parcel of literary discourse. It also influences the life of Ernest Hemingway that causes his suicide. The horrors of war about the two Another focal point of modernist literature has been the theme of soldiers and society

especially after World War I. To a great number of the writers of the period the ugly facts of war and the mental sequels to war gave to their thinking an entirely new cast. not merely the manner of their ideas of the human condition but the shape and sense also of literature itself. Modernism, which is characterized by the abandonment of the pre-existing narrative patterns and being aimed at the perception of the individual himself, was much affected by war trauma and disappointment of global conflict. Writers like Their works have allowed Ernest Hemingway who encountered the war to express this kind of thinking and analysis. The scars that are left by combat psychologically. The general scenario of Hemingway in expressing the problem of war trauma is typical of him. modernist literary style and themes of modernism alienation, fragmentation, pursuing meaning in a soulful world Violence that forever changed the world (Afaq et al., 2022; Ishtiaq et al.,2021)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Modernist literature, particularly after World War I frequently engages with the psychological and existential impacts of war. Ernest Hemingway, a central figure in the modernist literature captures the trauma of war through minimalist prose and detached narration, reflecting the disillusionment of a lost generation. Scholars such as Cathy Caruth and Dominick LaCapra have provided foundational insights into trauma theory, highlighting how literature becomes a site for articulating the unspeakable experiences of war. Hemingway's works like "Whom the bell tolls" and "A Farewell to Arms" depict emotionally stunted characters navigating fragmented worlds, reflecting internal and external destruction.

Hemingway provided a realistic and romanticized account of war (Sandhu , 2021). Hemingway's experiences as an ambulance driver in World War I and a correspondent during the Spanish Civil War had a profound impact on his writing (Baker, 1980). Scholars have argued that Hemingway's experiences with war trauma influenced his distinctive writing style, characterized by simplicity, clarity, and a focus on concrete, descriptive details (Young, 2015). Hemingway has very successfully tried to trace the effect of the environment of war on the soldiers. In his introduction to the book Men and War, Hemingway has insisted on learning "about the human heart and human mind in war.(Al- fahdawi, 2017).Hemingway's novels and short stories often feature characters struggling with war trauma, including Nick Adams in "The Nick Adams Stories" (1972) and Frederic Henry in "A Farewell to Arms" (1929). These characters' experiences, with war trauma are marked by feelings of disillusionment, fragmentation, and emotional numbness (Tanner, 1976). With all his hopes broken, Hemingway saw "a world of corrupt civilization, decadent institutions, victimized human beings, and a universal meaninglessness and purposelessness of modern existence." War had a serious impact on the sensitivity of Hemingway (Al- fahdawi, Hemingway did it by applying modernist elements, including fragmentation, non-linear storyline, etc, (2017). and understatement, has been regarded as a means of getting across the disorienting and traumatic impact of war on People (Habib, 2005;Gill et al.,2024). In the passage of the book A farewell to arms, Hemingway employs a non-linear plot development to present Frederic Henrys, scattered, fragmented experiences in the process of the war.

Ecological Discourse Analysis (EDA) is based on language-environment interaction that finds its foundation in ecological discourses as well as ecological conceptions of reality. looks at how trauma goes beyond the personal psyche into ecological and social environment. Recent According to studies by Stibbe (2015) and Fill & Mlence Garcia (2001), discourse has the ability to reflect as well as to shape aspects of life. ecological consciousness. A study of EDA on Hemingway explains why most of the landscapes in his stories had been war torn or symbolically infertile mirror characters reveal their inner devastation and nature becomes an agent of trauma discourses The participants completed a survey that involved moderate-frequent minimum grade effect (2025). Though a lot of research has been conducted on the themes of war in Hemingway, little has been done to combine them. Ecological discourse with the

trauma theory. This study seeks to bridge that gap, showing how war trauma is embedded not only in character psychology but also in the environmental discourse Hemingway constructs.

Ecological Discourse Analysis

Ecological discourse analysis (EDA), as an approach to study language from the perspectives of ecological environment, focuses on the impact of the surroundings on language. An ecological discourse analysis also takes into considerations life-sustaining relationships among humans, other organisms and the physical environment (Alexander, & Stibbe 2014; Gul et al., 2013(a) Gill et al., 2025; Gul et al., 2023(b)). In this research study, ecological discourse analysis approach is adopted in order to investigate war ecology within the selected works of Ernest Hemingway which contributes to war trauma in modernist literature.

Modernism and War Trauma

Modernism is a literary and artistic movement, appeared in the early 20th century, influenced by the trauma and disillusionment of World War I. Shell shock, as a psychological condition, and became a symbol of the modern human experience, reflecting the following themes in literature.

1. **Disillusionment with traditional values:** The war's brutality and senseless violence shattered the notion of a rational, orderly world.
2. **Fragmentation of identity:** Shell shock represented the fragmentation of the human psyche, mirroring the disintegration of social and cultural norms.
3. **Search for new meanings:** Modernist writers and artists sought to explore and express the trauma, anxiety, and uncertainty of the post-war world.

Modernist writers and artists explored this theme in their works, seeking to understand and express the complexities of the modern condition.

Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961)

Ernest Hemingway quickly emerged among American writers with the success of short stories and novel in the 20th century. He was born on July 21, 1899 in Oak Park, Illinois. He received prestigious reviews and gained fame very quickly for his writing and also for his personal life. He wrote a number of novels and short stories, and in almost all of them we come across a similar kind of theme including war and love with suitable modifications or changes. His writings are timeless because it captures and shows human condition in a way that is both relatable and profound (Lombardi, 2022). He did not directly serve in World War I and in World War II; he was an American correspondent for the magazine Collier's and covers the news of the fatal war. Hemingway was reluctant to write a novel that specifically described his experiences during World War I because writing helped him deal with his shell shock, exploring the widespread suffering that the veterans of the war were experiencing, and remind the increasingly indifferent American public of the atrocities of the conflict. In 1929, Hemingway published this elusive World War I novel, *A Farewell to Arms*, a novel that "testifies to the persistence of wounds, both visible and invisible" (Dodman 249). A common theme throughout Hemingway's stories is that no matter how hard we fight to live, we end up defeated. He gives the idea of lost generation. His works shows the disappointment and distress that characterize that era. The lost generation is marked by a sense of aimlessness, disorientation and disconnection. Hemingway is a key figure in the lost generation, a group

of writers and artists who came of age during world wars. He could not be referred as exclusively a war writer. Largely his novels and short stories revolve around war and unrequited love. He serves as a spokesperson to the millions of soldiers coming back from the front experiencing shell shock and depression. Hemingway did not directly serve in the war. Hemingway came from dysfunctional family, having relation with his father only. Furthermore, not only dysfunctional family, war and society also play a prominent role in their decision to commit suicide.

Psychological Toll in “A Farewell To Arms”

A Farewell to arms was published in 1929. The novel explains the pangs and sufferings of wars. It portrayed the battles, the retreats, the fears, the gore, the terrible waste of war. Ernest used his life when he wrote using everything he did nevertheless, remained a private person. This is an autobiographical novel. Hemingway portrayed the psychological toll of war on his protagonist, Frederic Henry, who suffers from shell shock. Henry “enlists in the Italian Army for no better reason than that he is in Italy and understands the language.” Fredric Henry is like “so many Hemingway protagonists including those in his earliest story like Robert Jordan from Hemingway’s 1940 novel on the Spanish Civil War, For Whom the Bell Tolls. In A Farewell to Arms, “the author is recalling his Great War experiences through his character Fredric Henry” (Dodman 250). Hemingway places his narrator Fredric Henry, as an ambulance driver for the Italian Army during the First World War. Hemingway is a writer prominently concerned with violence and death. Perhaps his omission style of writing (emotions unstated) has led us to see too exclusively that which is most visible tension, threat, violence and fear of loss. When the novel opens, Fredric and the men are found alleviating their war caused stress, finding outlets in alcohol, prostitutes and love affairs. Following lines from “A Farewell to Arms” shows war trauma of different characters (Khan et al., 2025; Afaq et al., 2023; Ahmed et al., 2024).

“Those that love things that die and believe in them die and are as dead as the things they love.”

The quote is closely tied to the concept of mortality and impermanence expressed in nihilistic tone suggesting that life has no inherent meaning and that human existence is ultimately futile.

“The summer nights were long and the sky was made of stars and he who could not work could at least lie down and look at them.”

This quote describes the simple pleasure of life during war time, pointing towards the engagements, weariness and plight within war. It shows a contrast between the beauty of nature and the ugliness caused by warfare.

“The world is not a pleasant to be. It is beautiful, it is the only world, but you must not trust it.”

This quotation by Rinaldi explores a paradoxical view of the world, acknowledging both its beauty and unpleasantness. It also implies that the world is unpredictable and potentially treacherous.

“I knew I would not be killed, not in this war. It did not have anything to do with me.”

Henry believes that the war doesn’t have anything to do with him which indicates a lack of emotional connection to the conflict. It demonstrates a common psychological coping mechanism among soldiers.

Psychological Toll In “To Whom the Bell Tolls”

“To whom the bell tolls” is a novel that tells the story of Robert Jordon, an American volunteer who is associated to the republican guerrilla unit during the Spanish civil war. As dynamiter, he is assigned to blow up a bridge to end a communication between fascists. During the bombardment, they lost Anselmo, Eladio and other veterans. Following quotes shows the psychological toll of different characters.

“He was completely integrated now and he took a good long look at everything. Then he looked up at the sky. There were big white clouds in it. He touched the palm of his hand against the pine needles where he lay and he touched the bark of the pine trunk that he lay behind.”

Here Robert Jordon feels completely integrated with his world and he is completely lonely and wounded. The nature is indifferent to him and the agonizing fact of his death.

“The world is a fine place and worth the fighting for and I hate very much to leave it.”

This line from Robert Jordan captures the internal conflict many soldiers experience. Despite the horrors of war, there's a deep attachment to life itself, making the choice to fight and potentially die even more painful.

“He had lost the will to live, but he did not want to die.”

This reflects the numbness and emotional exhaustion that soldiers often feel in the midst of war. It's a powerful statement on the psychological toll of prolonged combat, where the will to fight and survive may diminish.

“The earth is not in the war, it is in the war's effect on the men who are in it.”

This line shows the broader perspective of war's impact, emphasizing the psychological scars it leaves on individuals. War alters the inner worlds of those who experience it, and it's the trauma that remains long after the fighting stops.

“He was a little sick. It was nothing, but he was feeling the war in his stomach.”

This quote illustrates how psychological trauma can manifest physically. The mental strain and anxiety of war often have direct effects on the body, symbolizing the inescapable burden soldiers carry.

“You cannot know about the war. You cannot imagine it. It is too terrible to be imagined.”

Here, Hemingway conveys the incomprehensibility of war's full impact. This reflects the alienation and emotional disconnection felt by soldiers, who find it difficult to convey the extent of their trauma to those who haven't experienced it.

CONCLUSION

When analyzing the works of Ernest Hemingway in the context of war trauma, it is clear that the author does not only describe the external repulsiveness of war but plunges into the psychological and emotional consequences that a soldier can feel. The illustration by Hemingway of the phenomenon of trauma in the works like A Farewell to Arms and For Whom the Bell Tolls reflects modernist obsession with alienation, disillusionment, and breaking of identities. By the technique of portraying silence of his characters and using the technique of the iceberg theory, Hemingway shows the readers the inner and most times unseen

traumas that are left by war. The struggles of its characters, their feelings of disintegration and existential anxiety thus conform to larger modernist motifs of alienation and fragmentation of the personality and to the search erupting out of the violence and turmoil of war. His texts have become a keystone in interpreting the overlaps of the modernist literature, trauma, and the human condition after the events of the war.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the major findings of the study, the following points are recommended for future research studies:

- i. Research in future on Ernest Hemingway's works may be conducted from the perspective of linguistics while using the techniques of Systematic Functional Linguistics in order to highlight linguistic intricacy in the same writer's works.
- ii. Comparative studies may be conducted on Ernest Hemingway's works with respect to other modern writers.
- iii. It is also recommended to study Ernest Hemingway's works through the lenses of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Political Discourse Analysis (PDA) and Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA) to document power and politics related aspects in works of the same write.

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