

Representations of War in the Writings of Ernest Hemingway

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ABSTRACT *This study explores the representations of war in the work of Ernest Hemingway from the interdisciplinary perspective of Cultural Studies, specifically in terms of the complex relationships between history, memory, and representation. At the same time, the study advances a reconsideration of Hemingway's oeuvre by repositioning it at the juncture between modernism and postmodernism, thus extending a critical stance that has been applied to other authors traditionally lodged in the modernist canon. One such example, which I capitalize on in my research, is the critical work of the recent decades on the writings of William Faulkner. This strand of Faulkner criticism identifies elements of postmodernist avant-garde within the author's modernist experimentalism. I therefore insist in my own research on the two major coordinates of Hemingway's writings – his existentialism and his minimalism. While they have been explored by Hemingway critics to some extent, they have been comparatively neglected in systematic analyses of the representations of war. Bridging this gap is, in my view, the main critical contribution of this research.*

KEY WORDS *Psychoanalytical, human condition, critical directions, wound theory, existentialist viewpoints, gender studies approach, Lost Generation, trauma, alienation*

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1. Introduction

In tracing the change in attitude towards war throughout Hemingway's oeuvre, I have structured the study as an attempt to answer a question which has been approached by literary critics only marginally, namely, whether it is possible to speak of a development through time in the representation of war in this author's writings. And, if yes, what would the characteristics of this development be?

In considering existing critical studies and biographies but also, in a New Historicist vein, the stories told by official histories, I propose an interpretation of Hemingway's war fiction from the perspective of identity constructions – that is, by focusing on the ways in which identities are transformed and/or rediscovered depending on war's effects on individual conscience, first and foremost through the experience of violence. I use psychoanalytical, postfeminist and gender criticism to analyze the severe imbalances or disruptions in the development of personality, the strategies through which the self struggles to cope with tensions generated by the war, survivor traumas, the distinctions between the roles played by combatants and non-combatants in the representations of war and the manner in which the meaning of trauma develops in their respective cases. I also discuss the manner in which the war experience in Hemingway's fiction is associated to femininity (through the experience of independence, thus turning upside down the existing stereotypes) and to masculinity (through the experiences of intimacy and disability) in a

successful bid to offer a positive definition to individuals. I trace this re-conceptualization in its chronological development.

By mapping out this development, the study shows that in his fiction on the Great War and the Spanish Civil War Hemingway privileged direct experience, physical and material perception, and real-life circumstances. On the other hand, in the relatively few works on World War II, among which the uniquely significant novel *Across the River and Into the Trees* (1950), which Hemingway wrote after a period of severe depression and creative crisis generated by inflated public expectations, the author withdraws into the imaginary and seems incapable to recover the force with which he formerly apprehended war experiences.

Throughout this study, the notion of representation is understood in two related ways. Firstly, as an inner mental process which handles information provided by primary images, sensations and perceptions (i.e., direct representation via experience, which I discuss in close connection with the fighter-hero). And secondly, as a secondary mental image of previously perceived or experienced objects and phenomena (i.e., indirect representation via memory or testimony, strongly related to the experiences of non-combatant characters). The study shares with New Historicist and cultural materialist approaches the view that each text is a product of the age that engendered it, a creative manifestation thereof, and is thus culturally inscribed.

The large number of prose writings which involve representations of war authored by Hemingway in his capacities as novelist, short-fiction writer or war correspondent necessitated a laborious process of selection and structuring. The prose works that are the object of this research cover some four decades: from World War I to the Spanish Civil War to World War II. Nonetheless, the study is not chronologically organized but rather structured function of the views or perspectives on war, as well as depending on these perceptions' influence on the self. War is understood as a conflict between systems of power, as a limited conflict which obliterates the individual – and is therefore approached herein in terms of a Foucauldian analysis of heterogeneous power relations. The existentialist heroes of Hemingway's novels live under the sign of violence. The typical protagonist, the "Hemingway hero", is in his turn redefined in terms of a moral code born out of the violent and absurd nature of war and ultimately subjected, beyond the limits of the national and of history itself, to the final test of death. In the end, the human condition, whose tragic nature is revealed through the war experience, remains the center of gravity of Hemingway's writings.

2. Body of paper

The objectives and methodology of this research, offers a sketch of its theoretical underpinnings, defines the key concepts used herein, outlines the main aspects of the dynamics of the relationship between the representational mental space and the redefinition of identity in the corpus analyzed, and provides a short summary of each chapter. I also detail the criteria used in the organization of the study, I provide a justification for the selection of primary texts as well as for the chapters' sequence in terms of the changing perception and negotiation of both the representational space and the self and, a consequence thereof, in terms of the transformations in the description of war in Hemingway's fiction.

I also point out in the introduction that the issue of identity, which is so dear to postmodern authors, is anticipated by Hemingway as a survivor of a "lost" generation who writes on the lack of

a stable structure of traditional values, on the loss of identity and the construction of new identities based on the subject's cultural positioning and historicity.

Last but not least, the research also provides me with the opportunity to define my own stance as an author capitalizing on both the instruments of the researcher and the introspective insights of the literary critic.

The first chapter, "Visiting the Commonplaces of Hemingway Criticism: An Inquiry into the Re-evaluation of Hemingway's Fiction", approaches the current state of criticism on the representations of war in Hemingway, identifies the elements that promise re-evaluations of his work, and raises a number of questions concerning the main critical positions. In this respect, the thesis aims to prove that the exegesis of Hemingway's work is deeply influenced by the strand of literary criticism which approaches the theme of war from the perspective of the rewriting of history which emerged in the 1980s.

There are two main critical directions in this context in relation to which I position my own critical discourse. The Hemingway criticism of the 1950s to 1980s emphasizes war as a dominant trope, providing readings of Hemingway's works from a historical, thematic and biographical perspective. This position coalesced especially through the work of Philip Young, who used in his influential *Ernest Hemingway: A Reconsideration* (1959, 1964) the "wound theory" in order to demonstrate that the experience of World War I was a turning point in the life and work of the American writer which decisively marked everything that followed that watershed event. With the late 1960s and the rise of the postmodern novel, Hemingway criticism entered a period of decline. In recalling that time, Linda Wagner Martin, one of the premier Hemingway critics, noted that it used to be fashionable to focus on an abstruse and ambiguous writer such as Faulkner rather than on authors who, like Hemingway, were considered generally accessible (8).

Starting in the 1980s, however, an opposing trend sought to downplay the importance of war in Hemingway's work and initially focused instead on stylistic experimentalism, as laid bare by formal analyses. In the final part of the decade, formal analyses were complemented by ideological criticism in order to foreground an eclectic critical position supported by interdisciplinary approaches and by the variety of perspectives provided by (post)feminism, multiculturalism and psychoanalysis. Critics such as Kenneth S. Lynn (1987) and Frederick Crews (1995), for instance, sparked critical debates by questioning the significance of the Great War in Hemingway's life and work and by unmasking the cult of masculinity as, in fact, a means to conceal strong anxieties. In my study I also re-assess some of these critical stances.

To this end, the first subchapter – "The Historical Perspective and Beyond" – presents the origins of the biographical tradition pioneered in the 1950s by Malcolm Cowley, who insisted on the direct effect of the war experience on Hemingway's oeuvre. The subchapter also examines the opposite view expounded by Kenneth Lynn in his monograph *Hemingway* (1987), which showed that the role of this experience in the writer's life and work had been deliberately inflated. These two extreme viewpoints are reconsidered by combining formal and ideological critical approaches as well as through the investigation of the imaginary and the authentic from the perspective of existentialist and gender criticism.

The psychological and existentialist viewpoints are the subject of the second subchapter, titled "The Genealogy of Hemingway's Hero in American Literature – The Rule of Grace under Pressure: Psychological and Existentialist Approaches". These perspectives were introduced by Philip Young (1959, 1964) with the publication of his study on the re-examination of Hemingway's

work. Besides the “wound theory”, which associates the writer’s physical wound with his psychological battle to overcome its effects, Young also advanced the thesis of the typical Hemingway hero: a nihilist whose human dignity is defined by his capacity to accept the test of experience and to live according to this moral code (hence the “code hero”). Along the same lines, Gerard and Halperin (1958) and Richard Floor (1962) showed that nihilism and human dignity were the central resources of Hemingway’s writings, while Leo Gurko claimed that Hemingway’s chief goal was to measure the human capacity to “endure”, to accept the test of the toughest experience (with the old man Santiago as a veritable record-breaker in this respect). As a result, the writer’s interest was not so much in the trauma in itself, but in the characters’ attitudes towards it – an attitude that was essentially heroic. Consequently, the “code” hero emerged as a dominant figure of Hemingway’s fiction.

Nonetheless, as gender studies showed in the 1990s, this interpretation was to a considerable extent crippled by the fact that it considered only male protagonists, of whom it promoted a normative reading. Like existentialists, proponents of gender criticism employed psychoanalysis in order to reconsider the trauma. However, they did not restrict themselves to the physical wounds. Instead, they extended the analysis to the psychological traumas of non-combatants; to male and female medical staff for instance (Higonnet 2002). These critics were thus able to reconfigure the notions of masculinity and femininity in Hemingway’s work. These notions are discussed in the third subchapter, “Re-evaluation of the Centrality of War and the Reconfiguration of Hemingway’s Characters: The Gender Studies Approach.”

The first section of this subchapter, “Hemingway’s Male Characters: From Code Heroes to Paragons of Affect”, discusses the effects of war on the idea of masculinity. I argue that in wartime *intimacy* becomes the new norm in relations among men (cf. Das 2002), while during the wars’ aftermath the essential feature of the former combatant, which leaves a fundamental mark on his masculinity, is the *disability* (De Baerdemaeker 2007).

The foregrounding of intimacy enables one to move beyond the traditional critical approach, which focused on misogyny and the triumph of manhood in the modernist war-fiction canon. Instead, gender, psychoanalytical and cultural criticism placed “physical intimacy” center-stage (Das 2002). Unlike the traditional interpretation of war as an unprecedented means of brutalizing the male body, the new perspective illuminates a completely different dimension of the masculine experience, which is fundamentally marked by fear, vulnerability and physical tenderness.

As for individuals’ reintegration in the post war society, I extend De Baerdemaeker’s observation that individuals must overcome an additional obstacle in order to rehabilitate themselves by showing that their efforts to find a place in this world is considerably hampered by the social view that physical disability disqualifies one as a human being (the case of Krebs in “Soldier’s Home”). Consequently, the chief obstacle for postwar rehabilitation resides in such social limitations.

The second section, “Empowering Hemingway’s Women Characters”, chronicles the way in which feminist criticism in the 1980s and early 1990s, armed with the theoretical apparatus provided by theorists such as Judith Butler and Michel Foucault, attacks Hemingway’s male chauvinism and his use of cultural stereotypes that allegedly trivialize female protagonists (Garcia, Kennedy, Prescott). It was only after 2000 that postfeminist criticism, starting with Daniel Traver, revealed the complex relationships between the individual and ideology, for example in the reading of *A Farewell to Arms* (“Performing the Feminine in *A Farewell to Arms*”, 2005). Such

critics insisted on re-conceptualizing the notions of femininity and masculinity in the postwar context in order to expose social mechanisms of marginalization and exploitation.

In the second chapter, "Faces of War in Hemingway's Life and Fiction", I provide a brief outline of the life and literary career of Ernest Hemingway with a special focus on matters which support my claims concerning the autobiographical nature of his works. The first subchapter, "Hemingway's Life", brings nothing new to the available literary histories, yet it enables me to discuss Hemingway's life and work in terms of a self-mythifying protagonist who turns into a "hero of his culture", a model and imitation of his own work, as Fernanda Pivano noted.

The following subchapter, "Hemingway as War Correspondent: Outlook on the Intercrossings between the Author's Journalism and Fiction", deals with the author's work as a war correspondent, both during World War I and during the Spanish Civil War and, later on, during World War II. I am especially concerned with the exchanges between Hemingway's journalism and fiction.

Though a large part of Hemingway's prose writings are doubtlessly based on his personal experience and his direct involvement in all the major wars of his lifetime, my main objective here is to demonstrate that Hemingway reaches beyond the realist / naturalist depiction of war. Instead, he offers what I would call "a war fiction constructed by his imagination from within his own experience". The war experience serves as a catalyst of the imagination and hardly as a slice of reality to be described with the eye of the reporter, as in the articles of the press correspondent. To illustrate my point I read in parallel two texts on the Smyrna massacre three years after the Greco-Turkish War of 1919: a *New York Times* piece, "Smyrna's Ravagers Fired on Americans" (1922) and the short story "On the Quai at Smyrna" (1925). Another example, suggested by Elizabeth Dewberry and also culled from the Greco-Turkish War, is provided by the reading in tandem of Hemingway's reportage "Refugee Procession Is Scene of Horror" and the vignette placed between the stories "Indian Camp" and "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife".

In the third subchapter, "War and the Lost Generation", I look at the manner in which war is represented in Hemingway's writings in the context of the modernist movement of the early 1920s. I discuss therefore the role of the war experience and of the postwar European mindset in the making of the new generation of expatriate American writers in Paris in the 1920s, a group which Gertrude Stein famously dubbed the "Lost Generation" and of which Hemingway was a typical representative. I analyze Hemingway's exploration of this generation in his work, particularly in his novel *The Sun Also Rises*.

My interest in the odyssey of the Lost Generation lies chiefly in the issue of Hemingway's maturing as a writer and as a person, in the changes of his worldview after the war, and in the manner in which this worldview is reflected in the protagonist of his first successful novel, a survivor of wartime atrocities who feels alienated, emptied of spirituality, and possessed of a new identity defined by the war and its aftermath.

In the fourth subchapter, devoted to "Hemingway's War Fiction", I focus directly on the question of trauma in order to fashion the perspective through which I interpret the author's war fiction. I base my analysis on three short stories, "Now I Lay Me," "A Way You'll Never Be" and "Big Two-Hearted River". Known generically as "brother stories", they all deal with the problem of trauma from multiple perspectives. In my own reading of these stories I share the interpretations provided by Margot Sempreora (in her article "Nick at Night: Nocturnal Metafictions in three Hemingway Short Stories", 2002), who argues that Nick's essential trauma is not that of war but a

mental trauma suffered during childhood and subsequently activated by the adult trauma of war. This analysis employs the psychoanalytical approach made possible by Young's "wound theory", according to which in Hemingway's fiction the encounter with death is a manifestation of the "repetition compulsion" to face and thus erase from memory the experience of the trauma represented by the wound caused in the battle of Fossalta.

It is in this light that I read *The Sun Also Rises*, the events of which take place after the Great War. An exemplary book of the 1920s, as William Adair noted, but also a novel on the memory of World War I, *The Sun Also Rises* is a work in which memory is triggered by the protagonist's wartime wound. The novel foregrounds alienation and rootlessness in a way which reflects the state of mind of the generation of disenchanted American writers living in Paris in the 1920s, specifically the physical and mental drama of the former soldier among expats whose sterility and powerlessness are first and foremost psychological.

The third chapter, "War and the Transfiguring Functions of Memory", investigates the relation between memory and history, particularly the way in which both are reflected in the self. The chapter explores the relationship between history and narrative construction, using as its main theoretical frame Pierre Nora's analysis of the *lieux de memoire* and Yerushalmi's theory (*Zakhor*, 1982) on the way in which primitive memory opposes the modern historical conscience.

In the first subchapter, "Warfare, Identity and the Emergence of Aesthetic Memory in Modern(ist) Literature", I rely on Matt Matsuda's work in *The Memory of the Modern* (1996) on the discourse of memory as a modernist response to the accelerating rhythm of history, as well as on postmodernist theorists such as Rogers, Leydesdaff and Dawson. I discuss the poetics and politics of memory in terms of the "performance of memory" emerging as a result of the postwar experience and of the survivor's/writer's needs to respond to an indifferent audience. I also employ Harvie Ferguson's work on the impact of war on identity in three stages – identity at the level of equivalence, distinctive identity, and empathic identity. My interest is in the aesthetic view which corresponds to the third stage and was particularly favorable to modernist art. The concept of memory thus acquires a constructive and creative rather than merely descriptive dimension.

The second subchapter, "The Stakes of Combat Aesthetics in the Modernist Novel: the Case of Ernest Hemingway", starts from the realization that there is an "elective affinity" (Ferguson) between the development of the modern novel and the experience of the combatant in so far as war is doubtlessly a preferred theme of modern literature. While national and revolutionary war contributed to the development of classical realism in the novels of Stendhal, Balzac, Tolstoy, Howells or Stephen Crane, the literary reconstruction that followed World War I proved essential for the modernist culture that dominated the entire 20th century, and particularly for the innovativeness of war-fiction authors such as Claude Simon, Celine, Jules Romains, Ford Madox Ford, James Jones, Joseph Heller and, last but not least, Hemingway himself.

Using Ferguson's theory on the categories of the aesthetic structure of the experience and memory of the modern combatant – such as terror, chance, totality, senses, de-differentiation, de-realization, corporeality – I discuss corporeality in *The Sun Also Rises* in order to show how the memory of corporeality renders problematic the individual's life in postwar society in its emotional dimension. I suggest that one solution for survival is the exploiting of the creative forces of memory.

The third subchapter, "Soldier's Home: Memory and Transcendence", examines the short story of the title in order to discuss the combatant's return. The interpretation insists on the

elements that Alliez and Negri identify as characteristic for the ways in which modern literature deals with war as a dramatic event: on the one hand, war enables the individual to discover his or her solitude; on the other, it enables him or her to discover the apparently unchangeable peace of nature, such that the “return to peace entails the natural restoration of the sensory presentation of the world; the aesthetic restoration of *being-within an outside*” (Alliez and Negri 112). By making recourse to Ruben De Baerdemaeker’s study of the “Performative pattern in Hemingway’s ‘Soldier’s Home’,” (2007) I interpret Krebs, the novella’s protagonist, as an intruder in postwar life, whose status is the result of conflicting social norms. The fact that he cannot become a hero to his community and that, as a consequence, he distances himself from his wartime memories is dictated by the lack of interest in and understanding for the great dramas of the war and of postwar Europe on the part of his fellow inhabitants in provincial Oklahoma. The source of Krebs’s predicament is his inability to express his wartime experience in terms of a narrative that is accessible to the inhabitants of a small American town. Consequently, he decides to accept the passive life that his experience of wartime totalitarianism actually reinforces. In its passivity, Krebs’s memory enters a paradoxical relationship with the de-differentiation created by his experience on the front in an attempt to break out from the experience of postwar society. De-differentiation is thus a form of tension generated by the loss of individuality, while the problem of memory points to the crisis of personal identity, an essential problem of modernist fiction that Hemingway does not sidestep.

In the fourth subchapter, “*The Sun Also Rises: Corporeality, Memory and Human Identity*”, I employ Ferguson’s perspective on corporeality in an analysis of the same novel. I look at the manner in which war reduces the body of the soldier to a state of complete passivity, turning the latter into a mere object bereft of the will to act, as well as at the consequences of the memory of corporeality on former combatants.

The wartime memory of protagonist-narrator Jake Barnes, an American expat who continues to live in Europe ten years after the conflict, is almost exclusively represented by the experience of corporeality. The key consequence of corporeality in his case is his inability to physically consummate his love for Brett Ashley. In this case, the wartime memory doubles the physical handicap with an emotional one, as the entire novel is an illustration of the tragic way in which one lives with the corporeality of memory.

In the fourth chapter, “*War Narratives through the Lenses of Trauma*”, the analysis centers on the dominant trope of the “war wound” as trauma, the key means through which Hemingway represents the war in his work. The first four subchapters outline the theoretical framework of the discussion on trauma and, more specifically, on the relationship between history (war) and trauma. Michel Foucault’s theories on discursively generated power enable one to reconsider history from the perspective of power relations in historical and literary texts, as well as to expand the discussion on the effect of trauma and violence on the interpretation of history. Another critical reference is the cultural-psychoanalytical criticism of Higonnet (2002), who conceptualized war trauma by extending it to non-combatants as well.

Starting from the general definition of trauma and the distinction between the objective and the subjective components of the experience of “external trauma” (John Allen), as well as employing Cathy Caruth’s analysis in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996), I discuss the manner in which physical traumas caused by war and persecution differ from one individual to another and depend on the relevant historical and national perspective (the first

subchapter). In the next section I discuss the conceptualization of trauma, the identification of a paradigm of trauma as failed experience and of a paradigm of violence as the result of an external attack. (I rely here on Ruth Leys' distinction between mimetic and anti-mimetic theories of trauma). I further discuss the paramount role of fear in this conceptualization (the second subchapter, on "Conceptualizing Trauma"). Fear defines a new type of subjectivity for a self which loses its foundations and becomes diffuse. Sigmund Freud's observations in "Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety" on the relationship between traumatic neurosis during war and the problem of anxiety serve in my discussion of the behavior of the soldier traumatized by the shock of direct participation in the war (WWI) and of his struggle to survive psychologically in the novels and short stories of Hemingway.

The third subchapter, "Emotional and Psychological Trauma", explores aspects of intense trauma and traumatic events especially in cases where there is no associated physical trauma, that is, when the trauma is psychological and emotional. The analysis centers on three constitutive components of the emotional trauma: its spontaneous, unexpected and unpredictable character.

Using Esther Giller's theory of psychological trauma, as well as drawing on studies on the Great War, I look at the subjective individual experience which determines whether an event is traumatic or not. Psychological trauma represents the unique experience of an event or state of suffering in which the individual's ability to adapt emotionally is overpowered or in which his life, bodily integrity and health are severely threatened. The analysis dwells on the various critical implications suggested by Margaret Higonnet in "Authenticity and Art in Trauma Narratives of World War I", particularly on flashbacks, nightmares, dissociative states, deliberate self-harm, and reenactments of past events which point to mental disorders in soldiers as a consequence of war traumas (the so-called post-traumatic stress disorders, or PTSD).

The fourth subchapter, "Childhood and Adult Trauma", discusses matters related to childhood traumas which may subsequently affect the psychological, social and physiological development of an adult. I use Jon Allen's distinction, in *Coping with Trauma*, among three levels of involvement in traumatic events: the impersonal trauma, the interpersonal trauma, and attachment trauma.

The maximization of efforts to control situations involving emotional stress and the minimization of exposure to new stressful events diminish the chances of repeating traumatic symptoms. Lenore C. Terr studied the psychology of both adults and children in order to assess their condition and design the appropriate treatment. In her work "Psychic Trauma in Childhood" Terr shows that children have a diminished capacity to maximize their potential in cases of emotional trauma and that, when the stimulus which generated the state of anxiety is removed, the memory and scar of such fears persist.

In the second and most substantial part of the chapter on trauma I use such theoretical considerations to analyze Hemingway's novels and short stories. The fifth subchapter, "The Role of Trauma in Hemingway's Fiction", is devoted to several of the literary and historical characters in the writer's novels and stories – Robert Jordan, the protagonist of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Nick Adams, the "code hero" of "Indian Camp", and the characters in the stories "On the Quai at Smyrna" and "Big Two-Hearted River".

Of major interest in this subchapter is the first section, "Trauma in the Artist's Experience", as I discuss here a traumatic event of Hemingway's life on which he wrote in four pieces that were only published posthumously. This event concerns the loss, by his first wife Hadley, of the

manuscripts that contained his first writings in Paris in 1922. Given the unique, painfully traumatic nature of this experience, Hemingway refused to publish during his life the texts which mention the episode.

In drawing on Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub's theoretical perspectives in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1992), the analysis centers on the emergence of forms of narrative construction and historical reconstruction that are necessary in order to weaken the hold of traumatic memory. I conclude that Hemingway may have written repeatedly on the loss of his manuscripts without realizing that this was an attempt at discovery, a form of psychological recovery or of healing the trauma.

The subsection on "*For Whom the Bell Tolls: Emotional and Psychological Trauma*" uses the theoretical perspective advanced by Carl Eby ("*Rabbit Stew and Blowing Dorothy's Bridges: Love, Aggression and Fetishism in For Whom the Bell Tolls*", 1998) to discuss the war scars, the "psychoanalytical paradigm" known as the "wound theory", the word as symbolic wound, the physical and psychological trauma of the protagonists and the therapeutic character of love in the aforementioned novel. I argue that in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* love and work have the ability to lessen and eventually heal the physical and psychological burden of the wound. The novel sets a standard for the incessant struggle of Hemingway's characters to survive, for the suffering, patience, pain and death which are central to the human condition.

In the final subsection, titled "'Indian Camp', 'On the Quai at Smyrna', 'Big Two-Hearted River' and 'Out of Season': Psychological Trauma", I engage critically the violent world of Nick's childhood in "Indian Camp", then follow the events chronologically in order to introduce Nick as an adult in "Big Two-Hearted River". The analysis also refers to Nick as the central character in *In Our Time*, which subverts the chronological perspective, as well as to the way in which Nick's thoughts, ideas and feelings transcend the spirit of the river ("Big Two-Hearted River"). I insist on the traumatic energetic blockage which contrasts abruptly with the way in which Nick himself relates to the events. By taking into account both the most relevant violence- and trauma-related circumstances and the modernist aesthetic; the analysis discusses the similarities between the "fragmented narrative" and the "visual fragmentation" of cubist painting.

Chapter five, "War, Absurdity and Alienation: The Existentialist Hero" focuses on the existentialist hero in Hemingway's oeuvre, who as a result of the war experience is locked into a constant struggle with alienation and the absurd. In my reading, Hemingway's works are fashioned as a dialogue with the cultural canon on the human ability to endure harsh conditions. The focal point of this dialogue is not the misfortunes as such, but the heroic attitude of the protagonists.

In the sixth chapter, "Gendered Wars", I use gender and masculinity theory to analyze Hemingway's prose writings. The theoretical framework is provided by Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990), which deconstructs the binary opposition nature/culture and theorizes identity as performance, as something optional and therefore amenable to parody. From this starting point the chapter moves to a discussion of the notions of masculinity, femininity and the traditional roles assigned to the sexes through a variety of ways of representing war. The extreme experience of war enables one to reassess femininity and masculinity and attach to them complex meanings, and is thus a first step towards overcoming oppressive, limiting stereotypes thereon. At the same time, the discussion enlarges on ways in which the performative views on masculinity and femininity develop depending on the particular war that is the subject of Hemingway's writings.

In the first subchapter, “Jake Barnes and the Code of Masculinity in *The Sun Also Rises*”, the analysis centers on the effects of war on the concept of masculinity both in wartime and during the aftermath. In using the theoretical framework provided by Santanu Das (2002) the analysis dwells on the notion of intimacy, which becomes in wartime a new norm governing relations among males. This is illustrated with Rinaldi and Frederic Henry in the novel *A Farewell to Arms*. After the war, it is disability that turns into the essential feature of the former combatant, as manifest in the case of Jake Barnes in *The Sun Also Rises*. Santanu Das (2002) serves me in my discussion of the predominance of intimacy, which subverts the traditional perspective on misogyny and on the triumph of masculinity in the modernist war-fiction canon, while simultaneously supporting the opening up of modernist literature to physical tenderness. Against the traditional interpretation of war as an unprecedented means of brutalizing the male body, this perspective puts the spotlight on a completely different type of masculine experience based on fear, vulnerability, and physical warmth.

As for the postwar society in Hemingway’s writings, I follow Fore Dana’s (2007) recent suggestions concerning the re-assessment of the relationship between the wounded body and masculinity. My analysis discusses the extent to which, in some of Hemingway’s texts (*The Sun Also Rises*, “Soldier’s Home”), a wounded or mutilated body may still be happy in a world which imposes limitations on such bodies through cultural narratives which stigmatize deformity. I show that in order to find one’s place in the postwar world one needs to confront social views according to which physical disability disqualifies one as a human being. Consequently, the true obstacle to the postwar rehabilitation of the individual consists of social prejudices and limitations.

In the second subchapter, “Hemingway and the Crisis of Masculinity”, I use the re-conceptualization of the concepts of masculinity and femininity (Mark Spilka, *Hemingway’s Quarrel with Androgyny*, 1990 and Nancy R. Comley & Robert Scholes, *Hemingway’s Genders: Rereading the Hemingway Text*, 1994) in an attempt to demonstrate that the gender of the Hemingway protagonist is acquired and performative. In the spirit of Das and Strychaz (*Hemingway’s Theatres of Masculinity*, 2003) I discuss the masculinity of Hemingway’s protagonist as temporary, subjected to sudden change, relative and contingent, rather than as based on self-determination; as a function of changing rather than essentialized codes (“Indian Camp”, “Out of Season”, “The Doctor and the Doctor’s Wife”, “The End of Something”, “Mr. and Mrs. Elliot”).

The third subchapter, on “The Role of Gender and Warfare”, returns to the theoretical insights provided by Margaret Higonnet, who problematizes from an analytical perspective the normative interpretation of war and gender. I discuss the significance of the war trauma of non-combatants, especially in connection with women’s experiences. Starting from the theoretical outlook of Jamie Barlowe and Geraldine Brooks, the analysis refers to the distinction between genders as far as their visions of war are concerned, as well as to psychological balance in the context of war and of war-related gender trauma.

The final chapter, “War Symbolism in Hemingway’s Works”, is based on the observation that despite his “journalistic”, minimalist style and a language seemingly spare in metaphors, Hemingway shares with the great modernists a use of language in which the symbolic dimension is attained through extensive use of constitutive symbols, of symbolic construction of imagery and scenes, and also through such modernist techniques as the “objective epitome” and the “leaving out” – to mention only a few.

I start my discussion of Hemingway's war symbolism by arguing that in his work war plays the role of a constitutive symbol. Eliseo Vivas defines the "constitutive symbol" a symbol whose meaning cannot be stated abstractly, but which actually constitutes the text: "it is more than a matter of intended meaning" (274); "it is a creative synthesis of empirical matter which manifests itself in dramatic and moral terms and which functions categorically" (275). Hemingway conveys the subjective condition of his characters as part of his representation of war by means of a technique which M. Halliday calls (probably by analogy with Eliot's "objective correlative") "the technique of the objective epitome" (6). This technique combines Hemingway's minimalism with his symbolism in that the details he selects "are not so much those which produce the emotion as those which epitomize it" (6). In this sense, it can be said that Hemingway is symbolic in his narrative method, creating key characters who are representative on several levels.

In most cases, Hemingway turns war into a constitutive symbol by the technique of "leaving out", in other words, by deliberately stressing its absence, which can be interpreted as an element of his postmodernism, his deconstruction of war. As I have mentioned more than once in this study, he represents war in a minimalist way with emphasis on its aftermath, and on the psychological and emotional effects on the survivors rather than with an eye for its realistic or naturalistic description.

Though his language is metaphorically sparse, one should notice that his representations of war rely heavily on a symbolic imagery including several recurrent images such as mud, rain, snow, winter, dust, the plain, and the mountain.

For Hemingway, whose main narrative technique relies on recording and defining perceptions, the symbolist framework is itself a mode of perception. Like other modernists, among them Joyce, Eliot or Virginia Woolf, Hemingway used the symbolism of association to convey by implication the essential meaning he was after. A very good example is offered by his use of water symbols and its variants, mud and rain. In most cases, these symbols, subsumed to the constitutive symbol, have negative connotations.

Hemingway strikes a particular note among modernists in his use of gothic symbolism in the representations of war. Starting from Leslie Fiedler's remarks on the gothic mode in the modern American novel, the study analyzes various stances of gothic symbolism as war symbolism in Hemingway's fiction – a way of telling the truth about the human soul, about war and the human condition in modern society. Special emphasis is laid on his use of the themes of alienation and loneliness, common to both gothic and war symbolism, which he fully explored when he created his existentialist heroes. A parallel between Poe's and Hemingway's gothic symbolism discloses common roots. In both cases they reflect the writer's changed vision of his world – in the case of Poe, the spiritual crisis in a world changed by the rapid progress of industrial civilization, in the case of Hemingway, in a world changed during the aftermath of modern wars.

My inquiry into Hemingway's war symbolism rooted in a complex relation between trauma-memory and history has both a synchronic and a diachronic dimension, which I address in two separate sections of this chapter: one dedicated to Hemingway's short stories ("Indian Camp," "Hills Like White Elephants," "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," "A Clean Well-Lighted Place," "Big Two-Hearted River," "A Way You'll Never Be," "Now I Lay Me"), and the other one devoted to his novels.

The subchapter "War Symbolism in Hemingway's Short Stories" is an inquiry from a diachronic perspective into Hemingway's war symbolism, starting with some stories of initiation,

the so-called *Nick Adams Stories*. Though most of these stories do not deal with actual scenes of war, they offer an important insight into Hemingway's combat-related fictional world, by suggesting other extreme situations his characters are confronted with, which eventually lead to the birth of Hemingway's "code hero". Following the dynamics of the code hero's growth from the earliest example of Nick Adams to later portrayals, such as that of Francis Macomber, one can realize the gradual development of Hemingway's code for living in the modern wasteland, as well as "the refinement of his aesthetic theories" (Mangum 621-28). Textual references show how in quite a few of these stories war-related symbolism takes the guise of power struggles between white oppressors and Native inhabitants, while in other stories it refers to the effects of the war experience on the postwar life of both combatants and non-participants and takes the guise of a wasteland standing for modern man's physical and psychological trauma. In Hemingway's world, death begins in childhood, as described in the short story "Indian Camp."

The open-endedness of Hemingway's symbolism versus his minimalism (through omission or leaving out) is discussed with reference to the enacting of the life-death dilemma in "Hills Like White Elephants" and "The Snows of Kilimanjaro", while the critical comments on "Big Two-Hearted River" read the story as symbolic of a postwar situation, in which the enormity of the war effort renders all forms of traditional value obsolete. The alienation and isolation which lead to destruction and death in the meaningless universe of the postwar world are discussed in connection with "Soldier's Home", where the central character Krebs becomes a passive observer of the life around him, thus insulating himself from the burden of the wartime atrocities which he alone had experienced. Hemingway's postmodern representation of war in terms of omission or absence – the presence as absence – is thus laid bare.

The final subchapter, "War and Wound Symbols in Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*," deals with a novel that has been until recently read as an autobiographical work on love and war, but which current criticism sees rather as a fictional work on wounds, traumas, and failures. My reading emphasizes therefore the indirect description of war in terms of various physical and/or psychological wounds which irrevocably alter the individual and his relationship with a world that is itself changed. I show why Hemingway ends this novel with the apparently gratuitous death of a child at birth, in particular by drawing an analogy between the pointless, unanticipated death of soldiers and the sudden passing away of an innocent baby. In being associated with the Armenian genocide (1915-1923), which Hemingway covered in his writings, the baby becomes a symbol of the bloody history of the 20th century. The study also looks at the extent to which other works by Hemingway deal with genocide or innocent death, as well as at the associated symbolism ("On the Quai at Smyrna", 1925).

For Hemingway, being wounded in the war is the expression of a new vision, a new type of wound which has a direct physical and a long-lasting psychological effect on the individual, a "modern wound" inflicted by the advanced technology of modern weaponry. This is particularly evident by comparison with wounds in pre-modern war literature which function as a universal image of heroic affirmation, as these wounds were symbolic outcomes of heroism.

Apart from the autobiographical character of Hemingway's writing and the originality of events and characters in *A Farewell to Arms*, what gives power to the novel is, as Robert Lewis contends, "our recognition of how it so vividly retells the mythic story in new terms" (Lewis 12). This recognition reflects Henry's own recognition. When he realizes how human existence is degraded in war and how soldiers, no longer humans, are transformed into bodies fighting for a

cause that may never be attained, Henry cannot bear to think about the war any longer. The war no longer means anything to him.

The analysis expands upon the interference between the visual and the textual which Wilhelm (2006) only applies to *A Farewell to Arms*, in particular by exploring the extent to which “still life” as a technique in painting is used in Hemingway’s wartime writings in order to express guilt and anxiety as well as to question the characters’ explicit attempts to distance themselves from events and from responsibility by adopting the roles of victims.

The demythologizing of war and heroism does not exclude the persistence of the religious thought. Significantly, religion is present throughout the novel, thus amplifying the symbolic dimension of war.

3. Conclusions

Ever since Hemingway criticism reached maturity in the fifties and sixties war has been recognized as a major theme of this author’s fiction. This recognition came almost as a foregone conclusion. Many of Hemingway’s novels and shorter pieces deal with war explicitly and directly. Others are concerned with the aftermath of wars. The author himself experienced several wars during his lifetime, both as a direct participant, as a journalist covering wars, and in other capacities. He was even married to one of the greatest English-speaking wartime correspondents of all times. That war was a major theme of Hemingway’s oeuvre has therefore always appeared a matter of course and has provided the basis for the most influential readings of his works.

However, as the critical output on Hemingway’s fiction increased and assumed a variety of theoretical perspectives, it became evident that the consensus with respect to the centrality of war to Hemingway’s work was in fact hiding a multitude of unresolved critical questions. How did the representations of war in Hemingway’s fictional works develop or change through time? While war is undeniably a major theme of Hemingway work, what exactly is the connection between the author’s fiction and his war experience? More specifically, what is the connection between Hemingway’s personal war traumas and the traumatic experiences of his protagonists? How did the war experience influence Hemingway’s style, in particular his existentialism and his minimalism? And, in this context, what is the relationship between Hemingway’s views on war and the representations of war in the writings of other major modernist authors? Did Hemingway really cultivate masculinity and misogynistic stereotypes? What was the place of non-combatant participants in wars in his fictional works? And, last but not least, did or did not Hemingway, like several other of his fellow modernist writers, anticipate literary postmodernism?

The article has attempted to provide answers to these and other questions that have either been recently formulated by Hemingway critics or have been lingering with Hemingway criticism for decades. To this end, my critical approach has been primarily indebted to Cultural Studies, and particularly to the study of the complex relationships between history, memory, and representation. A constant concern of the article, and arguably the issue that has provided the backbone of my approach to my topic, has been the construction of individual identity in Hemingway’s war fiction in response to war and its effects – as well as the effects of other violent acts – on individuals’ conscience. By combining a variety of established and more recent critical approaches, among them psychoanalytical, (post)feminist, new historicist, and gender criticism, I have explored the disruptions and the points of fracture in the development of personality that are at the core of many of Hemingway’s writings on wars or their aftermath. I have focused

systematically on the strategies through which the self struggles to deal with the tensions and, in extreme cases, with the traumas caused by violent conflict.

The article has a threefold purpose: to familiarize the reader with the goals of this research, with the state of the art of Hemingway criticism, and with to those aspects of the author's biography that illuminate his work from the perspective of my topic of choice. After introducing the goals and methodology of the research, justifying the selection of primary texts, and outlining the general organization of the article, I revisit the commonplaces of Hemingway criticism in an attempt to stake out those areas which might be in need of rethinking and re-evaluation. The article enables me both to establish the major conceptual / critical references, and to pin down the unresolved or contested questions to be explored subsequently. The biographical discussion provides the background that illuminates the relationship between Hemingway's life, his war experience in particular, and the themes and characters of his fiction, among others also in the general literary context of his day. It is also during this first part of the article that I announce my intention to reconsider Hemingway's work by locating it at the point of transition between modernism and postmodernism.

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