



FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA

**Haven't We Been Defeated Yet?: A Historical and Literary Analysis of the 1920's  
Traumatic Experiences Through *A Farewell To Arms* (1929) and *The Sun Also Rises* (1926)**

Autora: Lucía Suárez Otero

Titora: Patricia Fra López

Traballo de Fin de Grao

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**Resumo** [na lingua en que se vai redacta-lo TFG; entre 1000 e 2000 caracteres]:

The decade of the 1920's commenced as a promising one in Western societies. Due to the economic growth after the war and the general rebellion against the previous order, it seemed that a new and better world was to be created. As it progressed, however, it degenerated, ending up in an economic crash that culminated in multiple dictatorships around the world and in a second world war. The reasons for this result may probably be traced back to a listless number of mistakes made by society as a whole, including not taking care of its traumatised citizens' mental health and necessities.

Writers, however, depicted different social problems in their works so as to raise awareness and leave a trace of what was really happening in these romanticised Twenties. One of these authors was Ernest Hemingway, member of the so-called Lost Generation, whose literary production is characterised by violence, disinterest for life and a resilient attitude. He not only wrote about it, but experienced the Trauma himself and the impossibility of facing it because of the taboos of his society.

The aim of this dissertation is to analyse the widespread shell shock present in the 1920's and its consequences, as well as its representation in novels by Hemingway: *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) and *The Sun Also Rises* (1926). Regardless of their publication dates, it is my intention to trace a historical timeline, being the former a portrait of the origins of the Trauma and the latter a representation of its outcomes. In order to achieve this, socio-historical and literary perspectives will be employed.

In the end, an analysis of the 2020's in America will also be referred to, so as to demonstrate that history moves in a spiral and that certain echoes from the past can be found in our present day society.

Santiago de Compostela, 21 de novembro de 2020.

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SR. DECANO DA FACULTADE DE FILOLOXÍA (Presidente da Comisión de Títulos de Grao)

For Lolo, who helped me every time I needed him. I couldn't have done all this without you.

And for Irene and Karima, who read this a million times.

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## Introduction

Ernest Hemingway went down in history as one of the best American writers in the English language. Thus, reading some of his novels and stories should be part of the syllabus of those subjects that deal with North American literature. In the fourth year of this degree, the compulsory readings we had to do for the subject “North American Literature II” included Hemingway’s novel *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) and two of his short stories, namely “Hills like White Elephants” (1927) and “A Clean, Well-Lighted Place” (1933). Although I relished the plots, until they were explained to us during the lectures I could not really appreciate the complexity of their meaning under their apparently simple form. Interested in learning more about this author, I commenced reading other novels and stories by him. I also began to read critics who analysed what those writings actually meant beneath “the tip of the iceberg”. It was at that moment when I learned that most feminist academics had fiercely criticised him and *cancelled* him because of his sexist behaviour.

The “cancel culture” is a current phenomenon of the 21<sup>st</sup> century society. It may ostracise anyone -either dead or alive- in an attempt for it to be emancipatory and go against the injustices of our society. Those who are *cancelled* are publicly accused, shamed and persecuted. They usually do not have a second chance and any achievement or contribution that they may have done, disappears with them. Although I defend having a critical attitude and not idolising anyone, I consider this “cancel culture” not critical at all (it tends to

overlook *why* people act the way they do, focusing only on *what* they do) and, consequently, very dangerous. From my perspective, in order to eradicate inequality, violence and discrimination (either in terms of class, sex or race), one has to analyse the origins of those behaviours.

That said, I firmly believe that literary works are nothing else but a product of their author, who, at the same time, is nothing else but a product of his/her context. It was this idea that encouraged me to elaborate my TFG around the study of trauma in Hemingway's novels of the decade of the 1920s: by analysing his books, the reader can learn that, before being a victimiser, he was a victim of his time.

The novels chosen for this dissertation are *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) and *The Sun Also Rises* (1926). The selected corpus has been reduced to only two novels because of two reasons, one of them being the limited number of characters. Secondly, because I wanted to focus on the 1920s, the first decade after the Great War, so as to appreciate the impact said war had on this author. For this reason, I needed novels written within that span of time and these were the most suitable ones for that purpose.

With respect to the objectives, it must be pointed out that there are two main aims in this TFG. Firstly, to contextualise and associate the contents and the form of Hemingway's narrative with the material conditions in which he lived. In other words, I will attempt to demonstrate that his selection of certain topics and the development of his laconic style -i.e., the iceberg principle- is not a mere personal preference, but a product of the context in which he lived. Secondly, I will try to prove that Hemingway's novels *A Farewell to Arms* and *The Sun Also Rises* are examples of trauma narrative. This assertion is based on two premises that will be tested out throughout the present analysis. On the one hand, regarding contents, they deal with and depict trauma. On the other hand, in terms of form, they present characteristics of this kind of literature in their narrative construction.



In order to achieve both objectives, this dissertation is organised in two main chapters. The first one, entitled “Trauma and its narrative construction”, aims to provide a better understanding of the concept of trauma and how it is converted into a narrative. In order to do this, it is divided into four sections. The first one offers a brief depiction of the historical development of the term. In the second one, the study of trauma is explained from the perspective of literary criticism and the different waves that constitute that approach. In this section, I show my stance on these theories, defending the one that understands trauma as a product of its context. In the third section I seek to associate Hemingway’s writing (both his style and contents) with his own trauma and, therefore, with his society. Finally, the fourth section is dedicated to explaining what trauma narrative is and the literary aspects that shape it. The aspects here described are the key points for the literary analyses in the next chapter.

Chapter two, entitled “Analysis of the novels”, is divided into two main sections. The first one consists of the analysis of *A Farewell to Arms*, whereas the second one is dedicated to the analysis of *The Sun Also Rises*. Even though the former was published three years after the latter, I decided to start the analysis with *A Farewell to Arms* because the diegesis is set in the period that corresponds to the origins of its narrator’s trauma. The diegesis of *The Sun Also Rises*, however, is set in the aftermath period of the trauma of its narrator. Although these two books are not connected at all, by grouping them I wanted to construct a historical timeline of 1) how trauma was originated in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and 2) how it was treated by society and, therefore, what life was like after its origins. This timeline is created in an attempt to facilitate the reader’s comprehension of the traumatic process in a very specific context. For this reason, I decided to include both novels in the same chapter instead of separating them into two different ones.

Finally, it is also important to point out the different methodologies that will be applied for each purpose. The whole analysis is based on one of the approaches of the Literary Trauma Theory, which is the “Pluralistic Model of Trauma”. This model seeks to explain trauma and narratives that deal with trauma by locating them in their context. As a result, historical and literary perspectives will be employed. In the first chapter, I will use the historical perspective to present the development of trauma studies as well as Hemingway’s context. In addition, in the last section I will use the literary approach to explain some characteristics of trauma narrative. In the second chapter, I will apply the literary perspective to analyse both novels.

## Chapter 1. Trauma and its narrative construction

### 1.1. Historical definition of trauma

The concept of “trauma” is the central point in this dissertation. However, its definition is characterised by a profound variety depending on the scholar, the field and the historical period in which it is studied. In order to facilitate a more profound understanding of it, I will briefly portray the development of the concept through the history of its medical study, paying special attention to warlike contexts in which it was developed.

The etymology of the word “trauma” comes from the Greek “*τραῦμα*”, which means “wound”. Either a physical or mental wound, trauma must have existed for as long as humans have: violent episodes -wars, colonisations, tortures<sup>1</sup>, etc.- have filled our whole history. It seems reasonable to think that those events had affected people from previous historical periods as well as they affect us nowadays.

Nonetheless, the study of the term -i.e., its acknowledgment and recognition by society- has not always existed. Moreover, once this field of study emerged, it was affected by society’s prejudices -e.g., gender stereotypes. As a result, its investigation suffered from periods of inactivity, which frequently coincided with years of peace. Thus, the following history of the concept should be understood in a spiral: it is cyclical but not flat- there is development in each of those active periods.

According to Sarah W. Anderson, the study of trauma can be traced back to the 1860s when doctors realised that those who survived to railway accidents acted in an atypical way, even after physically recovering from their injuries (15). In 1889, the neurologist Hermann Oppenheim defended that this was “due to physical damage to the spine or brain” and named this phenomenon “traumatic neurosis” (Gomes 39).

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<sup>1</sup> By dominant classes or powers, e.g., The Inquisition.

Furthermore, during the decade of the 1880s, other neurologists (Jean-Martin Charcot, among others) who had started to analyse what they considered an unusual conduct in women, developed the concept of “hysteria”. The reason for using this label stems from their understanding of the uterus as the origins of the mental disorder. They disagreed with Oppenheim’s analysis of the railway victims’ behaviour: according to them, their erratic conduct was due to their hereditary hysterical nature (Gomes 39). Whatever the case, despite the initial excitement with which these new theories were welcomed, the general interest soon faded.

It would not be until the First World War that the concern for mental health was recovered. Before America entered the war, European doctors had already begun to study this condition. In February 1915, Charles S. Myers, a British physician, was the first to name it under the term “shell-shock” in the medical journal *The Lancet*. In his article, he described this phenomenon through the study of three different men. Apparently, the explosion of a mortar shell had affected their senses -hearing, smell, vision, taste- and their memory (Myers 316). According to this diagnosis, it affected both the body and the mind. Nonetheless, the mind was overlooked in favour of a focus on the physical effects. Understanding this illness as a physical wound would mean that its nature is transitory: once it is physically cured, it disappears.

As Annessa C. Stagner points out, doctors -including Myers- later realised that some soldiers suffering from shell-shock had *not* been near an explosion and, therefore, this term could be misleading (256). American doctors had followed attentively the medical discussions about this phenomenon, and

[b]y 1916, reports from prominent American psychiatrists and British soldiers on the front began to alter American media discussions concerning shell shock. Authors suggested that soldiers’ witnessing of the horrors of industrial warfare caused shell shock, a type of psychological trauma. (Stagner 258)

Their emphasis on the psychological nature of this illness was an advanced position for the time. America was optimistic about their soldiers' recovery, an assumption that separated that country from Europe.

It is also important to point out that, at that time, this disorder was faced with a profound prejudice and a sexist outlook. Men suffering from this condition were compared to "hysterical women". This comparison was an insult at the time. As Judith Herman says:

When the existence of a combat neurosis could no longer be denied, medical controversy [...] centered upon the moral character of the patient. In the view of traditionalists, a normal soldier should glory in war and betray no sign of emotion. Certainly he should not succumb to terror. The soldier who developed a traumatic neurosis was at best a constitutionally inferior human being, at worst a malingerer and a coward. Medical writers of the period described these patients as "moral invalids." Some military authorities maintained that these men did not deserve to be patients at all, that they should be court-martialed or dishonorably discharged rather than given medical treatment.

The most prominent proponent of the traditionalist view [...] Lewis Yealland [...] advocated a treatment strategy based on shaming, threats, and punishment. Hysterical symptoms such as mutism, sensory loss, or motor paralysis were treated with electric shocks. Patients were excoriated for their laziness and cowardice. Those who exhibited the "hideous enemy of negativism" were threatened with court martial. (14)

Soon after the war ended -i.e., when soldiers were not necessary for the welfare of their country anymore-, the interest in healing those men faded. The aforementioned optimism about overcoming shell-shock vanished when doctors realised that it was not a rapid process. Soldiers were left on their own and another cycle of disinterest in mental health began.

Despite the disinterest of the general public, it is important to mention the work that the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud developed throughout that period, since it was enriching

for the field and will have a great impact on later trauma theories. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud, interested in elucidating what had happened with soldiers in WWI, theorised what trauma was in itself. He stated that the mind is composed of different layers. The outer layer works as a membrane that protects the inner layers from the intensity of the external stimuli (Freud 21). When external stimuli pierce the outer protective layer and reach the inner ones due to the lack of preparation of the individual, he/she is neither able to comprehend nor assimilate it. According to Freud, that person will repress the event and, by doing this, it is split off from the unity of the ego (5). In other words, the conscious represses what is *unpleasant* for the self, becoming the latter the *repressed*, the *unconscious*. After a long period of repression, the most important element of the disruptive event may be forgotten. Nonetheless, this does not erase the unpleasantness of the whole event, which still haunts the survivor. As a result, there is a *compulsion to repeat* that event to understand and control the unpleasantness it causes. Since the key element was forgotten, that person “is obliged to repeat the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of [...] remembering it as something belonging to the past” (Freud 12).

It would not be until the outbreak of the Second World War when the general public became, again, concerned with the issue of mental health. During this period of investigation, a small advance was achieved with respect to shell-shock: in general terms, people started to understand that anyone -i.e., any men- could be a victim of the shock in warlike conditions. In other words, suffering that illness had nothing to do with the soldier’s manliness: they were not *hysterical*. Even though this understanding was still quite sexist, it entailed more respect to those men and a more serious investigation in the field. However, once the war ended, medical interest faded again.

The interest returned during the Vietnam War. There is a significant difference from this period of investigation with respect to the previous ones: veterans from this war were the ones who organised themselves and who demanded treatments for their mental health.

The pressure these soldiers put on medical institutions crystallised in 1980 when the American Psychiatric Association (APA) recognised the illness under the term of “post-traumatic stress disorder” (PTSD) in the third edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-III). According to Bessel van der Kolk,

[t]he DSM definition of PTSD is quite straightforward: A person is exposed to a horrendous event “that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others,” causing “intense fear, helplessness, or horror,” which results in a variety of manifestations: intrusive reexperiencing of the event (flashbacks, bad dreams, feeling as if the event were occurring), persistent and crippling avoidance (of people, places, thoughts, or feelings associated with the trauma, sometimes with amnesia for important parts of it), and increased arousal (insomnia, hypervigilance, or irritability). (174)

So far, it has been depicted how the concept of trauma had been -medically- approached at different historical moments. Both terms, *hysteria* and *shell-shock*, are nowadays out-dated. Conversely, *PTSD* is still quite used and quite useful. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that *PTSD* does not mean exactly the same thing as *trauma*. The former does refer to the disorder, whereas the latter “is specifically an event that overwhelms the central nervous system, altering the way we process and recall memories” (Psychotherapy Networker 0:22-0:36). In other words, it is a disruptive event that affects the psyche.

In any case, the recognition of the *PTSD* was a turning point for mental health. Prejudice against mental disorders started to -slowly- vanish until now. These days it is much easier for people to talk about their traumas and mental illnesses without being judged or rejected. As a consequence, many people have analysed this phenomenon from different

perspectives -feminist, antiracist, LGTB, etc.- and from different fields- e.g., literary criticism.

As it can be seen, in one hundred years the term has evolved from a sexist study on the so-called *hysteria*, to the emergence of *shell-shock* -a condition that began to be examined after comparing traumatised soldiers with “hysterical women”-, to the more general and less prejudiced of *PTSD*. Although *PTSD* does not mean exactly the same thing as *trauma* (the former refers to the disorder and the latter includes the disorder and the event that originated it), its recognition helped to dispel certain prejudices against mental health and democratised the analysis of trauma.

## **1.2. Literary trauma studies: main traits**

The democratisation of the term *trauma* and its study was also reflected in literary criticism with the emergence of the “Literary Trauma Theory”. Although it is characterised by a profound variety of understandings and perspectives, I will succinctly explain what it is and which its most salient approaches are.

The discipline of “Literary Trauma Theory” belongs to the field of literary criticism. In general terms, its aim is to explain what trauma is and how it is represented in literature. With respect to its origins, it is commonly said to have begun in 1996 when professor Cathy Caruth published her book, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*. Thus, she became the pioneer of a whole discipline. Later on, there appeared scholars who also specialised in literary criticism and who were also dealing with the issue of trauma. However, they did not agree with some claims of the approach started by Caruth. As a result, two waves or models must be distinguished.

To begin with, the first wave, which is obviously pioneered by the mother of this discipline, Cathy Caruth, is also referred to as the “Caruthian Model”. Other critics who



joined this model (e.g., Shoshanna Felman, Geoffrey Hartman) had also a great relevance in the development of this theory. However, in order to depict their (general) understanding of trauma, I will quote Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience* as representative of them all.

In *Unclaimed Experience*, Caruth offers her understanding of trauma as “an overwhelming experience of sudden, or catastrophic events” (4) that cannot be understood at the moment of occurring and, consequently, “the response to [it] occurs in the often delayed, and uncontrolled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena” (10). In other words, she advocates that trauma is an extreme event that cannot be understood when it occurs but that persists outside the limits of normal memory, returning frequently to the person's mind. According to her, this occurs because the psyche is damaged, fragmented. This fragmented psyche represses what is painful for the self and, by doing this, causes an inability to comprehend and assimilate the aforementioned trauma.

However, it is the belated return of the repressed after a period of latency that may help to understand the event and to codify it into a narrative. Quoting her, “[t]he historical power of the trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all” (Caruth 17). The aforementioned narrative, according to her, will be strongly referential. She affirms that history can be faithfully constructed and known “in the very indirectness of this telling” (Caruth 27).

From Caruth's assumption of *referentiality* as the only way of representing trauma can be inferred a comprehension of trauma as “unspeakable” or “ineffable”, despite the fact that she does not use these words in her book. The *unspeakable* nature of trauma was not, however, a premise started by Caruth or other critics belonging to this theory. According to Barry Stampfl, said assumption can be traced back to “Adorno's influential pronouncement that there can be no poetry after Auschwitz” (15). This declaration had a great impact on

Holocaust studies and on scholars belonging to the first model of the Literary Trauma Theory, who later theorised about it.

As it can be seen, the “Caruthian Model” highly relies on Freud’s theories<sup>2</sup>: the fragmented psyche and its repression of the unpleasant, the inability to understand the disruptive event and its belated return that haunts the survivor, etc. Furthermore, this model developed that understanding with modern neurobiological studies.

In the second place, the other wave is commonly addressed under the umbrella term of “Pluralistic Model of Trauma” due to the great variety of approaches it is composed of. Because of this variety, it is difficult to offer a single and firm definition of trauma. Nonetheless, since I consider Michelle Balaev’s understanding quite representative of the model, I will quote her. In “Literary Trauma Theory Reconsidered”, Balaev states that “[t]rauma causes a disruption and reorientation of consciousness, but the values attached to this experience are influenced by a variety of individual and cultural factors that change over time” (4). She, like Caruth, recognises that trauma has an impact on the psyche. However, there is a radical different understanding of that impact. Whereas the first model claims that the event *fragments* the psyche and prevents both its direct linguistic codification and knowledge, this model advocates *reorientation* as its effect upon the mind. Put in other words: the *unspeakability* of trauma may be one of its aftereffects, but not the only one. As a matter of fact, the different expressions after the traumatic experience will be highly dependent upon the material conditions -i.e., the society, culture, social class, gender, etc.- in which the person lives.

The richness of this approach is that they do not attempt to create a single and rigid definition of trauma and its aftereffects. Without denying the contributions of the first model,

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<sup>2</sup> In *Unclaimed Experience*, Caruth not only discusses Freud’s texts and theories about trauma, but also Lacan’s absence and de Man’s referentiality. She attempts to relate them with the issue of trauma. These discussions have been overlooked in this TFG due to character limitation.

what these scholars do is offering tools to analyse each trauma in its time, place and sufferer, in an attempt to improve and fill the gaps of the first theory<sup>3</sup>.

As a philologist, it is my belief that defending unspeakability as the only aftereffect of trauma has two major consequences. Firstly, I firmly believe that assuming the impossibility of directly verbalising trauma is denying the possibility of any real knowledge: if traumatic experiences can only be addressed by references, their core meaning will never be fully described. As a result, those who had not experienced the event will never be acquainted with it: the knowledge and the lessons that can be learnt from it disappear with the only person/people who went through it. This is not to say, however, that precise referentiality cannot exist: I consider that referentiality may be an option, but its existence does not exclude verbalisation and, for certain traumas<sup>4</sup>, the linguistic codification is much more appropriate.

Secondly, I also believe that claiming for ineffability is going against our own nature. Human beings have the distinctive capacity of language. We can describe everything that surrounds us and, if the existing words are not enough to codify it, we create new ones. I am not denying the difficulty of its verbalisation, especially in contexts when victims are blamed or even rejected by their society. What I am rejecting is the impossibility of its linguistic codification: if those people had not lost the faculty of speech, there would have been always a possibility for them to express what they lived.

To summarise, the study of trauma reached the literary criticism field at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with Caruth's publication of *Unclaimed Experience*. The first wave, pioneered by her, is deeply rooted in Freudian and modern neurobiological theories. They understand trauma as an extreme event that fragments the psyche and makes the experience

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<sup>3</sup> E.g., In "Trauma and Power in Postcolonial Literary Studies", Irene Visser not only sheds light on the particularities and aftereffects of trauma in colonial situations, but also points out aspects -resistance, resilience and the possibility of overcoming trauma- that were not explored in the "Caruthian Model".

<sup>4</sup> E.g., the Holocaust.

unfathomable, ineffable and belatedly tormenting. The second one defends that there can be multiple aftereffects, and they will all depend on the social factors that surround the person. After depicting my disagreement with the understanding of trauma as unspeakable (first model), I took side with the “Pluralistic Model of Trauma” (second model). In the following section, I will apply the theory of this model to the author selected for this dissertation. That is, I will present Hemingway’s writing in his context in order to demonstrate that his literature was a product of his time and trauma.

### **1.3. Hemingway as a traumatised writer of trauma<sup>5</sup>**

The decade of the 1920s in Western cultures is widely known, among other terms, as the “Roaring Twenties”. The reasons for naming it thus can be traced back to the economic growth, the rebellion against the previous order and the advance in the feminist struggle with the acquisition of new rights for women, among others. However, the label of “roaring” is, to say the least, questionable, for this period had its shadows too. After the war, there were high rates of unemployment due to the finalisation of wartime contracts. In addition, three economic recessions during this decade left many workers unemployed. The unemployment, unfair conditions of labour and the recent experience in the Great War resulted in the perfect breeding ground for the rise of chauvinism, racism and the revival of the Ku Klux Klan. Moreover, crime rates increased drastically during those years because of Prohibition (Murphy 2-13). Another downside of this period, the most important one for this dissertation, was the profound disregard towards mental health.

Most men who had participated in WWI and who had witnessed the atrocities that occurred there returned to their homes traumatised or *shell-shocked*, as it was referred to in those days. However, social standards (especially those related to gender norms) prevented

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<sup>5</sup> The title of this section is a paraphrase of Antolin Trinidad’s title ‘Freud and Hemingway: Traumatized Writers of Trauma Narratives’ in “The Great War, Psychobiography and the Narrativisation of Trauma in Hemingway and Freud” (2019).

these people from verbalising what they were feeling. Displaying feelings of fear or emotion was considered feminine and anti-patriotic: the common belief was that soldiers should pride themselves on their participation in the war.<sup>6</sup> As a result, those men who did show the aforementioned emotions were, in general, despised by society, including medical personnel. This repression had a great impact on the individual lives of the men who suffered it and on society as a whole. Therefore, artists from very different countries<sup>7</sup> decided to depict in their works how society dealt with this mental health issue in order to evince it. This is the case of the American novelist Ernest Hemingway.

Hemingway experienced the cruelty of the war himself whilst working as an ambulance driver in WWI. He was not as a mere spectator who helped other men. On the contrary, he was directly injured when a mortar shell exploded near the place where he was standing (Hutchisson 27). When he returned home from the front, he presented symptoms of trauma. Nowadays, this condition would be treated pharmaceutically and with therapy, but none of these options existed for him at the time. Hemingway had to battle alone with depression and trauma, as well as with his “great insecurity about his non-combatant role in the war” (Hutchisson 36). The way he dealt with his mental disorders was by repressing them. However, as Freud started to elucidate during the decade of the 1920s, if someone represses their trauma, it will inevitably return to haunt them in their dreams (Freud 7). That is to say, if the traumatic experience is ignored and not cured, it will cause severe problems throughout the rest of their lives. This repression had a major influence on Hemingway’s artistic production. Moreover, it also made his life and behaviour turbulent and erratic until 1961, when he decided to put an end to it by committing suicide.

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<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 1, section 1.1., p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, the German writer Erich M. Remarque in *All Quiet on the Western front* (1928) or the British author Virginia Woolf in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925).

As it can be seen, the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including the romanticised decade of the 20s, was characterised by extreme violence and a profound dehumanization. This affected the artists' perception of life and, obviously, their works. In relation to this, it is important to mention that Hemingway, and consequently his literary works, belonged to the Modernist tradition. Modernists longed for innovation and tried to separate themselves from the past, its traditions and institutions; they prioritised the individual's self-consciousness and also avowed for technique -i.e., not spontaneous creation. Even though this artistic movement was not caused by WWI -Modernism had been already developed before its outbreak-, the war might have elicited these artists' "penchant for raw materials, intense psychic tensions, bleak realism, and proclivity toward chaos" (Applewhite 422). This, together with his personal experience, explains why Hemingway's novels deal with topics such as death, violence, a senseless existence, alcoholism, dating prostitutes... and trauma.

The way he explored those topics, that is, Hemingway's own writing style, is also a Modernist innovation. He developed a minimalistic style that received the name of "Iceberg principle" or "principle of omission" because of the way he described it in *Death in the Afternoon*:

If a writer of prose knows enough about what he is writing about he may *omit* things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of movement of an *ice-berg* is due to only one-eighth of it being above water [sic]. (98, emphasis mine)

Thus, it can be said that his novels and short stories are composed of two levels: the one that is displayed and the hidden one. The former is accessible -i.e., understandable- for everyone because of its apparent simplicity. The latter, however, will only be reached after an exercise of study and analysis, but it is the richest level, for it contains the feelings and thoughts of both the author and the narrator.

He uses several techniques to put the Iceberg principle into practice. Firstly, he constructs succinct dialogues. This does not only make the story apparently simple, but it also allows different connotations and satiric meanings. It is important to point out that irony is a key element in Hemingway's fiction: through an ironic perspective, he can express what he feels and thinks without explicitly exposing himself. Secondly, he uses streams of consciousness to depict the characters' thoughts. Although this may seem the opposite to the principle of omission, those thoughts are also constructed in accordance with the iceberg structure: they provide basic information to the story, necessary for its fluency and development, but they are much more complex than they appear to be. Finally, he finishes his narratives with an open ending, thus creating suspense and forcing the reader to deduce what happens next. Furthermore, the narrator, i.e., Hemingway, "avoids committing himself to any conclusion" (Ma & Zhang 83).

As I mentioned before, this is the style through which Hemingway portrayed harsh topics, including trauma. Applying the theory of the "Pluralistic Model of Trauma", the context must be regarded in order to elucidate why he wrote about those topics in such a style. Since the society of that time despised men who displayed symptoms of shell-shock or expressed their emotions, it seems reasonable to believe that Hemingway's pithy style was conditioned by those social norms.

In summary, Hemingway was traumatised after the Great War. The fact that he was a Modernist, together with his personal experiences, may have had an influence upon the topics he chose. However, the society in which he lived prevented men like him from expressing what they felt afterwards. Therefore, he had to use a laconic style in order to deal with, among others, the issue of trauma. Thus, the "principle of omission" can be understood as a way of representing the imposed ineffability of trauma and emotions.

So far, a historical perspective has been used in order to explain the concept of trauma, the different approaches of trauma studies and the context in which *A Farewell to Arms* and *The Sun Also Rises*, which are considered trauma narratives, were written. In the following section, I will add to this perspective the literary analysis. In it, a definition of trauma narrative will be offered. In addition, the literary parameters used in the study of the novels in chapter two will be explained. I will also explain to what extent they can shape a narrative that deals with trauma.

#### **1.4. Main characteristics of trauma narrative**

Either directly or referentially, there is always the possibility of reconstructing trauma into a story. This narrative can have different natures: judicial, medical, autobiographical... In this TFG, the literary narrative of trauma will be examined. To facilitate its comprehension, certain aspects of the literary analysis will be presented in this section.

First of all, it is important to offer a definition of literary trauma narrative. As Antolin Trinidad points out, this narrative is “where the convergence between clinical disciplines and literary criticism can happen” (107). Although it would be interesting to provide a deeper understanding of the psychological aspect of this kind of narrative, in this TFG the focus is only on the literary features that constitute it. In order to explain such features, Genette’s narrative theory will be explored.

In *Narrative Discourse*, Genette distinguishes different aspects to take into account when analysing a narrative: order, duration, frequency, mood and voice. Since I consider *voice* to be the most crucial aspect, especially in trauma narrative, I will begin explaining it before presenting the rest.

For Genette, *voice* is “not only the person who carries out or submits to the action, but also the person (the same one or another) who reports it, and, if need be, all those people who participate, even though passively, in this narrating activity” (213). According to him,



it is composed of the *narrating instance*, the *time of narrating* and the different *narrative levels*. The narrating instance is defined as the context -moment and place- in which a person utters a statement (Genette 212). The time of narrating, in contrast, is the distance that aforementioned narration has with respect to the story (prior, subsequent, simultaneous...) and is marked with a particular tense (Genette 215). Finally, the narrative levels are distinguished to organise the different relations that an act of narration may have with the story itself. The first level corresponds to the narrating instance of the “first narrative” and it is named *extradiegetic*. The story itself would be the *diegetic* or *intradiegetic* level. Finally, the stories told within the intradiegetic level (that is, the instances of a “second narrative”) would be the *metadiegetic* level (Genette 228–9). Furthermore, and in relation to this division, he describes two types of narrators: the *heterodiegetic* and the *homodiegetic*. The former is not present in the story they tell; the latter, conversely, is a character in the story. Regarding the *homodiegetic*, Genette offers a further distinction, depending on the position they have with respect to the story: they may be mere observers of the facts or the protagonists, in which case he uses the label of *autodiegetic* (244-5).

In any narrative, the narrator is the tool through which the reader can get acquainted with the diegesis. Therefore, the narrator’s perspective will always have a major influence upon the reader. In trauma narrative, this is even more evident. For example, if the narrator of the traumatic events is the survivor him or herself, the presentation of those events will be tremendously influenced by his/her affected mind. If this were the case, the story would be a personal retrospection obtained after an exercise of the speaker’s memory, which, as it was depicted in previous sections, is altered after the trauma. Consequently, the way in which the other aspects -i.e., order, duration, frequency, mood- are presented may be also different from other types of narratives.

With respect to the *order*, it can be defined as the relation between the temporal, normal, succession of events in the diegesis and the way they are organised in their narration (Genette 35). The narration may be linear, which means that it follows the same order as the sequence of the events; but, if it is not, if there is discordance between these two orders, Genette talks about *anachrony*. There are different types of anachronies: if something that had occurred before the narrated diegesis is mentioned, it is called *analepsis* or *flashback*; it is called a *prolepsis* when a future event is anticipated; finally, the change from one level of the diegesis to another is called *metalepsis* (Genette 35-79, 234-5). These temporal intrusions may be common in some narratives of trauma due to the difficulty of offering an organised discourse on an event that is innately chaotic and disruptive.

The aspects of *duration* of the narrative and narrative *frequency* can be defined as the *rhythm* at which the events are told (Genette 88) and their repetition during their narration (Genette 113), respectively. Again, these aspects are also crucial in the narrative construction of trauma. On the one hand, the pace of narration of an event that is considered traumatic may increase at high rates because of the anxiety it produces. Another possibility for this phenomenon is the opposite: the narrator may decrease the rhythm of the telling in an attempt to recapitulate and understand it, although it had not taken so much time in the diegetic level. On the other hand, if the survivor/narrator presents the symptom of trauma that Freud called “compulsion to repeat”<sup>8</sup>, the narrative will be full of repetitions.

Lastly, Genette states that the category of *mood* is composed by *distance* and *perspective* (162). The first refers to “the relationship of the narration to what it narrates” (Mambrol, Mood section, par. 1) and there are three main types: narrated speech -the most distant-, indirect style -less distant- and direct style -the least distant (Genette 171-2). The second is referred to as *focus* and it “determines the *extent* to which the narrator allows us

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<sup>8</sup> See Chapter 1, section 1.1., page 9.

to penetrate into the character or the event” (Mambrol, Mood section, par. 2). Genette distinguishes the following types: zero focalization, commonly known as omniscient narrator because they have no limit of knowledge; internal focalization, when the focus is set on a particular character and the narrator’s knowledge is restricted to theirs; and, finally, external focalization, when the focus is set out of the diegetic level and, thus, the narrator does not have access to the characters’ consciousness (189-94).

These parameters are the key points for the two analyses of the novels. As the reader can see, when analysing these criteria established by Genette, trauma narrative may present certain particularities with respect to other types of literature. In Chapter 2, I will apply all the theory explored in this chapter -both from historical and literary perspectives- in an attempt to demonstrate that *A Farewell to Arms* and *The Sun Also Rises* are examples of trauma narrative.

## Chapter 2. Analysis of the novels

In this chapter, the novels *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) and *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) will be studied from a literary perspective in order to demonstrate that both are examples of trauma narrative. They have been arranged in the same chapter, instead of dedicating one chapter for each one, because I attempt to trace a historical timeline of the psychological disorder of trauma through their respective analyses. This is the reason why *A Farewell to Arms* is analysed before *The Sun Also Rises*: despite being published after *The Sun Also Rises*, the former represents the origins of trauma, whereas the latter depicts its aftermath.

It is important to point out that, even though they are analysed in the same chapter because of the aforementioned reasons, these novels are not connected with each other. Therefore, they present multiple differences. These differences condition the organisation of their respective analyses. In *A Farewell to Arms*, there is a contraposition between the body and the mind throughout the whole novel. This contrast, which the narrator tries to dilute by connecting them, creates two levels of meaning. The study of this novel is based on the separation of those two levels. Conversely, *The Sun Also Rises* does not create such a clear contraposition that may allow the reader to organise its analysis around two specific levels. Consequently, the organisation of the analysis of *The Sun Also Rises* is based on how trauma emerged, how it was treated and what the purpose of the narration is.

### 2.1. *A Farewell to Arms* as the origins of trauma

The construction of this novel is strongly shaped by the iceberg principle. Thus, the organisation of its analysis must revolve around the two levels of meaning it entails: what is hidden and what is displayed. In this section, I will explore these two levels, focusing on the literary characteristics that frame this book within trauma narrative, in order to demonstrate it is the depiction of the origins of trauma.

In this book, the construction of a double meaning is built on the division between the *mind* and the *body*. As it was depicted in the previous chapter, when analysing the historical understandings of trauma, the mind and the body have been traditionally separated and the impact of physical injuries upon the mind tended to be overlooked.<sup>9</sup> However, *A Farewell to Arms* “challenges us to reconsider the mind/body dualism that keeps the wounds of the body separate from the wounds of the mind. For Frederic's narration [...] destabilizes such distinctions in an effort to hold together a broken past that remains, in the present, a nexus of uncertainty and contestation” (Dodman 250). Based on this dualism, Hemingway constructs the narrative. The body (the story) is what is seen at first sight. The mind (the meaning), however, can only be understood after a great effort of analysis.

It is important to point out that the voice that tells the story, Frederic Henry, is an *autodiegetic narrator* who relates the story from a subsequent narrating time. In other words, this first-person narrator is recollecting his memories from the past and, as it will be proved here, he presents symptoms of trauma (aftereffects) when reminiscing about them.

### **The body and the story**

In this narrative, the body is presented as the tool that connects the mind with the external world. As a result, everything that happens to the body will have an influence upon the mind. On this premise, scars are quite symbolic: not only do they mean that the body has been literally open to the exterior, but they also constitute a reminder of that damage. Nevertheless, before the appearance of a scar, there must be an aggression and a wound. These, in warlike contexts where violence and dehumanisation are commonplace, occur every day.

One of the most important aggressions in *A Farewell to Arms* is the explosion of a mortar shell in chapter nine, for it causes Henry's hospitalization and the subsequent

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<sup>9</sup> See Chapter 1, section 1.1., pp. 7-8.

development of the events. Before it happened, Henry and other ambulance drivers were discussing how terrible the war was and how important it was to stop it. At that time, Henry believed that they had to keep fighting in order to reach its ending. The others, especially Passini, disagreed: for them there was nothing worse than war (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 47). Near them, shells began to explode and, while they were dining, one fell in their dugout. This is how Henry describes what he felt:

I tried to breathe but my breath would not come and I felt myself rush bodily out of myself and out and out and out and all the time bodily in the wind. I went out swiftly, all of myself, and I knew I was dead and that it had all been a mistake to think you just died. Then I floated, and instead of going on I felt myself slide back. I breathed and I was back. (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 51)

This excerpt is a perfect example of both the *stream-of-consciousness* device that characterises the iceberg principle and the altering of the *duration* that is typical of trauma narrative. It is composed of four sentences. The first represents the moment right after the explosion. It is a long sentence characterised by the omission of any punctuation mark and the repetition of the short phrase “and out”. By doing this, the narrator accelerates the rhythm of the narrative and transmits his anxiety to the reader. The second and the third sentences do present some punctuation marks. Furthermore, each is shorter than the previous one. These two features gradually slow down the pace of the narrative. It is important to point out that, instead of simply stating that he felt anxious, Henry wrote those sentences in a chaotic and nervous way. According to Freud, this occurs because the traumatised person - i.e., the extradiegetic Henry- cannot remember the event as belonging to the past; he, instead, relives it when he has to relate it.<sup>10</sup> In other words, these three first sentences are both a depiction of what he experienced in the diegetic level and a depiction of the nervousness

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<sup>10</sup> See Chapter 1, section 1.1, p.9.

that, as a narrator, he again goes through. Finally, the fourth sentence is a short one. It can be considered the threshold that brings the reader back to the diegesis: we, with Henry, breathe and are back.

Henry was not the only man to be injured in that Austrian attack. In fact, before really understanding what had happened to him, he heard Passini's screams and tried - unsuccessfully- to help him. He describes Passini's injuries with an objectivity more appropriate for a doctor than for a narrator: "His legs were toward me and I saw in the dark and the light that they were both smashed above the knee. One leg was gone and the other was held by tendons and part of the trouser and the stump twitched and jerked as though it were not connected" (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 51-2). By doing this, he avoids showing to the reader how he felt for his comrade. Moreover, since he cannot show what Passini was feeling, he chooses a *direct style* to represent his pain, and quotes the last words Passini uttered (screamed). The distance the narrator creates between himself and the facts -avoiding the expression of his feelings/thoughts- is an important device in the iceberg principle. In addition, a very important lesson can be learned from this: open wounds make one bleed out.

Another event that illustrates this occurred shortly after. Henry was in the ambulance and the man on the stretcher above him had a haemorrhage. He described how his blood fell on him as "a stream" (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 57) and asked the driver for help, who answered that he, alone, would not be able to help that man, and he continued driving. Meanwhile, that man continued bleeding out and the blood that fell on Henry was "warm and sticky" (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 57). After some time, the stream lessened because the man had died: "At the post on the top they took the stretcher out and put another in and we went on" (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 57). The way he described the replacement of the corpse by another injured man reminds the reader of the battlefield: death

can be avoided, but there are other priorities and, when one soldier dies, another one must take his place. Witnessing these deaths -both caused by the haemorrhage of an open wound- and soaking himself in these men's blood will have a great impact on Henry from that moment onwards.

Returning to Henry's own injury, he describes it like this: "My legs felt warm and wet and my shoes were wet and warm inside. I knew that I was hit and leaned over and put my hand on my knee. *My knee wasn't there.* My hand went in and my knee was down on my shin" (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 52, emphasis mine). Apart from describing his open wound and how he was soaked in his own blood, the narrator shows how parts of the body -i.e., parts of the self- can be lost: his knee was not there and, as it will be depicted here, will never be recovered.

In chapter fifteen, a doctor removed the shrapnel from Henry's body and took him to the X-ray machine to check if there was some of it left. When the results came, the doctor and other three colleagues went to see Henry. After the bandage in his knee was removed, he described it as "not too freshly ground hamburger steak" (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 87). Then, the doctors discussed when it would be better to operate on it, and decided to wait for six months. Henry refused to believe this, and the conversation was as follows:

'Do you want to keep your knee, young man?'

'No,' I said.

'What?'

'I want it cut off,' I said, 'so I can wear a hook on it.' (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 88)

Under this *sarcasm* -another device of the iceberg principle- Henry showed his willingness to close his wound immediately, whatever cost and consequence. In fact, his desperate need to close it led him to ask another surgeon for a second opinion. Dr. Valentini operated on him the following morning and, even though the operation was successful, it left a scar on him. This is how he refers to it later on:



Valentini had done a fine job. I had done half the retreat on foot and swum part of the Tagliamento with *his knee*. *It was his knee all right. The other knee was mine*. Doctors did things to you and then it was not your body any more. The head was mine, and the inside of the belly. (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 205, emphasis mine)

In other words, an aggression means the fragmentation of the body. It either kills or leaves a scar but, in any case, the body will never be the same. This is the reason why Henry did not, and does not, acknowledge his right knee as his own anymore.

Apart from the wounds, there are other “damages” in the body represented in this novel: the illnesses. There are two main examples. On the one hand, Rinaldi’s syphilis. Nowadays it is a curable disease, but this novel suggests that, for him, it was terminal: Rinaldi is portrayed as very distressed and, even though Henry, at first, tried to convince himself that it was nothing -“I did not think he had syphilis. It was not a serious disease anyway if you took it in time, they said” (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 206)-, he later admitted that he had his doubts: “‘I was wondering whether Rinaldi had the syphilis.’ [...] ‘Has he the syphilis?’ ‘I don’t know’” (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 265). Here, it is important to bear in mind that syphilis is a sexually transmitted disease. Thus, an echo of the correlation between love and death can be perceived here.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, Henry’s jaundice while he was hospitalised. He continued drinking, despite the nurse’s prohibition, and when he happened to have this condition, the nurse accused him of “self-inflicted jaundice” (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 129). As a result, he lost his convalescent leave and had to return to the front, with the consequent retreat and all the deaths it caused and that he had to witness. Although it is true that he caused his own jaundice with his alcoholism, it is never stated that he did it on purpose. In fact, what is suggested is that he drank to avoid thinking throughout the entire time he had to spend alone, lying in bed. In

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<sup>11</sup> After Catherine’s death, the narrator came to the conclusion that death and love were inseparable. This idea shapes the whole narrative from its very beginning, as it will be explained in the next subsection.

any case, it is reflected how medical professionals accused and blamed their patients for their own illnesses.

The last and most violent aggression against the body is murder. There are two main examples in this novel, and both occurred during the retreat. The first one, when the two sergeants tried to leave Henry and the other men. He ordered them to halt and, when they did not, he shot them. One escaped, but the other fell and Bonello asked Henry to let him “go finish him” (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 182). The second one, when Aymo was shot. He had a terrible, albeit quite brief, death. Henry depicts his agony objectively and directly: he “was crossing the tracks, lurched, tripped and fell face down” (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 190). A bullet had pierced his head from the “low in the back of the neck” to the place “under his right eye” (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 190). Lain in the mud, Aymo breathed his own “blood irregularly” and finally died while Henry was “stopping up the two holes” (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 190). Even though it was not a haemorrhage what killed this man -it was the bullet that crossed his whole head-, Henry tried, instinctively, to close the open wounds. It is important to bear in mind that both Henry and Bonello were ambulance drivers. Therefore, they did not have to kill anyone in that war, but they killed that sergeant who did not even represent a threat for them and even joked about it later. What they had done to the sergeants is the same thing as other Italians did to Aymo shortly after. These passages emphasise that anyone in warlike conditions can become and do things he/she would never have had conceived, just because of fear.

Finally, love has also a great relevance in this subsection, for it is presented as the healing power in which Henry took refuge from all the violence depicted here. Although his relationship with Catherine started as a game (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 29) to distract themselves from the war and its pains -Catherine’s loss of her fiancé and Henry’s trauma-, they actually fell in love with each other. This is how he describes what he felt:

God knows I had not wanted to fall in love with her. I had not wanted to fall in love with any one. But God knows I had and I lay on the bed in the room of the hospital in Milan and all sorts of things went through my head but I felt wonderful. (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 85)

Lying in bed, recently injured by the mortar shell and having witnessed all the atrocities he had seen, he still *felt wonderful* because of her. Catherine had loved and lost in the past, which made her wiser than Henry and his mentor in this issue. She taught him to make a religion of this feeling and gave him something to believe in. This religion ruled their imaginary world, which they had created as an alternative to the miseries of the real, ordinary one. This world, however, had its own wars and violence, which were materialised through pregnancy and childbirth. When she was in labour and certain complications emerged, the doctor had a long conversation with Henry and recommended him to perform a C-section. Henry's great anxiety for Catherine's health is clearly depicted through the construction of that dialogue:

'There are two things. Either a high forceps delivery which can tear and be quite dangerous besides being possibly bad for the child, and a Caesarean.'

'*What is the danger of a Caesarean?*' *What if she should die!*

'It should be no greater than the danger of an ordinary delivery.'

'Would you do it yourself?'

'Yes [...]'

'What do you think?'

'I would advise a Caesarean operation [...]'

'*What are the after effects?*'

'*There are none. There is only the scar.*' (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 284, emphasis mine)<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> This is only an excerpt of a longer dialogue.

The fact that everything that Henry said is formulated in short questions, without affirming anything, emphasises his feeling of uncertainty and nervousness. Furthermore, despite the narrator's use of the direct style, with which he avoids showing his emotions, there is an intrusion when asking for the Caesarean's dangers: "*What if she should die!*". It is my belief that this cry of despair belongs to both the extra-diegetic and the diegetic levels. Certainly, Henry, at that moment, was concerned about Catherine's possible death: the Caesarean implied cutting her belly and opening her body, something that, as it has been depicted earlier, seriously scared Henry. However, that cry is not a question, but an exclamation, as if lamenting what *will* happen. This intrusion, which anticipates the future events, is a prolepsis (a type of anachrony) and is frequent throughout the whole narrative, as it will be depicted in the following subsection.

Henry, nervous and unsure, finally accepted the doctor's recommendation of doing a C-section, although this implied fragmenting her body. This is how he refers to his beloved:

I thought Catherine was dead. She looked dead. Her face was gray, the part of it that I could see. Down below, under the light, the doctor was sewing up the *great long, forcep-spread, thick-edged, wound* [...] It looked like a drawing of the Inquisition. I knew as I watched *I could have watched it all, but I was glad I hadn't. I do not think I could have watched them cut, but I watched the wound closed into a high welted ridge with quick skilful-looking stitches* like a cobbler's, and *was glad*. When the wound was closed I went out into the hall and walked up and down again. (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 287, emphasis mine)

He could not see how they cut her, but he *needed* to watch how they closed her. He needed to make sure she was not bleeding out, like Passini or the man in the ambulance. However, as Trevor Dodman points out, "as the wound gets closed she seems to get swallowed up by it, disappearing from the scene, becoming, in effect, all wound. Frederic no longer sees Catherine anesthetized on the table but only the wound: great, long, forcep-spread, thick-

edged, high-welted, closed” (265). Nevertheless, despite closing the wound, Catherine bled out. There are hardly any descriptions or comments by the narrator about his feelings at that moment. He only says about her death: “It seems she had one hemorrhage after another. They couldn’t stop it. I went into the room and stayed with Catherine until she died. She was unconscious all the time, and it did not take her very long to die [sic]” (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 293). Henry shows no emotion, neither as a narrator describing those events, nor as a character. Apparently, he faced the death of her beloved with a resilient attitude, as if he had expected that result since the very first moment he accepted the caesarean. When he went to see her for the last time, “it wasn’t any good. It was like saying good-by to a statue” (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 293). Then, he left.

Summarising, the violence against the body is clearly depicted in this novel. Aggressions either kill or open the body until it bleeds out. If the haemorrhage is stopped, it will leave a scar, which is a reminder of the fragmentation of the body and the loss of oneself. If someone tries to avoid the pain caused by the wound, either by dating prostitutes like Rinaldi or by drinking and falling in love like Henry, the consequences are even worse.

### **The mind and the meaning**

When Henry was taken to the dressing station after being hit with the mortar shell, the medical captain told him that “the pain [hadn’t] started yet” (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 56). Even though he was referring to his knee, in this subsection I will apply that statement to his mind and to the emotional cost all the violence previously depicted had upon it.

Henry refuged himself in Catherine and her love and made her his religion: “You’re my religion. You’re all I’ve got” (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 104). They were so devoted to one another that they even claimed to be the same person: “We’re the same one” (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 266). This explains why Catherine’s death is remarkably

disruptive for Henry: her death meant the death of a part of him. The war and its violence had destroyed his body, but love and its consequences -i.e., Catherine's pregnancy and death- destroyed him inside. This internal destruction caused a new trauma in him. This trauma is the one that affects the narrative the most, for it dissipated all his possibilities for hope and healing, not only as a character at the end of the novel, but for the rest of his life - including his narration of the story from the very beginning. As a result, the story is deeply affected by disbelief, anxiety and a strange presentation of the events with frequent anachronies.

In the first chapter, for example, he provides a description of what life was like at the front. It is obvious that in a warlike context, this place is going to be full of death. Nevertheless, the narrator's descriptions in the very first pages of the novel are deeply influenced by his past experiences. He depicts the soldiers who were marching carrying their guns like pregnant women: "under their capes the two leather cartridge-boxes on the front of the belts, [...] bulged forward under the capes so that the men, passing on the road, marched as though they were six months gone with child" (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 4). Carrying lethal guns is compared with pregnancy, because that was what killed Catherine. The reader will not understand this parallelism until much later in the story, but it can be considered an anticipation of the denouement.

Another interesting passage that reveals how much the extradiegetic Henry shaped the story itself occurs in chapter 3. He is describing his relationship with the priest, and wonders about the difference between night and day:

I tried to tell about the night and the difference between the night and the day and how the night was better unless the day was very clean and cold and *I could not tell it; as I cannot tell it now*. [...] He had always known what I did not know and what, when I learned it, I was always able to forget. But I did not know that then, *although I learned it later*. (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 13, emphasis mine)

According to the narrator, he *learned* later on but he is not able, at present -i.e., the narrating time-, to put it into words: what he learned is still *unspeakable* for him. The fact that he brings something belonging to his present into the diegesis constitutes a prolepsis (a type of anachrony). Anachronies are frequent in trauma narratives and they will be frequent in the rest of this novel too.

In chapter seven, another important example of prolepsis occurs. Henry is fantasising about how his first night with Catherine “ought to be” and says: “I wish she were here now. I wished I were in Milan with her” (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 36). The absence of Catherine in the extradiegetic Henry’s present is already anticipated here and is confirmed later in chapter thirty-four, when he comes back to the difference between day and night:

I know that the night is not the same as the day: that all things are different, that *the things of the night cannot be explained in the day*, because they do not then exist, and *the night can be a dreadful time for lonely people once their loneliness has started*. But with Catherine there was almost no difference in the night except that it was an even better time. If people bring so much courage to this world the world has to kill them to break them, so of course it kills them. The world breaks every one and afterward many are strong at the broken places. But those that will not break it kills. It kills the very good and the very gentle and the very brave impartially. If you are none of these you can be sure it will kill you too but there will be no special hurry. (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 222, emphasis mine).

Again, he cannot tell the reader what it is that does not exist in the day. However, this time he does reveal what he learned: that “night is a dreadful time for lonely people”, that the “world breaks everyone” and that “those that will not break it kills”. The fact that he can affirm all these statements is a clear anticipation of his beloved’s death.

The conversation Henry has with Count Greffi in the next chapter sheds light on what happens at night:

‘Maybe it is too late. Perhaps I have outlived my religious feeling.’

‘My own comes only at night.’

‘Then too you are in love. Do not forget that is a religious feeling.’ (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 233-4)

The night is the lack of light. It is the coolest moment of the day. It is when nightmares occur and, certainly, a dreadful time for traumatised people. Nonetheless, what *A Farewell to Arms* tells the reader is that (the religion of) love surpasses all those terrible things. Therefore, the fact that Henry lost his beloved means two things. On the one hand, he has to face the harshness of the night all by himself. On the other hand, he has to do it without any religion or belief that may comfort him.

Henry’s life after Catherine’s death is, thus, characterised by a profound disbelief. This disbelief is not only related with love or traditional religions, but also with everything that exists on Earth. He describes the world as the place where humans are brought to die or to be killed:

That was what you did. You died. You did not know what it was about. You never had time to learn. They threw you in and told you the rules and the first time they caught you off base they killed you. Or they killed you gratuitously like Aymo. Or gave you the syphilis like Rinaldi. But they killed you in the end. You could count on that. Stay around and they would kill you. (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 289).

He did not even have faith in language because its words were being used in an abstract and obscene way and he “could not stand to hear” them (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 165). In fact, for him, only “the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates” had dignity (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 165).

Nevertheless, despite having gone “all to pieces” like Catherine (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 284), losing his friends, his beloved, his newborn son and his faith, Henry continues living. He continues trying to understand what happened and continues narrating



his story in spite of all those things that he cannot verbalise yet. He has an attempt to continue, to be strong at a broken place, that must be highlighted, for it demonstrates his willingness to be resilient.

Finally, another important aspect related to Henry's presentation of events must be pointed out. According to Daoshan Ma and Shuo Zhang, Henry's unreliability as a narrator arose from the blending of trauma and alcoholism, two conditions that "have colored his memories [sic]" (83). Ma and Zhang highlight that when Henry "becomes drunk the language does too"<sup>13</sup> (82). It is my belief that not only the language becomes *drunk*, but also the presentation of the facts the narrator offers. Some passages are difficult to understand because of their bizarre construction. Perhaps the most symbolic one is the death of his newborn son. This is how Henry describes his birth:

A doctor came out followed by a nurse. He held something in his two hands that looked like a freshly skinned rabbit and hurried across the corridor with it and in through another door. I went down to the door he had gone into and found them in the room doing things to a newborn child. The doctor held him up for me to see. He held him by the heels and slapped him. 'Is he all right?'

'He's magnificent. He'll weigh five kilos.'

I had no feeling for him. He did not seem to have anything to do with me. I felt no feeling of fatherhood.

'Aren't you proud of your son?' the nurse asked. They were washing him and wrapping him in something. I saw the little dark face and dark hand, but I did not see him move or hear him cry. The doctor was doing something to him again. He looked upset. (Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 286-7).

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<sup>13</sup> Streams of consciousness without punctuation marks, for example. Ma and Zhang exemplify this with a passage in Chapter 3.

The fact that the doctor “hurried across the corridor” with the baby and was “doing things” to him suggests that the child was already in danger. Moreover, the fact that Henry “did not see him move or hear him cry” and “had no feeling of fatherhood” is also quite revealing. Most readers would immediately think that the baby was born dead. However, this belief contrasts with the -supposed- comments of the doctor and the nurse, who referred to him as if he were alive. Shortly after, the baby’s death is confirmed:

‘What’s the matter with the baby?’ I asked.

‘Didn’t you know?’

‘No.’

‘He wasn’t alive.’

‘He was dead?’

‘They couldn’t start him breathing. The cord was caught around his neck or something.’

(Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* 288)

This strange development of the events was unlikely what happened in the diegetic level. Even though the narrator claims that he felt no feeling of fatherhood, it was probably painful for him to lose his son. In fact, losing his wife during the delivery of the baby, being him already dead, must have been even more painful: it means that Catherine died for nothing, that her war -i.e., childbirth- was lost from the very beginning, as the other wars in the ordinary world. Despite the impossibility of judging whether Henry distorts the events on purpose or not, the fact that “he’s probably drinking while he’s telling the story” to avoid the pain it causes does certainly not help him to remember (Ma & Zhang 83).

Recapitulating, the deaths of Catherine and the baby implied the death of a part of Henry’s self. He lost the world of love, his refuge, and now has to live in the cruel, dehumanising, ordinary world. He can no longer hope or have faith in anything and any possibility of recovering from his first trauma had faded with his family. As a result, the story he tells is characterised by prolepses, with which he laments the unavoidable

denouement; a nihilist outlook on life and a strange presentation of the facts caused by the alcohol he drinks to avoid the pain. Nevertheless, he goes on narrating as he continues living: with a resilient attitude.

### **Open wounds and scars**

In the previous subsections, I have depicted how Henry suffered from two traumas. On the one hand, the trauma related to the body, which was originated after the explosion of a mortar shell and his witnessing of several haemorrhages. On the other hand, the emotional trauma after his wife's and son's deaths. Additionally, none of them is presented as *healed*.

It must be pointed out that Henry, as a narrator, puts the focus on certain events framed within a very specific period of time -WWI- and avoids mentioning hardly anything about his life before and after that time. Thus, the reader does not know anything about the narrating instance (place and moment) in which he recollects the story. The fact that he concentrates only on that specific period, whose remembrance arises symptoms of trauma, seems to tell the reader that the whole story is what Freud called "a compulsion to repeat".

Those symptoms of trauma, or aftereffects, are Henry's open wounds. He cannot address the past without making his narrative bleed. Finding a meaning would close the (emotional) wound or, at least, help in the healing process. If these wounds do heal, they will leave a scar and he will never be the same. However, this does not frighten Henry as much as living in a world where everything is cruel and meaningless. As a result, Henry shows a constant and desperate need for finding a meaning, a reason, something that may explain why life entails so much pain. Therefore, *A Farewell to Arms* can be said to represent, not only the origins of Henry's traumas, but also his unsuccessful search for a meaning.

## **2.2. *The Sun Also Rises* as the aftermath of trauma**

In 1926, this novel- the first one written by Hemingway<sup>14</sup>- was published. Set during the same decade, it represents the aimless lifestyle of an American group of expatriates in Europe. It is important to point out that, although this book presents multiple levels of meaning<sup>15</sup>, none of them is opposed to one another as in *A Farewell to Arms*<sup>16</sup>. Therefore, the analysis of this novel, which is focused on its depiction of trauma, will be organised differently with respect to the analysis of the other book previously mentioned.

Before its study, there are three important aspects that must be pointed out. Firstly, the narrator (Jake Barnes) is an autodiegetic one -i.e., he had been a (main) character in the story that he is now relating from a first-person perspective. Secondly, the narrating time is subsequent to the diegesis- i.e., the events had occurred at a time prior to Jake's act of narration. Thirdly, there are no details or comments on the narrating instance.

Furthermore, it must be emphasised that this novel does not depict the origins of the trauma, but its aftermath. Nonetheless, the starting point in this analysis is that Jake's trauma shapes his memories, which are his whole narrative. Because of that decision -i.e., choosing the aftermath of trauma instead of its origins-, the reader can locate the psychological illness within a particular context and understand the treatment it received at those place and time.

Thus, in this section, how *The Sun Also Rises* portrays life after being traumatised will be explored. Since this portrayal will be affected by the narrator's own trauma, it is important to understand his psychological illness and how it was regarded at that time. Therefore, the present section will be divided into three subsections. To begin with, the explanation of the emergence of trauma; then, the description of how it was treated and,

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<sup>14</sup> *The Torrents of Spring*, published earlier in the same year, was only a novella -i.e., a short novel.

<sup>15</sup> For further analysis, it would be interesting to analyse in detail: the system of values the characters create in a society characterised by a profound disbelief; the characters from a gender perspective; the role of bullfighting and its meaning (i.e., a symbol of tradition) in the modern world; religion and its presence in the novel; etc.

<sup>16</sup> *A Farewell to Arms* was constructed around the opposition between the body (the story) and the mind (the meaning). See Chapter 2, section 2.1., pp. 23-38.

finally, the literary analysis of how trauma shaped the reminiscence of the story and the purpose of that act of remembrance.

### **“One of us”: the trauma of a whole generation**

Understanding the origins of trauma is important, for it helps to shed light on the subsequent development and treatment of that psychological disorder. Therefore, in this subsection I will explain *the* trauma (in general) depicted in the novel and how it had emerged, paying special attention to how it unifies the characters' *gang*.

In this book, the narrator hardly provides any information about the characters' past lives.<sup>17</sup> In fact, most of the times, the reader gets that information from the conversations they had and the comments they made. Despite the lack of details about what had happened to them, they are presented as different people who were united by a common bond. This bond does not make gender distinction: women (Brett) can be included, and are included indeed, in the group. However, in order to understand the similarity between them, their explanation shall be separated regarding their gender.

On the one hand, it must be explained what had happened to (most of) the male characters<sup>18</sup>, like Jake Barnes, Mike Campbell and Bill Gorton. Regarding Jake, the fact that he is the (autodiegetic) narrator of the story provides a deeper understanding of his condition. Although at the moment of the narration he avoids referring with specific words to his *problem*, Jake offers information that helps elucidate the issue. The most clarifying passage in that regard occurs in chapter 4, when Jake, as a character, started thinking about his wound. This is what the narrator tells:

[I]t was a rotten way to be wounded and flying on a joke front like the Italian. [...] That was where the liaison colonel came to visit me. [...] I was all bandaged up. But they had told him

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<sup>17</sup> Robert Cohn is an exception to this rule, for the story of his life is presented in detail in the very first chapter. In the following subsections, it will be explained why Jake made this decision.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Cohn will be, for the moment, left apart.

about it. Then he made that wonderful speech: ‘You [...] have given more than your life.’ [...] He never laughed. He was putting himself in my place, I guess. ‘Che mala fortuna! Che mala fortuna!’ I never used to realize it [...] *Probably I never would have had any trouble if I hadn't run into Brett when they shipped me to England. I suppose she only wanted what she couldn't have.* (Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* 27, emphasis mine)

The fact that the liaison colonel stated that he had “given more than [his] life” and that it was the reason why he could not be with Brett leads the reader to the conclusion that his genital area was damaged or amputated.

Regarding Mike Campbell, the reader learns that he fought in the war because of several comments other characters made. For example, when Cohn asked him if he had been in the war, Brett said “He was a very distinguished soldier” (Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* 117). Even though this is a sarcastic comment -he had done several discreditable things as a soldier-, it confirms his participation in that event. With respect to Bill, his active participation in the war -i.e., as a soldier- is doubtful. There are no comments that confirm it. In fact, a remark made by Bill himself in chapter 17 proves the opposite. The comment is contextualised within a conversation between Mike and Bill. They were discussing about how long it took the steers to take in the bulls:

‘It took about an hour.’

‘It was really about a quarter of an hour’ Mike objected.

‘Oh, go to hell,’ Bill said. ‘*You've been in the war. It was two hours and a half for me.*’

(Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* 173, emphasis mine)

Bill establishes a distinction between himself and his friend because of their respective temporal perceptions. According to him, these different perceptions stem from Mike’s participation in the war. As a result, Bill is implicitly suggesting that he did *not* take part in it. Despite this, he was part of the *gang* ever since the very moment he appeared in the novel. Although he was probably not a soldier in the war, he must have been there anyway with

another purpose, for he is presented as someone who understands and, consequently, who is as a great companion for other men who did fight, as Jake and Wilson-Harris<sup>19</sup>.

On the other hand, it is important to mention what had happened to the only woman of the *gang*: Lady Brett Ashley. She was Jake's nurse when he was wounded. Even though her profession could be considered another example of active participation in the war, it is never confirmed in the novel whether she had to face disruptive events whilst working there. In other words, it cannot be asserted that the war was the cause of her trauma. What is confirmed, however, is that she had indeed undergone disruptive experiences that occurred as a result of that war. According to Jake, Brett's "own true love" died "with the dysentery" during the war (Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* 34). Apart from the fact that it is not a noble death, it compelled Brett to search for another partner. She did find another man and married him. Unfortunately, her new husband resulted to be dangerously abusive towards her. According to Mike, he "[a]lways made Brett sleep on the floor" and "when he got really bad, he used to tell her he'd kill her. Always slept with a loaded service revolver. Brett used to take the shells out when he'd gone to sleep" (Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* 176). In a few words, although the war did not traumatise her directly as it did with her male friends, it fostered the conditions that caused her trauma.

Despite the lack of detailed descriptions of the characters' backgrounds, the reader can see how all their traumas emerged as a result of the war. Therefore, they sought comfort in each other's company. Although they would not discuss their problems, emotions or feelings, they knew that the rest, who had suffered similar things, would understand and respect their ways of living. In that regard, they form a *gang* in which not everybody was welcomed -e.g., Robert Cohn was constantly despised because the war had not affected him

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<sup>19</sup>A secondary character introduced at the end of chapter 12. He was also a war veteran who had "not had much fun since the war" (Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* 112). Therefore, he greatly valued the companionship of Jake and Bill during their stay at Burguete.

in a similar way.<sup>20</sup> However, those who were welcomed -in Brett's words, those who were "one of [them]" (Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* 28)- presented a deep bond of camaraderie. Since their society forced them to repress their emotions and concerns, the creation of the *gang* could be understood as a way of enduring trauma and feeling some relief. In the following subsection, I will focus on how this novel portrays the aforementioned repression of trauma and its consequences.

### **Repression of trauma and its consequences**

Although Western societies changed radically after the war, the ideal of manliness remained the same. The common belief was that a man should pride himself on his fighting. Therefore, if he displayed any emotions of fear or pain, he would not be a "real man" and society would reject him. Thus, in order to avoid being despised, most men suppressed their traumas. The repression of trauma must be understood as a process executed by two agents: the society and the individual. In this subsection, it will be analysed how the novel illustrates the aforementioned repression and the consequences it had upon the characters' mental health, paying special attention to Jake, the narrator of the story.

To begin with, it would be interesting to explain the repression exerted by the society. In the novel, there are multiple examples of this phenomenon when Jake's condition is brought up. The most illustrative excerpt in that respect occurs in chapter 12. Bill was talking to Jake and told him,

‘One group claims women support you. Another group claims you're impotent.’

‘I just had an accident.’

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<sup>20</sup> For further analysis, it would be interesting to explore Robert Cohn from the perspective of trauma. Even though he did not experience the cruelty of the war, he did experience antisemitism and many humiliations that may have shaped his personality as well.



‘Never mention that,’ Bill said. ‘*That's the sort of thing that can't be spoken of.* That's what you ought to work up into a mystery. Like Henry's bicycle.’ (Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* 101, emphasis mine)

Despite being good friends and being alone at that moment, Bill still prevented Jake from talking about his injury. It is important to emphasise the modal verb he used: he did not use “should”, for example, because he was not recommending Jake to avoid talking about this issue; he was explaining to him the impossibility (“*can't*”) of its verbalisation. Shortly after, Bill said something that helps to shed light on the reason why it could not be discussed: “I'm fonder of you than anybody on earth. *I couldn't tell you that in New York. It'd mean I was a faggot*” (Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* 101, emphasis mine). Thus, the reader learns what limited men's verbalisation of trauma and emotions: masculinity and its codes.

Then, the second agent of repression -i.e., the individual- must be also explained. Knowing that they could be despised by society if they did not fit into the standards of manhood, men prevented themselves from expressing their concerns. An example of this occurs at the very beginning of the novel. Jake picked up a *poule* (prostitute) in the street to accompany him to dinner. When she touched him, he “put her hand away” (Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* 13) and the *poule* asked him “What's the matter? You sick?”, to what Jake simply answered “Yes” (Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* 13). The importance of euphemisms must be emphasised, for they do not only deviate the subject of conversation, but also belittle it. Although, in this case, it was the woman who used the word “sick”, Jake did not refuse it. In fact, he accepted that general, inexact, description of his condition but did not expand on it. When she insisted on knowing what had happened to him, he only said “I got hurt in the war” (Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* 14) and, again, did not elaborate on it. Both as a character and as a narrator, Jake avoids discussing his impotence and, when the topic cannot be avoided, he refuses to use the precise words.

So far, the reader has seen how society represses trauma up to transforming it into an *unspeakable* phenomenon. As a result, those who are traumatised assume that unspeakability as natural and innate and avoid its verbalisation themselves. Jake's examples of ineffability are quite telling because the reader can contrast them with the information that the narrator (subtly) offers. However, in the cases of Mike and Bill, the reader cannot know what happened to them because the ineffability about their respective stories is extreme: absolutely nobody, not even the narrator, is willing to mention that.

Accepting the repression of feelings and emotions as a feature of manhood leads to insecurities when that repression cannot be avoided any longer. Moreover, the only way of assuaging those insecurities is by reinforcing other masculine attitudes. In *The Sun Also Rises*, there are two main examples of masculine reassurance<sup>21</sup>: the use of humour and the excessive consumption of alcohol.

Firstly, humour is central throughout the whole novel. The most illustrative example of its use to reinforce masculinity<sup>22</sup> occurs after Bill's comment on the ineffability of trauma. This is what the narrator says: "He had been going splendidly, but he stopped. I was afraid he thought he had hurt me with that crack about being impotent. I wanted to start him again. "It wasn't a bicycle,' I said. 'He was riding horseback.'" (Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* 101). Just before that moment, the conversation was serious because Jake's impotence had been brought up. Since he needed to show distance and indifference towards the topic, he

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<sup>21</sup> For further analysis, exploring from a gender perspective Jake's admiration for bullfighting and bullfighters would be interesting, since it could be also understood as another example of masculinity. Bulls are hazardous animals per se, and those bred for bullfighting are spurred to increase their violence and make them more threatening. Therefore, when bullfighters enter the ring, they -consciously- risk their lives to defy death. This converts them into a symbol of courage, strength, honour and hence masculinity.

<sup>22</sup> For further analysis, it would be interesting to consider the different manifestations of humour in relation with masculinity. As the novel depicts, not every use of humour ends successfully. For example, at the end of chapter 13, Mike tried to tease Cohn for being in love with Brett (Mike's future wife) as if to demonstrate his indifference. However, he did not make an appropriate use of this tool and the other characters despised the way he talked to Robert.

turned it into a jest. That said, it should be also pointed out that humour is one of the devices of the iceberg principle.<sup>23</sup>

Secondly, alcohol and the appreciation of it are presented as tenets of the masculine dogma. The Count Mippipopolous, for example, is presented as an “icon of virility” (Bond 64) because he could “enjoy everything” -i.e., drinking, eating...- “so well” (Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* 53). In the Count’s words, he knew *the values* (Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* 53). However, although there are a few passages in which Jake did appreciate alcohol, most of the time he and the rest of the characters drank, not for enjoyment, but with the purpose of getting *tight* (drunk). Therefore, it is indispensable to understand their consumption as having a dual intention. On the one hand, to assuage their insecurities and reinforce their masculinity. On the other hand, to drown their trauma in their drunkenness and to self-destruct themselves -e.g., “Get tight. Get over your damn depression” (Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* 194).

The novel depicts how this excessive drinking affects the characters’ memory -i.e., how it destroys them and their minds. The most telling example in that regard occurs in chapter 8, when Jake and Bill met for the first time in the story. Jake asked him about the places he had visited, and Bill told him,

‘Where did you go?’

‘*Don't remember* [...]’

‘Do anything else?’

‘*Not so sure*. Possible.’

‘Go on. Tell me about it.’

‘*Can't remember*. Tell you anything I could remember.’

‘Go on. *Take that drink and remember*.’

‘*Might remember a little*,’ (Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* 62, emphasis mine)

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<sup>23</sup> See Chapter 1, section 1.3., p. 18.

Evidently, everything he would “remember” after drinking lacks any reliability. This alcoholic amnesia also occurred to (the diegetic) Jake. For example, in chapter 14, Jake, whilst being drunk, started reading a book that he had already read before. However, in his inebriated state, everything “seemed quite new” to him (Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* 128). Most importantly, there are some examples of the aforementioned amnesia occurring to Jake as a narrator. For example, in chapter 7, when he cannot remember the lyrics of the song that was being chanted while dancing with Brett and he transcribes it with “.....” (Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* 56); or in chapter 10, when the narrator cannot remember Cohn’s remark about the cathedral (Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* 79).

In a few words, the novel depicts how the repression of trauma and its consequent ineffability is a result of the material conditions -i.e., time, place, etc.- in which the characters live. This repression is exerted both by society and by themselves. Avoiding the topic, belittling it with humour and consuming excessive alcohol are three examples of the self-repression of trauma. Although all had an impact on their mental health, alcohol was even more destructive, for it also affected their memory. Consequently, Jake’s remembrance of the events may be unreliable. In the following subsection, a literary analysis of the narrative construction of the novel will be presented, paying special attention to its reliability and to the purpose of its creation.

### **The diegesis and its purpose: some glimpses of light**

Emphasising, once again, Jake’s narrating time is indispensable, for it conditions the whole story. There is a lapse of time between the events (prior) and their narration (posterior). Therefore, the presentation of said events is not the portrayal of what had happened, but the portrayal of the recalling of them. In the previous subsections, it was explained that Jake’s mind was affected by trauma and alcohol and that those two conditions constrained him (through ineffability and amnesia) both as a character and as a narrator. In the present

subsection, the narrative construction of the novel, its purpose and reliability will be explored.

Since his mind was unreliable because of the damages that trauma and alcoholism had caused, the extradiegetic Jake based the telling on his empirical experiences. As Adrian Bond remarks, “[t]he body becomes integral to the truth of writing, a corroborating witness to the author's, or character's, experience. [...] [The body] is the primary referent for knowledge” (57). Consequently, since the narration is -or attempts to be- determined by the aforementioned empirical experiences, its *order* is entirely chronological -i.e., linear. The few examples of digression that occur in this novel are found after Cohn had punched Jake in his head (Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* 165)<sup>24</sup>, as if to emphasise the dependence of the narration on corporality and its welfare.

In connection with bodily experiences, the aspect of *duration* must be emphasised. In general terms, the directness of Jake's narration<sup>25</sup> creates a rapid rhythm. This rhythm, however, is steady in its celerity: normally, there are no abrupt changes to it. Exceptions to this constant pace occur when the body does *not* experience the event and, therefore, a need for skipping its non-occurrence emerges. The most significant example of this takes place in chapter 7, when Jake was lying in bed and Brett appeared. Jake was “having a bad time” and she “sat on the bed” and “stroked [his] head” (Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* 48). He asked her what she had said to the Count, to which Brett replied ““Sent him for champagne. He loves to go for champagne.””. Right after that comment, the narrator says, “Then later” and quotes Brett's question. The comment the extradiegetic Jake makes before Brett's

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<sup>24</sup> There are several *prolepses* -i.e., anticipation of the events- in chapter 17. For example, Girones's funeral and the arrival of his family. However, the most interesting prolepsis depicts how the bull's ear was cut and given to Romero, “who, in turn, gave it to Brett, who wrapped it in a handkerchief [...] and left both ear and handkerchief [...] shoved far back in the drawer of the bed-table that stood beside her bed in the Hotel Montoya, in Pamplona” (Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* 172). This not only anticipates the events of chapter 18, but also the characters' departure from Pamplona.

<sup>25</sup> I.e., the avoidance of superfluous details and the selection of a direct speech most of the times.

question suggests that some time had passed. However, he gives no information about what had happened during that time. The fact that they are in bed and that some time had passed but no details are given suggests that there was an attempt of sexual intercourse (Bond 70-1). Nonetheless, due to Jake's impotence, the reader knows that coitus could not have occurred, that his body *could not* culminate that act successfully. Since the narration is based on corporal experiences, the extradiegetic Jake omits what did *not* happen to his body. This omission is an example of the alteration of the narrative's *duration*: it increases the rhythm to an extremely rapid pace that causes its omission -i.e., ellipsis.

With respect to the *mood*, the aspects of *distance* and *focus* must be explained. Firstly, regarding *distance*, it must be said that, more often than not, the extradiegetic Jake chooses the *reported speech*<sup>26</sup> to present the characters' conversations. This speech is, according to Genette, "the most 'mimetic' form" (172) and it allows to say more in a less mediated way (163). Therefore, by opting for this kind of speech, he establishes less distance between himself and the narrative. Secondly, regarding the focus, it is important to point out that, in this book, it is not static. As William C. Vivian said, "[t]his novel runs the gamut of Genette's scheme of narrative focus" (20) -i.e., internal, external<sup>27</sup> and zero focalization. In other words, there are examples of these three types of focalization<sup>28</sup>. The fact that the narrator maintains a close distance with his story and that he does not (or cannot) stick to a

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<sup>26</sup> Evidently, there will be exceptions to this selection: the whole narrative is *not* a mere transcription of the characters' conversations.

<sup>27</sup> It should not be forgotten that this kind of focalization -i.e., when the "the hero performs in front of us without our being allowed to know his thoughts and feelings" (Genette 190)- fits Hemingway's principle of omission.

<sup>28</sup> In chapter 3, there are examples of these three different types of focalization. From its beginning until the arrival of Brett and her friends, Jake uses an external focalization -i.e., the reader has access neither to the narrator's thoughts nor to the characters'. When these people arrived, Jake changes to an internal focalization and reveals how he felt: "I was very angry" (Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* 17). Finally, when Robert met Brett, he changes to a zero focalization -i.e., omniscience. The extradiegetic Jake, who had already experienced all the events that are going to be portrayed in the novel, acknowledges that these two characters will have an affair. Therefore, his consciousness as a narrator imbues the description of that moment with a profound anger and mockery: "He looked a great deal as his compatriot must have looked when he saw the promised land. Cohn, of course, was much younger. But he had that look of eager, deserving expectation" (Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* 18-9)

single type of focalization leads the reader to reflect on his relationship with the diegesis and the purpose of its narration.

Regarding his relationship with the story, it must be pointed out that Jake wanted it to be honest. The main examples of the narrator's honesty occur in chapters 10 and 14, when talking about Robert Cohn. In chapter 10, Jake received a telegram from Brett and Mike and, although he knew Cohn would be interested in reading it, he "put it in [his] pocket" and told him that they "[sent] their regards to [him]" (Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* 86). This is what the narrator has to say about what he did: "Why I felt that impulse to devil him I do not know. Of course I do know. *I was blind, unforgivingly jealous of what had happened to him*" (Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* 87, emphasis mine). What he says in chapter 14, after Mike's confrontation with Cohn, is even more telling in that respect: "I wished Mike would not behave so terribly to Cohn, though. [...] I liked to see him hurt Cohn. *I wished he would not do it, though, because afterward it made me disgusted at myself*" (Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* 129, emphasis mine). The origins of these feelings of anger and resentment stemmed from Jake's impossibility of having a romantic and sexual relationship with Brett, the woman he loved. At the beginning of the novel, Jake (as a character) was so profoundly in love with her that he even proposed Brett to have a romantic relationship in which he would allow her to have sex with other men: "'Couldn't we live together, Brett? Couldn't we just live together?' 'I don't think so. I'd just *tromper* you with everybody. You couldn't stand it.' 'I stand it now.'" (Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* 48). She declined every suggestion from Jake. However, every time he seemed to realise that they would never be together and that it was better for him to leave her, she manipulated him in order to make him remain by her side: "'We'd better keep away from each other' 'But, darling, I have to see you, It isn't all that you know'" (Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* 23). The fact that Jake had to remain by her side whilst being constantly refused was a permanent reminder of his

impotence and, therefore, of his trauma. In other words, the events of this diegesis were painful to Jake at the moment of experiencing them -i.e., as a character- because they were a constant reminder of his (physical and mental) wound. Moreover, these feelings of pain and bitterness did not only take place at the diegetic level: they still emerge at the extradiegetic level and imbue the narration of the story<sup>29</sup>, making it more subjective. However, the narrator is aware that he should not feel that way and, consequently, is critical towards himself.

With respect to the purpose of the diegesis, it must be said that, if the narrative were purposeless, Jake would have probably avoided the moral remarks about his discreditable behaviour. The fact that he does *not* avoid them provides the story with a purpose, an intention. I firmly agree with William C. Vivian when he declared that the purpose of Jake's narration is to come to terms with the events he relates: "He has understood them intellectually but is not yet emotionally fit to deal with this story. There are things he cannot bring himself to discussing *directly* because the emotional wounds are still raw and there is a great deal of misplaced anger" (19, original emphasis). Consequently, this purpose of *coming to terms* with the events must be understood as a process in progress (Vivian 77, emphasis mine).

Exploring the origins of that process is important to thoroughly understand the analysis. These origins occur in chapter 17 when Jake had an argument with Cohn, who punched him in the head. Coming back to his hotel, this was what Jake noticed:

Walking across the square to the hotel *everything looked new and changed. I had never seen the trees before. I had never seen the flagpoles before, nor the front of the theatre. It was all*

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<sup>29</sup> The most illustrative example of how Jake's feelings imbue the narrative occur in the first chapters of the novel. Jake tells the reader that he used to listen to Cohn's problems and to advise him. In other words, that they used to be good friends. The way he does narrate those facts, however, is very disconcerting. His portrayal of Cohn is ironical, critical and, in short, quite harsh on him. Therefore, their friendship seems impossible considering Jake's thoughts about Cohn. Later on in the novel, the reader will learn that their friendship was totally plausible, but it reached its ending after Robert's affair with Brett.



*different*. I felt as I felt once coming home from an out-of-town football game. I was carrying a suitcase with my football things in it, and I walked up the street from the station in the town I had lived in all my life and it was all new. They were raking the lawns and burning leaves in the road, and I stopped for a long time and watched. It was all strange. Then I went on, and my feet seemed to be a long way off, and everything seemed to come from a long way off, and I could hear my feet walking a great distance away. *I had been kicked in the head early in the game*. It was like that crossing the square. It was like that going up the stairs in the hotel. Going up the stairs took a long time, and I had the feeling that I was carrying my suitcase. There was a light in the room. Bill came out and met me in the hall. (Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* 167, emphasis mine)<sup>30</sup>

The narrator describes what he perceived as “new” and “changed”. Nevertheless, the reader is aware that Jake had already gone to the hotel several times, in other words, that the external world should not be new to him. In consequence, the novelty and the change that Jake is describing must be *internal*. This internal change is emphasised at the end of the *fiesta* when he looked at himself in the mirror and did not recognise himself: “I looked strange to myself in the glass” (Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* 194-5). This change, however, *cannot* be considered an epiphany. If it were an epiphany, Jake would not be still immersed in a *process* of coming to terms with the events. In fact, if it were so, he would have come to terms with said events immediately after experiencing that revelation. Once again, quoting William C. Vivian, this may not be an epiphany, but it is certainly “a lesson in living” (77) that determined Jake’s actions as a character and, later, as a narrator.

Finally, I would like to conclude this analysis by mentioning, again, the figure of Count Mippipopolous. His figure serves both as a contrast with and as an example for Jake. The Count was admitted into the *clique* -“He’s quite one of us” (Hemingway, *The Sun Also*

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<sup>30</sup> It should not be forgotten that this passage could also be considered an example of the importance of corporality in this novel. The fact that he had already experienced that feeling of newness also after being hit in his head establishes an interesting pattern of physical violence and moral awakening.

*Rises* 28)- because he had something in common with the rest: his active participation in the war. However, he *could* speak openly about what had happened to him, not only in WWI, but also in any other warlike event in which he had participated:

‘I have been in seven wars and four revolutions,’ the count said.

‘Soldiering?’ Brett asked.

‘Sometimes, my dear. And I have got arrow wounds. Have you ever seen arrow wounds?’

‘Let's have a look at them.’

The count stood up, unbuttoned his vest, and opened his shirt. He pulled up the undershirt onto his chest and stood, his chest black, and big stomach muscles bulging under the light.

‘You see them?’

Below the line where his ribs stopped were two raised white welts. ‘See on the back where they come out.’ Above the small of the back were the same two scars, raised as thick as a finger. (Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* 53)

His injuries are presented as purely physical. Contrary to Jake, Mippipopolous did not let these wounds affect his psyche or, if he had ever allowed those wounds to affect him psychologically, he had managed to overcome them. In a few words, his wounds had healed, which allowed him to “enjoy everything so well” (Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* 53).<sup>31</sup> The fact that this character is presented in the narrative is a source of hope for Jake and for the reader: it means that healing is possible.

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<sup>31</sup> See Chapter 2, subsection 2.2, p. 46: because of this, he is also a symbol of masculinity.

## Conclusion

In this dissertation there were two main objectives. On the one hand, to demonstrate that Hemingway's literature (both in terms of contents and style) was a product of his historical time. On the other hand, to prove that *A Farewell to Arms* and *The Sun Also Rises* were trauma narratives.

In order to achieve the first objective, a historical perspective was applied. With it, I have presented how trauma and mental health were treated at different periods. Focusing on the decade of the 1920s, it should be noted that America (and Western societies, in general) had numerous prejudices about trauma and mental health deeply rooted in gender stereotypes. Even after one of the most horrific wars in history, men were still prevented from displaying any sign of pain or emotion. If someone showed any symptoms of *shell-shock* -as trauma was referred to those days-, that person would be despised, ridiculed and excluded. Being under that threat made it difficult for those people to turn their traumas into a normal and healthy speech.

For this reason, I do not agree with the idea of trauma being innately *unspeakable*. Throughout these pages, I have tried to prove how societies are the ones that cause mental disorders, either by using explicit violence, like wars, or by the use of subtle violence, as the imposition of gender norms, discrimination, exclusion... Moreover, it has also been demonstrated how, after causing the aforementioned disorders, societies are also the ones to silence them. In other words, I have tried to prove that trauma is not ineffable: society turns it into an ineffable phenomenon.

It cannot be firmly asserted that this was *the* reason why Hemingway wrote the way he did: for doing this, it would be necessary a tangible proof of Hemingway admitting it. Nevertheless, it seems to be a correlation between the imposed ineffability that society put

in men and the decision of a male author to write as fewer words as possible, avoiding thus, among other things, to show his feelings. To that extent, it can be affirmed that the first objective in this dissertation was achieved.

In an attempt to fulfil the second objective (i.e., demonstrating that *A Farewell to Arms* and *The Sun Also Rises* are trauma narratives) a literary perspective has been employed. Even though they were grouped in the same chapter in an attempt to create a historical timeline of the traumatic process, their respective analyses had to be organised in different ways due to the fact that they are unconnected.

In *A Farewell to Arms*, the autodiegetic narrator, Frederic Henry, presented severe symptoms of trauma. These symptoms emerged because Henry was traumatised by his war experiences and his very act of narration constituted the remembrance of the painful, disruptive events that had caused his mental illness. As a consequence, the construction of the whole narrative was affected by this and multiple characteristics of trauma narrative could be found in terms of form. In terms of contents, it was demonstrated that the novel depicts the issue of trauma. As a matter of fact, different traumas were found in this analysis. One of the conclusions reached was that Henry remembered those events in an attempt to find the meaning under the pain they had caused. Finding that meaning would be for him a source of hope and would help him cure from his mental illness. However, at the very end of the story he could not find it and, consequently, could not understand why they had happened. Although the story is only told once, Henry's unsuccessful search for a meaning reminded me of Freud's "compulsion to repeat" in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and I consider that Henry is a victim of that compulsion. Therefore, *A Farewell to Arms* was shown as indeed an example of trauma narrative.

In *The Sun Also Rises*, the narrator, Jake Barnes, was also an autodiegetic one. His story also constituted an act of remembrance. However, in this case, the act of remembering

dealt with the period afterwards the origins of his trauma. For this reason, i.e., he did not have to face the same events that caused his mental illness, he presented less symptoms of trauma in comparison with *A Farewell to Arms*. Nevertheless, this aftermath period was affected, even shaped, by the traumatic event he had gone through in WWI. Therefore, when something that was a result of said event -e.g., his impossibility of having a successful relationship with Brett- occurred, it did arise some symptoms of this disorder. In this case, the reason why Jake commenced the narration was that, at the end of the diegesis, he had had a sort of awakening: he started to see things differently and realised that he should come to terms with the events. As a result, his narration is considered to be a process of coming to terms with the events that had once caused pain to him. From my perspective, the purpose of the narration is one of the most important things in the analysis: it reveals that the whole novel deals with the issue of trauma (with the possibility of overcoming it, specifically). Again, although to a lesser extent than *A Farewell to Arms* due to the reasons above, *The Sun Also Rises* also presented characteristics of trauma narrative in terms of form. As a result, this novel can be considered another example of trauma narrative.

So far, the objectives of this dissertation can be said to be fulfilled. Nevertheless, I would consider all these conclusions useless if the lessons they may afford us nowadays were not exposed. On that account, I will briefly depict how America treats mental health these days -i.e., exactly one hundred years after the decade that was studied in this TFG.

The decade of the 2020s has just begun. Thus, depicting the consequences that the events occurring right now will have in the future is almost impossible. What can be firmly affirmed, however, is that the Covid-19 pandemic has had and will have (for the next few years, at least) a great influence in our lives and mental health. Certainly, living in the context of a pandemic is a stressful factor for everyone. Moreover, it must be stressed that some people who contracted the illness and suffered its acute effects presented, after physically

recovering, symptoms of psychological illnesses. According to Charlotte Huff, experiences with hospital care and intensive care treatments may be the reason why some mental illnesses, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, arise (par. 2).

As it can be seen, even though there has not been a world war recently as it occurred in the decade of the 1920s, we are, again, in a historical moment in which mental health is at stake. In addition, quoting Maddy Reinert et al., this health crisis, unlike other disasters in the history of the United States, does not affect specific regions or populations, but everyone, hence creating a “nationwide mental health crisis” (34). In fact, I would add to this that the whole world, not only the USA, is suffering from this crisis.

Because of this, it is more important than ever to dispel any prejudice against psychological disorders and take care of people’s mental health. In order to do that, I would encourage professionals from different fields to explore the issue of mental health from their respective approaches. This would include critics in literary theory. Certainly, analysing literature helps to understand human nature in a deeper way and, thus, to be more comprehensive and empathetic with the rest of our human fellows. Hemingway’s work and life are an example of what may happen when this is not done: alcoholism, self-destruction and suicide.

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