"You are all a lost generation" : The Wandering Soldier in the Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway

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“You are all a lost generation:”
The Wandering Soldier in the Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway

by

Stephen Denn

A Master’s Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
Montclair State University
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
Master of Arts
January 2016

College of Humanities and Social Science
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American involvement in World War I, although for only one year, wreaked havoc upon millions of young men, many never overcoming the horror and suffering. Although the men returned to America externally fit and physically intact, internally the war still raged. Drawn into a nightmarish world thousands of miles from home, the American World War I veteran endured the carnage, chivalrously defeating the evil attempting to permeate the world. Exposed to sophisticated weaponry, as well as incompetent leaders, these young men from American farms, cities and suburbs persevered and sailed home, welcomed and greeted as heroes by their homeland.

Upon return to their childhood homes and communities, the American veteran encountered family and friends, incognizant and ignorant of their recent harrowing experiences. Parents expected their sons to resume their lives, just as they were before the war. Unwilling to acknowledge or accept the alteration of the men’s personality and attitudes, parents recoiled to a steadfast denial. Their sons were suffering from “shell shock,” or what is referred to today, as post traumatic stress disorder. Among these disillusioned former soldier’s was nineteen-year-old Ernest Hemingway, who at the time, was reeling in this aforementioned environment, a victim languishing in the stagnant midwestern United States.

Not only were the family members and communities unable to comprehend the apathetic behavior of the tortured veterans, the United States government was equally
unprepared. Soldier’s suffering from PTSD or shell shock, received inadequate care for this debilitating mental illness, often the recipients of electroshock therapy, deemed a possible cure. Eventually, the soldiers, for various reasons that will be discussed in this thesis, forfeited meaning and reason to live productively, relinquishing their souls, desiring a life without responsibility.

Ernest Hemingway wrote of this despondent lot. Hemingway, severely wounded while serving as an ambulance driver in Italy, returned home to Oak Park III, physically impaired and psychologically wounded. Settling down as a writer in Paris, France among the expatriates seeking refuge in the salons and cafes, Hemingway penned numerous tales depicting the plight of the shell shocked World War I veteran. Hemingway became the voice of this generation, ultimately coined as “lost,” by writer Gertrude Stein. The question remains if Hemingway wrote these stories as therapy to quell his own case of shell shock. Close analysis of his World War I novel *A Farewell to Arms* as well as the short stores cited in this thesis attempt to answer this question.

As one of the most discussed American authors of all time, numerous scholarly articles and biographies, as well as Hemingway’s own words, attest to the possibility he wrote his wandering soldier tales in order for the apathetic American citizenry to fully understand the inner conflict the veteran endured. Although a few scholars dispute this claim, the majority believe Hemingway was writing of his own war experience. For the purpose of this thesis and the belief of its writer, Hemingway was the tortured World War I veteran, misunderstood by family, and forever unable to forget the war.
"YOU ARE ALL A LOST GENERATION":
THE WANDERING SOLDIER
IN THE
SHORT STORIES
OF ERNEST HEMINGWAY

A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of Master of Arts in English

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2016
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Chapter I:

Introduction

Although the United States of America was an active participant in World War I for less than one year, 1917-1918, millions of young men returned home, physically intact, yet mentally unstable, reeling from this nightmarish world thrust upon them. Drawn into a skirmish many did not understand, yet feeling the pang of patriotism, the American soldier endured the war’s hardships and valiantly fought along side the allied forces, in the burrowing trenches, swathing through European land. In a harrowing letter to his mother, United States Marine Sergeant Karl Spencer wrote, “were we disgusted, we have been in the trenches nearly four weeks, no leaves, no liberty, no rest, they must think the marines are supermen or maybe mechanical devices for fighting” (Spencer 123). Relating an impending shell explosion, the Marine added, “you hear a whizz and immediately bang, a trench mortar affair, calibre 88 cm...is filled with shrapnel, and its concussion is terrific. Damnit, I certainly hate these things” (126). Finally, Spencer shares this experience after a long battle, “the odor of a dead German is stifling” (127). Sergeant Karl Spencer, along with thousands of American veterans of “the Great War,” unknowingly faced a future of uncertainty, misery and distress. This fated coterie’s disorientation was soon to be captured by a wounded veteran of the “Great War” himself, American writer Ernest Hemingway. “You are all a lost generation:” The
**Wandering Soldier in the Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway** will be the focus of this study, with close analysis and exploration into Hemingway's own shell shock as well as his unstable protagonists' inability to cope within a detached America.

Overcoming dreadful conditions synonymous with falling shells, trench warfare, poisonous gasses and flaying bullets, the American soldier persevered and helped win the war, ending 4 years of annihilation and continual bereavement, "at eleven o'clock on the eleventh month of 1918, the war ends as Germany and Allies sign an Armistice" (Howard 135).

With more than "4 million survivors" of the war descending on America at a furious pace, some of the returning "veterans found their jobs filled by others or their farms lost to creditors" (18). Increasing furor erupted over the "fact that civilian war workers had prospered in safety, their pay increasing by an average 200-300 percent, while soldier's and sailors barely subsisted on military pay" (18). In addition, the America the men departed, was not the America they retuned to, "the soldier's and sailor's returned to a land of bootleggers, gangsters, 'speakeasies,' and bathtub gin, to women smoking cigarettes...short skirted young women danced the shimmy" (Farwell 290-291). Overly blatant was the fact that "more than any other event in American history, the Great War marked the end of one era and the beginning of a new age. It was among history's clearest dividing lines" (290).

Lost among the soldier's homecoming, and the eventual disillusionment, was the alteration of the men themselves, from symbols of invigorating you to despondent, unspiritual victims enduring the anguish of war. Besides feeling alienated and isolated by a society and government they felt exploited them:
the young men returning from the war had themselves changed....most had seen more of the world than had their elders and had been exposed to beliefs and customs strange to them and to those they left behind. Many had witnessed close and first hand horrors, fears and excitements of an exceptionally brutal conflict. (291)

The barbaric life in the trenches, surrounded by persistent death, and the habitual shelling, all effected the bravest and most stoic of men, “the tension of trench warfare—the terror of mutilation and death, the uncanny sights and smells—could completely unhinge an unquestionably sturdy soldier” (Baggett 212). As time went on, many Veterans of the First World War, “suffered from nightmares, loss of sleep, panic attacks or other infirmaries which their contemporaries called neurasthenia” (212). Also called “shell shock,” a term invented by doctor Charles S. Myers, shell shock could take the “form of paralysis, contorted positions or irregularities in gait or facial expression” (212). Major William E. Boyce, the surgeon of the U.S. Army’s 30th Infantry said of the shocked men, “some of them cursed and raved and had to be tied to their litters; some shook violently” (Farwell 180). Unable to conform to American society’s moral and ethical codes, the Veterans became America’s lost soldiers.

Serious discourse on ‘shell shock’ by the United States Military only began during the American Civil War (1861-1865). Prior to this, Austrian physician Josef Leopold in 1761, coined the term “nostalgia,” to describe a soldier’s mental state after experiencing wartime trauma. These soldier’s “reported missing home, feeling sad, sleep problems, and anxiety” (Friedman, ptsd.va.gov.). From Leopold’s term “nostalgia” evolved “soldier’s heart” or “irritable heart” during the American Civil War. Dr. Jacob Mendez Da Costa
studied Civil War soldier's and discovered the battle fatigued possessed "cardiac symptoms and described it as overstimulation of the heart's nervous system" (Friedman). The soldier's complained of a rapid pulse, anxiety and trouble breathing, especially after strenuous exposure to fighting and death. During the Civil War, "5,213 cases were reported during the first year or 2.34 per 1,000, this incidence rose to 3.3 per 1,000 during the second year of the war" (Chamberlain 360). The term "neurasthenia, used quite often during World War I, was initially catalogued in the 1850's, defining the "sometime mental derangement of railroad wreck survivors" (Groom 113).

Greater study of shell shock occurred during and after World War I, acquiring multiple names, from neurasthenia to male hysteria to war neurosis, eventually culminating in the term "Shell Shock," so named as a reaction to the explosion of artillery shells. Shell shock was "first thought to be the result of hidden damage to the brain caused by the impact of the big guns. Thinking changed when more soldier's who had not been near explosions had similar symptoms" (Friedman). In World War II, the term "shell shock" was replaced by "Combat Stress Reaction," also known as "battle fatigue." During the Vietnam War, PTSD replaced all previous terms and is still used today. PTSD, or post-traumatic stress syndrome, is defined as "a psychiatric condition that can occur in anyone who has experienced a life-threatening or violent event" (LeDoux v). Greater research has proven that "individuals with PTSD have memories of the event that they relive again and again (i.e., flashbacks, nightmares...or images of the events of war" (v). Doctor's T.M. Keane and D.H. Barlow "proposed a triple vulnerability model of PTSD etiology based on theoretical descriptions of anxiety
The phrase "shell shock" initially appeared in medical literature in an article by Dr. Charles S. Myers, a Cambridge University psychologist, published in the prestigious journal *The Lancet* (Persico 155). The precise condition was actually related "by the third month of the war in *The British Medical Journal* by Dr. Albert Wilson, but was never named" (155). Shell shock presented military physicians with a serious dilemma. The injury existed intrinsically, unseen, buried deep in a victim's brain. Physical injuries, though varying in nature, were obvious and immediate treatment was available. With no outward signs of injury, doctors remained perplexed by this disorder and any diagnosis was difficult to ascertain. Enhancing the situation even more was the inability to "distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate cases. This ambiguity led to accusations of malingering among soldiers" (Chamberlain 360).

The brutality of World War I procured the greatest in-depth study of soldier's suffering mental breakdowns, as "one of the main reasons for this epidemic was the traumatic environment of the Great War. Soldier's of this horrific trench warfare experienced prolonged exposure to constant threats against their own life, while also witnessing the mutilation and deaths of friends and comrades" (Chamberlain 360). Subjected to "continuous confrontation with death...the shock of surprise and an unresolvable conflict between fear and duty" (Higonnet 95), men, fatigued beyond human endurance, succumbed to the strain.
The traits and characteristics of shell shock varied from soldier to soldier and “could take on many forms: sometimes the men’s motor system just gave way, the legs or the arms would not work anymore” (Groom 113). Other men “began to act like hysterical women. They screamed and wept uncontrollably. They froze and could not move. They became mute and unresponsive. They lost their memory and the capacity to feel” (Chamberlain 360). Incoherent men wandered hospitals and aid stations ignorant of their surroundings, lacking cognizance of their environment, the slightest noise sending them awry. Battle weary soldiers “trembled and slunk away in apparent fear...while others simply stood speechless, oblivious to all (Farwell 180).

Parallel with the barbarity of World War I was the controversial, inhumane and deplorable treatment received by the soldiers suffering from shell shock. Savage and primitive tales from all sides involved in the war, serve as proof of this severity amidst the uncivilized rituals passed off as cures. If only a soldier was cured by a picture of Charlie Chaplin? Dr. Lewis Coleman, with the United States Army, recalled “that an autographed photo of Chaplin did wonders for the men in his care....he may say D’ you know Charlie?’ and then begins the first ray of hope that the boy’s mind can be saved” (Strachan 223).

Unfortunately, the United States medical profession lacked the skills, compassion and empathy to cure their mentally ill. The label of “shell shock” upon a soldier defined the soldier as weak. Soldiers, through the history of war, were expected to present a semblance of strength, bravery and courage. Trained to endure the worst imaginable scenarios, the American soldiers were supposed to display only heroism, not frailty, in their battle field encounters. During World War I, “physicians of the time had begun to
stigmatize victims of shell shock as weaker men” (Chamberlain 361). Deemed unmasculine, “some even went so far as to suggest that these malingers deserved to be shot for cowardice” (361). Initially viewed by all military as a “failure of masculinity—a failure of hardness, courage or willpower—and a manifestation of latent effeminacy or immaturity” (Higonnet 93), shell shock victims were met with hostility and punished rather than supported.

The United States of America’s early treatments for shell shock victims of World War I, varied from the insane to the bestial. Stories abound of attempted panacea’s involving great viciousness. One commander of troops, “believed that at the first symptoms of emotional collapse, a soldier should be tied to the barbed wire before the front trench for thirty seconds” (Persico 155). Dr. Lewis Yealland had his own therapy, locking “the patient in a dark room, warning him that he would not be released until he began behaving normally” (155). Many soldier’s received electroconvulsive shock therapy. This controversial method involved connecting electrodes to the brain or paralyzed limbs, where an electric current would be sent through the part of the body (Baggett 217). Dr. Yealland, mentioned earlier for his belief that locking sick men in a dark room was the answer, was a firm believer in electroshock therapy. In dealing with a private who awakened mute one morning after surviving nine battles, Dr. Yealland “shocked him for more than an hour, after which the soldier uttered a groaning. He then stepped up the voltage for another half hour, after which the soldier was able to speak in a horse whisper” (155). Other treatments were less tortuous, Dr. Albert Wilson, one of the first physicians to study shell shock, believed his “prescription for dysfunctional soldier’s was a stiff drink. Alcohol would supply quickly absorbed calories” (Persico 154).
These men, although fortunate to survive the war, returned to America forever mentally and emotionally scarred and burned. Their innocence robbed and formative growth years wiped away, the American Veterans were expected to resume their lives, just as they were before the war, honoring mother and father, attending church on Sundays and retaining respect for the rules of the home. In post World War I America, sons were presumed to grow-up resembling their parents and the lifestyle they stood for, regardless of events, such as war, that may alter this tradition. If a young man, even a survivor of the Great War, dare venture against this world, or voice an opinion against God, then a collision course was set in motion. Unfortunately, the Veteran was entering a fabricated existence forced upon them by individuals unaware of the trauma recently experienced. When the conflicts within the family home inevitably erupted, the men departed this familial life, escaping into a world of vast loneliness. As F. Scott Fitzgerald said of the World War I veteran, “many had grown up to find all gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in man shaken” (Farwell 291).

F. Scott Fitzgerald may as well been referring to American writer Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961). A veteran of World War I, Hemingway penned numerous tales detailing the mental anguish of the surviving shell shocked American Veteran and their return to American soil. Possibly utilizing writing as a therapeutic tool to quell his own case of shell shock, Hemingway became a strong voice for this generation of disoriented and misplaced pawns. Though valiant in effort, many literary critics have attempted to separate Hemingway’s personal life from his works, yet the preponderance of similarities rebukes these claims. The one novel and four short stories, analyzed in this discourse, are overwhelmingly biographical, per this writer’s opinion, as they refer to
Hemingway and his World War I and post World War I experiences. A short, concise biographical study of Hemingway in his war years will be supplied as well as an exposition on Hemingway’s World War I novel, *A Farewell to Arms*. Further elucidation will probe whether Hemingway wrote *A Farewell to Arms* as a remedy to cure his war trauma. Hemingway places his main character Fredric Henry, as an American ambulance driver for the Italian Army before the United States entered the war. Hemingway himself was an ambulance driver for the American Red Cross, before America entered the war and was severely wounded in the legs. Fredric Henry is wounded in the novel, also engaging shrapnel in the legs. Close examination of the novel and Hemingway’s life will delve into Hemingway/Fredric as the shell shocked soldier telling this story from memory. Scholarly articles, Hemingway’s own letters, and biographies by Scott Donaldson, Kenneth Lynn, Michael Reynolds, Peter Griffin, and Jeffrey Myers will be implemented to support, as well as contradict, the scenario that Hemingway possibly wrote *A Farewell to Arms* as a healing mechanism.

Biographer Kenneth Lynn in his biography *Hemingway* (1987) and critic Frederick Crews in *The Critics Bear it Away: American Fiction and the Academy* (1992), contradict Philip Young’s eternal proclamation that all Hemingway’s works were related to his war experiences. Instead, Lynn and Crews claim Hemingway’s mental instability evolved from an unhappy childhood. As a boy, Hemingway’s mother attired her son in dresses, spurring the adult Hemingway into creating a masculine persona. Matthew Stewart in his article, “Ernest Hemingway and World War I: Combatting Recent Psychobiographical Reassessments, Restoring the War” (2000) disagrees with each man, stating, they “make it seem as if the war slid off Hemingway like water off a duck’s
back and have asked us to understand that some of his most admired war stories are not really war stories at all” (Stewart 200). Jackson Benson in his article “Ernest Hemingway: The Life as Fiction and the Fiction as Life,” offers a different perspective than Lynn and Crews, yet he fails to totally agree with the numerous other critics, such as Philip Young and Matthew Stewart, just to name a few, who believe the majority of Hemingway’s stories are autobiographical and war related. Benson applies a “what if” aspect to Hemingway’s writing, agreeing that the war did have an effect on Hemingway, while also complying with Lynn, “here I must agree, reluctantly, with Kenneth Lynn,” Benson writes, “there doesn’t seem to be any evidence of the kind of shell shock that many World War I victims experienced” (Benson 351). Benson firmly believes Hemingway’s war writing was based on “‘what if’ I were wounded in such a way that I could not sleep at night? ‘What if’ I were wounded and made crazy” (351-352). Michael Reynolds, author of 4 Hemingway biographies, opines another view. Reynolds believed Hemingway’s wounding was indeed traumatic, yet the greater life altering trauma occurred upon his return home. “Demoted,” (61), Reynolds wrote, referencing the world traveled and wounded soldier’s homecoming, as a virtual return to the womb, once again impaired and empowered by his possessive and stifling mother.

The short stories in this discourse that lend credence to Hemingway’s “lost generation” wandering soldier’s incapacity to overcome their shell shock, as well as conform to an unappreciative society, are “Soldier’s Home,” “Big Two-Hearted River: Part I,” “Big Two-Hearted River: Part II” and “Cross Country Snow.” In these tales, Hemingway chronicles the World War I veteran’s reappearance in America, the obstacles facing them and their attempts at dealing with shell shock in their own way.
The voice of this paper maintains the midwest, suburban reared, teen-age Ernest Hemingway, was traumatized by exposure to the horrible events he witnessed as an Ambulance driver for the Red Cross, on the front lines of World War I. Although his tenure was short, Hemingway was privy to great pain and suffering, boys his age, losing life and limbs. The extent of Hemingway's affliction and anguish is difficult to measure. Biographies attest to Hemingway's embellishing and exaggerating not only his war experiences, but other events in his life, from women to fishing to drinking. This voice will accept Hemingway was tormented, and his anguish, related when pen was put to paper, created enduring literary masterpieces.

In order to substantiate this view, the writer will peruse not only the alluded Hemingway biographies, but numerous journal articles as well. Two additional works, *The Letters of Ernest Hemingway: 1907-1922* (2011) and *Hemingway on War* (2003) will provide vital primary accounts written by Hemingway himself. Advocation of this writer's premise that Hemingway captured the true essence haunting the World War I veteran was discovered in articles by literary critics Philip Young, Steven Trout, Matthew Stewart, Mark Cirino, Jim Barloon, and Alex Vernon, among others. As noted earlier, Philip Young and Matthew Stewart agree World War I had an eternal and profound effect on Ernest Hemingway. Steven Trout's analysis of the U.S. Government's great injustice and mistreatment of the American veterans, juxtaposed with his critiquing of "Soldier's Home," provided essential material on two fronts: American history combined with American literature. Jim Barloon meticulously deciphered *In Our Time*, bringing Hemingway's unique writing style to the forefront. Barloon and Mark Cirino agree, "Big Two-Hearted River: Parts 1 and II" are certainly war stories, with Cirino emphasizing the
power and skill of Nick’s mental control, where Nick “does not attempt simply to banish the thoughts of war from his mind but more sensibly to replace these unpleasant thoughts” (Cirino 128). Alex Vernon and Matthew Stewart concur “Cross Country Snow” is not merely a story of a young man skiing, but the winter version of “Big Two-Hearted River: Parts I & II”; a physically and mentally wounded veteran of the “Great War,” and lost generation member, pursuing contentment in nature, while trying to survive devoid of responsibility. Sincere efforts will be made to use journal articles published in the past 20 years, from various sources, avoiding total reliance on *The Hemingway Review*, which is published twice a year. The majority of these articles disagree with Kenneth Lynn and Frederick Crews and endorse the theory that Hemingway was severely effected by his involvement in World War I and his eventual wounding.

World War I tomes by Byron Farwell, Joseph Keegan, Thomas Fleming and Richard Holmes, meticulously researched, provide essential history and background detailing the abomination endured by the American soldier during and after the war. The abhorring medical treatment received by the Veterans for their physical and emotional wounds is detailed in these works, this author concentrating primarily on the emotional. Sheena Chamberlain’s 2012 treatise on PTSD and the United States governments Department of Foreign Affairs web site furnished enhanced examination of the history and maltreatment of shell shock victims.

The American soldier, who survived World War I, returned to the United States bereft of the values they were raised with, many even doubting the existence of God. Victims of an uncaring government, who sent them to this war, left to care for themselves. Although alcohol consumption was illegal in the 1920’s, many Veterans, once law
abiding citizens, openly violated these very laws they fought to defend, finding solace in alcohol and women. The 1920’s became a generation consisting of lost, wandering young men eager to forget the war. With little professional assistance available, the World War I veteran drifted aimlessly. Ernest Hemingway wrote of this despondent lot, his misunderstood shell shocked veteran seeking refuge in the beauty of nature. There is no closure for the Veteran of World War I, Hemingway stresses that. His characters, unable to forget or bury the memories collected, merely drift among the masses, immersed in ephemeral comfort. Karl Spencer, the United States Marine introduced earlier, Ernest Hemingway, his literary characters Fredric Henry, Harold Krebs and Nick Adams, created an entire generation forever labeled “lost,” wayward and astray.
Chapter II:

Ernest Hemingway says farewell to innocence and writes

*A Farewell to Arms*

Ultimately, the World War I veteran desired freedom, a life without consequences, and the independence to find truth and peace in themselves. These victims of "the great war," "the war to end all wars," or "the great catastrophe," became known, albeit somewhat reluctantly, as the "lost generation." This generation needed their stories told, their experiences shared and their torment sketched, by someone who survived the horrors of war and possessed empathy and the ability to cast attention upon this despondent lot. Unwillingly, American writer Ernest Hemingway, (1899-1961), became that spokesman. Born and reared in the midwestern United States, Ernest Hemingway spent the majority of his childhood in suburban Chicago, Illinois and summered on the lakes of Michigan. Reared by a domineering, suffocating, pious mother, who without question, ruled his father as well as the family home, Grace Hall Hemingway tried to instill in her children the admirable midwestern virtues of honoring thy mother and father and holding an unmitigated faith and belief in God. When the United States entered World War I, Ernest Hemingway, due to poor eyesight, was denied entry into the military. Volunteering for the Red Cross ambulance service early in 1918, he was accepted in May, "given the honorary rank of second lieutenant, and sailed for Europe, May 21st" (Oldsey 181). Designated to ARC Section Four and responsible for driving the wounded from the apocalyptic front to the hospitals in the rear for medical treatment, Hemingway willingly "took charge of a Red Cross canteen at Fossalta, a village north of Venice on the Piave River" (181).
At 18 years of age, and slightly removed from the comfort of his parents' home, Hemingway saw the ravages of war and its inherent destruction, as "he collected and sorted body parts of blown-up soldiers" (Castro 460), while witnessing "closer to the front there were bodies scattered in the fields and then clusters of bodies all uniformed and twisted into bizarre postures" (Griffin 72). Always eager to be near the action, Hemingway requested, and was granted closer access to "an advanced listening post, a hole in the ground....a hundred and fifty yards closer to the Piave and the Austrian lines" (74). Hovering in the hole with two other men, "near midnight on July 8, 1918, about two weeks before his nineteenth birthday" (Odsley 182), they heard "the crack of rifles, the staccato of machine guns, and the boom of field pieces" (Griffin 4). Suddenly, from across the river, he heard a cough, then a chuh, chuh, chuh...then a long descending roar, then there was a flash" (74). The Report of the Department of Military Affairs January to July 1918 tersely recorded, "E.M. Hemingway was wounded by the explosion of a shell which landed about three feet from him, killing a soldier who stood between him and the point of explosion, and wounding others" (Panda 73). Knocked unconscious by the exploding shell of shrapnel spewing metallic embers throughout the hole, slicing skin and tearing flesh from bones, Hemingway slowly gained consciousness and imbibed the scene before him:

one of the soldier's beside him had his legs blown off. The stumps twitched, but the man was dead. The other soldier had taken shrapnel in the chest but was still alive. Ernest hoisted up the wounded Italian in a fireman's carry, and, with own legs full of shrapnel and feeling as if 'had rubber boots full of water on,' he started back toward the trenches. Suddenly...Ernest was
pitched forward by machine-gun slugs tearing into his right foot and
the side of his right knee. (75)

After spending “five days at an aid station.....and 28 pieces of shrapnel removed from
his legs and feet” (182), Hemingway was moved to the “Ospedale Croce Rossa
Americana in Milan,” where in “mid-August had two machine gun bullets removed from
a foot and knee” (182). Although for the rest of his life, “in his damaged legs he carried
bits of metal” (Reynolds 31), and would “walk stiffly on his right leg” (Donaldson 126),
Hemingway, “the first American to be wounded in Italy” (Myers 36), recovered from his
physical wounds, spending nearly seven months in various hospitals throughout Milan
and the United States.

Months after his wounding, on October 18th, 1918, Hemingway wrote his family
from his hospital bed in Milan, wistful in alleviating their fears, especially the dread a
mother and father feel when one of their children is in constant danger. Vacillating
thoughts emanated from his fragile mind, from humorous to melancholic to
compassionate. Keenly aware of his audience, the family numbering two parents, four
sisters and one baby brother, cognizant in his omission of the indigestible details
surrounding his wounding and its consequences, Hemingway pontificated on the direct
effect of the wound as a singular and solitary act. Discarding the medical procedures,
operations and recovery, Hemingway produced thoughtful words emphasizing empathy
and sacrifice. Declaring “there is nothing for you to worry about about, because it has
been fairly conclusively proved that I can’t be bumped off” (Hemingway, Letters 147), he
reiterates the machismo and states that “wounds don’t matter, I wouldn’t mind being
wounded again so much because I know just what it is like” (147). Carefully choosing
his words, Hemingway, still close to parents at this time in his life, states, “it does give you an awfully satisfactory feeling to be wounded, its getting beaten up in a good cause.... there are no heroes in this war.....all the heroes are dead...and the real heroes are the parents...they suffer a thousand times more” (147). Concluding his letter, Hemingway promises an antithetical one in the future, “now I’ll write you a nice cheerful bunky letter in about a week so don’t get low over this one” (148).

Externally offering his family a semblance of courage, stoicism and effortless sacrifice, Hemingway’s valiant attempt at thwarting their panic, failed to assuage his own. Purposely neglecting to relinquish his battlefield exploits upon his worried family, Hemingway withdrew the memory and buried it deep within, the wound remaining there possibly for the rest of his life, “many years after the night of his dreadful injury, he was afraid of the death-dealing dark....that first terrifying wound had a lasting effect on Ernest Hemingway” (Donaldson 126). Reflecting on his loss of innocence nearly twenty-five years later, Hemingway wrote in 1942, regarding his youthful experience in “the war to end all wars”,

When you go to war as a boy you have this great illusion of immortality. Other people get killed; not you. It can happen to other people; but not to you. Then when you are badly wounded the first time you lose that illusion and you know it can happen to you. After being severely wounded two weeks before my nineteenth birthday I had a bad time until I figured out that nothing could happen to me that had not happened to all men before me. Whatever I had to do men had always done. If they had done it then I could do it too and the best thing was not to worry about it (Hemingway, Hemingway on War xiv).
Upon his return to the United States, Hemingway “landed in New York on January, 1919, thus ending a nine-month tour of duty abroad” (Oldsey 182). Similar to many other veterans, Hemingway limped home, in this case, to Oak Park, Illinois, to recuperate physically and emotionally. Externally, Hemingway’s virility prospered, a returning war hero with glistening medals perched on his chest for validity, swapping war stories with veterans, speaking at schools and churches and granting interviews to newspapers and magazines. Internally, however, a different story loomed, “Ernest Hemingway did not think he would ever forget the killing. He knew he would never forget the sound a trench mortar shell makes just before it explodes” (Reynolds 47). According to his brother Leicester, Ernest, once home and settled in his childhood bedroom, “like hundreds of thousand of soldiers before and since, he received some psychic shock, He was plagued by insomnia and couldn’t sleep unless he had a light in his room” (Leicester Hemingway, My Brother Ernest Hemingway 48). His younger sister Ursula, stated she “would drink something light with Ernest until he went to sleep, and then I would sleep with him so he would not be lonely in the night. We always slept with the light on” (Griffin 115). Moreover, his older sister, Marcelline recalled, “in between his extrovert activities Ernie had quiet, almost depressed intervals” (Stewart 204). Marcelline provides greater description of her brother’s first days home, “staying in bed for long periods of time, drinking on the sly to ease the pain, retreating from family activities and showing little inclination to forge an adult identity for himself” (204).

Cognizant a problem may exist, Hemingway perused the topic of “shell shock,” known in that time period as “neurasthenia,” in his father’s copy of the American Medical Association Journal. Always obstinate, he convinced himself he did not suffer
from this ailment, internally refuting these possible claims. Although he decided not to
discuss this with his father, a family medical doctor, he was so worried over the
possibility of shell shock, he consulted a doctor without his family's knowledge. Dr. Guy
Conklin recalled, nearly 41 years later, "Ernest was badly shell shocked when he came
for treatment in the summer of 1919" (Reynolds 69).

In a 1948 letter to writer, scholar and biographer Malcolm Crowley, Ernest
Hemingway stated, "in the first war, I now see, I was hurt very badly; in the body, mind
and spirit; and also morally....the true gen is I was hurt bad all the way through" (Stewart
204). Thirty-years earlier, juxtaposed with this emotional fragility, was the presence of
Hemingway's mother, Grace Hall Hemingway, now back in his life amidst the stagnant
environment of small town life in Oak Park, Illinois. Not yet twenty years old, and only a
year-and a half since graduating high school, Hemingway experienced travel, sex, love
and war. Referring to Oak Park, "nothing in the village seemed quite the same to him
after the war" (Reynolds 36), the stimulating life he just left in Europe, although
harrowing, provided a zest for life and adventure. Once home, this zeal was gone,
drained in the emptiness of the suburban, midwestern United States, "Oak Park, though
restful, seemed tame and dull" (Myers 45). Mature beyond his years, "he had outgrown
the religion and morality of his self-righteous parents and sanctimonious town" (45).

At the mercy of an authoritative mother, stifling in a virtual autocracy, while dealing
with the psychological agony of war, Hemingway and his mother were headed for a life-
shattering showdown. Initially, "Grace had hailed him as a conquering hero--and the
next day had resumed treating him as though he were still a boy" (Lynn 101). In
contemplating his mother's commanding attitude, Hemingway was dumbfounded, "it
was if he had never ridden in the backs of ambulances...or felt the pain of shell
fragments tearing into his flesh" (Lynn 101). With time dwindling towards an eventual
confrontation, Grace never relented. Constantly critical of his drinking, smoking,
carousing, and bereft of his faith in God, the tension in the home reached a crescendo.
In an attempt to appease his forever weakening father, Hemingway told his mother “that
he had had some bad experiences and would work out his problems if she left him
alone” (Myers 53).

Inevitably, “the climax to their feud was not long coming” (Lynn 116), caused by “a
relatively trivial incident” (Myers 54), sneaking out at night with his two sisters and their
girlfriends. As Hemingway’s sister Sunny said, “our innocent picnic was judged to have
been a disgraceful orgy” (54). Not allowed to defend himself, and without support from
his father, Hemingway retaliated, finally confessing his actual feelings to his mother.
Grace wrote her husband, stating, “Ernest called me every name he could think of, and
said everything vile about me” (Lynn 117). In return, Grace castigated her son for
“irreligion,” “corruption,” “hedonism” and to stop “neglecting your duties to God and your
Savior” (117). Further adding, “do not come back until your tongue has learned not to
insult and shame your mother” (Myers 54). From this moment on, until each parent
passed away, an acrimonious relationship existed. Even his conversion to Catholicism,
done for the sake of his second wife, Pauline Pfeiffer, did not bode well, “Catholicism—the
religion (according to Oak Park Protestants) of immigrants, servants and
drunks” (54).

Hemingway, like many of the shell shocked and disillusioned World War I veterans,
separated himself from the family home and moved on, marrying Hadley Richardson
and moved to Paris, France, intent on becoming a writer. With a small trust fund inherited by his wife, and writing occasional pieces for the Toronto Star, Hemingway settled down amongst the expatriates of Paris and began his serious writing career. Away from the discomfort of the midwestern United States, now immersed in the catastrophe called Prohibition, Hemingway discovered much needed solace within the Parisian cafes as well as other writers, some of tremendous fame. James Joyce, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Gertrude Stein and Ezra Pound, just to name a few, were at one time or another, friends with Ernest Hemingway in the Paris years. Through financial frugality and exposure to some of the world’s most prominent and talented writers, Hemingway produced the short story collection he long desired, detailing the plight of the emotionally scarred World War I veteran, now aimlessly wandering America, or better known as the “lost generation.”

Coined by Gertrude Stein, “the lost generation” refers to the young Americans who survived World War I and drifted among the masses, lethargic in their attitude and lifestyle” (Griffin 156). These men quickly viewed the war as futile, whose sacrifices were in vain, therefore citing this sense of disillusionment. As an unacknowledged member of the “lost generation,” Hemingway wrote of this disillusionment in his first published short story collection, In Our Time (1924). “For much of In Our Time, World War I is indeed upon the page...reaching into every corner of Hemingway’s text” (Trout 275). Honing his writing skills, Hemingway developed a unique writing style where he would write a small scene in explicit detail, allowing the reader to subconsciously decipher the omitted part. Although considered a book of war stories, the word “war’ is seldom mentioned. Paramount throughout the collection is the established
Hemingway's soldier, they "are loners...they make a separate peace and go their own way" (Barloon 15). The short stories contained in Hemingway's *In Our Time*, lend further support "that indicates Hemingway was profoundly influenced by the war. Both his life and his fictions show that the wounding had its serious effects" (Stewart 203).

Following *In Our Time*, "a nihilistic grouping of stories interspersed with vignettes of terrible war-time violence" (Barker 4), was *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), where "the Great War" is presented as a source of physical and spiritual mutilation" (Barker 4). The novel's characters, forever scarred physically and emotionally from the war, live their lives irresponsibly and never dwell on the consequences of their poorly made decisions. The embodiments of the lost generation, Hemingway's protagonists in *The Sun Also Rises* serve as proof that in this generation "nobody ever knows anything" and they are living in a metaphorical "hell, a condition bearing more resemblance to spiritual suffering than to one of physical discomfort" (4). One of the novel's themes that assuredly replicates the mind set of the lost generation is, "after having lived through the intensity of the war, nobody can feel that any action has any consequences" (4).

With the success of *In Our Time* and *The Sun Also Rises*, Ernest Hemingway rapidly rose among the litany of American authors, earning respected reviews and acquiring fame, for not only his writing, but his personal life as well. As writing proved therapeutic in Hemingway's quest to conquer his shell shock, process the prevalent agony engrossing the World War I veterans, in addition to reminding an ever increasing apathetic America citizenry of the war's horrors, Hemingway remained hesitant in writing a novel specifically detailing his own World War I experiences. His war adventures were slightly chronicled in the short stories, yet a novel truly delving into Hemingway's time in
Italy was yet to be penned. In 1929, Hemingway published this elusive World War I novel, *A Farewell to Arms*, a novel that “testifies to the persistence of wounds, both visible and invisible” (Dodman 249).

Autobiography “can be characterized as a form of public relations in which the author places himself in the position of telling the world the truth about himself—the truth as he sees it, or wants it to be seen” (Oldsley 181). Although not a true autobiography, *A Farewell to Arms* supplies Hemingway’s most extended fictional statements of his disillusionment” (Donaldson 126), and adds to the Hemingway canon another protagonist severely effected by the war. Fredric Henry is like “so many Hemingway protagonists—including those in his earliest stories—men wounded in war: Nick Adams, Harold Krebs, Jake Barnes, Fredric Henry, and later on, Robert Jordan from Hemingway’s 1940 novel on the Spanish Civil War, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. In *A Farewell to Arms*, “the author is recalling his Great War experiences through his cipher, Fredric Henry” (Dodman 250)

Hemingway places his narrator Fredric Henry, as an ambulance driver for the Italian Army during the First World War. Henry “enlists in the Italian Army for no better reason than that he is in Italy and understands the language...he thinks the cause is just and that he will be useful as an officer in charge of ambulances” (126). His past is seldom alluded to, a common trait in Hemingway’s writing, as is Henry’s portrayal of the Hemingway “hero.” The traits of the Hemingway hero, as seen in many stories and strongly adhered to in *A Farewell to Arms*, are encapsulated in the following decrees: above all else, a person must possess courage; a person is responsible for their own actions; there is no God, so a person’s fate is in their own hands, a near death
experience is the closest to truth an individual can come; and a person must always be active.

With the aforementioned characteristics pervasive in his mind, body and resulting actions, Fredric Henry carries the reader through his own World War I trials and tribulations. Fredric is an ambulance driver in the Italian Army, holding the rank of Lieutenant, an American, leading four Italian Ambulance Drivers to and from the front lines, depositing the dead and the injured, to Aid stations just a few miles from the fighting. When the novel opens, Fredric and the men are found alleviating their war caused stress, finding outlets in alcohol, prostitutes and priest teasing.

Fredric lives a solitary life, devoted to the Italian cause, yet more devoted to the men in the ambulance squad. Upon meeting Catherine Barkley, a beautiful British nurse, nurturing her own emotional wounds, Fredric vacates the dirt and filth of the brothel and succumbs to Catherine’s beauty and sweetness. Initially, the relationship with Catherine was purely sexual, each needing the other’s pleasure, wistful for moments to forget the war. Catherine, a hospital nurse and therefore witness to the same horrors as Fredric, is mourning the loss of her fiancee killed in the war, telling Fredric “they blew him all to bits” (20). Still reeling with regret that she was engaged for eight years and never went to bed with him, Catherine “is still psychologically off from the death of her fiancee” (Nolan 107). Fredric, erstwhile, has discovered release from the war’s vulgarness through sex with Catherine, admitting he does not love her, “I did not love Catherine Barkley nor had any idea of loving her, this was a game” (Hemingway, AFTA 30). Admitting “I thought she was a little crazy” (30), Fredric confesses, that sex with Catherine, “was better than going every evening to the house for officers where the girls
climbed all over you” (30). Although cognizant of Fredric’s feelings, Catherine stoically refers to the relationship as a game herself, valuing their time together, albeit a temporary escape from the war.

Eventually, war’s unpredictability interjected itself upon the couples sexual escapism. While at the front, Fredric is severely wounded when a trench mortar shell explodes a few feet away, shrapnel tearing into Fredric’s legs and killing the man standing next to him, his friend Passini, whose injuries are described, as “one leg was gone and the other held by tendons and part of the trouser and the stump twitched and jerked as though it were not connected” (55). After Fredric’s valiant attempt to save Passini’s life proves futile, he collects himself and recognizes his own wounding,

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. I wiped my hand on my shirt and another floating light came very slowly down and I looked at my leg and was very afraid. (56)

Fredric returns to Catherine Barkley, as a patient in the hospital where she is assigned, however, only after a horrific ambulance ride, where a hemorrhaging man on the stretcher above Fredric dies, dripping blood upon the helpless American Lieutenant. During Fredric’s recovery, he and Catherine resume their relationship, where it evolves from merely physical, to one of enduring love and affection. Catherine volunteers to work the late shift, therefore procuring uninterrupted evenings for the amorous couple. Once fully recuperated, Fredric must depart the woman he loves and the clean life they created, returning to a world of terror, the front lines of World War I.
During his time away from Catherine Barkley, Fredric resides in a world of daunting abomination, striving to elevate himself above the mayhem and disgust. Even repulsed by his good friend, the surgeon Rinaldi, who inquires as to Fredric’s sex life with Catherine, Fredric struggles to maintain his sanity while those around him succumb to the basest level. Fredric is one “of a million men, moving against the other” as Ford Madox Ford described in 1916, “impelled by an invisible moral force into a hell of fear that surely cannot have had a parallel in this world” (Ferguson 340). Battling the incessant raining while driving the injured and the dead, Fredric cannot avoid the ringing death knells:

There was much shelling and many rockets in the rain and machine-gun and rifle fire all along the line....we could hear the sound of a great bombardment far to the north....the wounded were coming into the post, some were carried on stretchers, some walking and some were brought on the backs of men. (186)

Further enhancing the destruction was the addition of the German Army to the Austrian line. Believed to be the best prepared and well equipped Army in the World, the word ‘German’ instilled fear into the very hearts of the weary soldiers, “it’s Germans that are attacking one of the medical officers said. The word Germans was something to be frightened of. We did not want to have anything to do with the Germans” (187). With the onslaught of German and Austrian troops advancing upon the Italians, a retreat was necessary. Known as the “retreat from Caporetto,” an actual event implemented in the novel by Hemingway, Fredric endures additional human debauchery of mammoth
proportions. Dealing a detrimental blow to an Army’s morale, a retreat is synonymous with admitting defeat. Initially, the retreat from Caporetto is orderly and structured. Fredric and his men Aymo, Piani, and Bonello encounter and rescue two Virgin women fearing rape. The cars and men are moving well and systematically; however, the cohesion is ephemeral. The pounding rain juxtaposed with the depthless morale becomes overwhelming for even the strongest of men. Confusion and anarchy soon reign, evidenced by Fredric witnessing the Italian police shooting their own men, unmercifully and without provocation.

Fredric and his men survive and maintain their sanity by relying on one another; however, war’s infinite power proves too much even for this brotherhood to sustain. Submitting to eventual desertion and death, Fredric and his men disband. Once their ambulance is stuck in the mud and their mobility lost, this kinship evaporates. A solitary, powerless man, Fredric discovers he is to be executed, accused of being a German in an Italian uniform. Miraculously escaping, he dives into a nearby river. Avoiding the soldier’s barrage of scattered bullets directed his way, Fredric stays underwater for as long as he can, latches on to a floating tree and enters the life of a fugitive.

Basing the justification of his desertion from the Italian Army on the fact that an American deserting the Italian Army is not the same as an American deserting the United States Army, Fredric is making his own “farewell to arms.” When he says, “anger was washed away in the river along with any obligation” (232), Fredric “says good-bye to military arms and to love’s embrace” (Oldsey 179). Resuming his life with Catherine, they sail across Lake Como in the middle of the night and find refuge in Switzerland. With the ravaged plains of the war behind them, Fredric and Catherine live a utopian
existence in the mountains, an idyllic life offering harmony and seclusion from the war. Awaiting the birth of their child, Fredric leaves the trauma of the war behind, settling down with Catherine.

Fredric Henry, or Ernest Hemingway, is telling this story from memory. The ghastly remnants of World War I pervade throughout Fredric's telling. His exposure to the countless dead and dismembered has eternally blistered a once ordinary man. His memory exists of friends dying in his arms, battle weary surgeon's amputating legs and arms of teen-agers boys, trenches where "the dead....were found in layers stacked up on top of one another" (Ferguson 341). Intermixed with the visible horrors forever etched in Fredric's mind are his feelings of futility and helplessness, that his presence and sacrifice in the war accomplished absolutely nothing. His frustration is evident rather early in the novel, when he returns from vacation and notes "it evidently made no difference whether I was there to look after things or not," later repeating, "evidently it did not matter whether I was there or not" (16). This reiteration "consistently supports Fredric's feeling that his influence upon the outcome of events is negligible" (Prescott 46). Nowhere in the novel is Fredric's mind scarring more exacerbated than his inability to save those closest to him. Fredric's failure to save his surgeon friend, Dr. Rinaldi, his friends from the ambulance squad and now Catherine and the baby, will undoubtedly leave indelible marks upon his conscience. Such horror may be impossible to overcome. Stressing the hopelessness he feels, Fredric's words ring of one in despair:

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. (327)

The novel concludes as Fredric "left the hospital and walked back to the hotel in the rain" (332). The reader, deftly drawn into Fredric's despair, remains as unaware of Fredric's future as Fredric is, Hemingway craftily concluding the novel with the lost generation claiming another wretched soul.

From the very first page of the novel Fredric suffers from shell shock; his voice is always already the voice of a traumatized survivor of grievous wounds and losses. A 'changed man' from the outset, his narrative reveals the continued and unchanging hold that his painful past has on his present. (Dodman 251)

Similar to the multitude of World War I veterans and Ernest Hemingway, Fredric Henry must cope with his war experience and attempt to move on and find a place in the world. If Fredric Henry is perceived to be suffering from shell shock, then the question must be debated on whether Hemingway was successful in believing writing was the panacea to cure his own ills. Many events that effected Hemingway in World War I are delivered as exploits of Fredric Henry. Both men were ambulance drivers, wounded in the legs with shrapnel, and fell in love with nurses. Accepting A Farewell to Arms as autobiographical clouds the novel and projects unfair criticism on Hemingway. The novel must stand alone and be considered fiction, as in this case, "fiction must be seen as wish-fulfillment" (Oldsey 182). In comparing Hemingway to Fredric Henry, the differences are blatant, regarding love affairs, "Hemingway did not have the love of his life affair that Lt. Henry does" (182). Hemingway did fall for an older nurse, yet the relationship was assumed to never be consummated. As far as Hemingway's military
service reads, “He was not a combat hero. He was not involved in the Caporetto Retreat. He did not desert criminally, did not flee to Switzerland” (182). Finally he was not “the common-law husband of a beautiful British woman, was not the father of her still born child” (182).

However, the events where no doubts exist as to the accuracy of their telling, are the wounds Fredric Henry suffers, the aftermath of the outer body experience, and the delaying of his own medical treatment, in order for doctors to treat those whose lives were in greater peril. Before the shell exploded, Ernest Hemingway was handing out chocolate bars while Fredric Henry was eating cheese and drinking wine. Hemingway described the attack as hearing “the crack of rifles, the staccato of machine guns, and the boom of field pieces....then a chuh, chuh , chuh....then a long descending roar. Then there was a flash” (Griffin 74). Fredric Henry’s recounts his tale, “I heard a cough, then came the chuh-chuh-chuh-chuh--then there was a flash, as when a blast furnace door is swung open, and a roar that started white and went red” (Hemingway, AFTA 54). Upon sustaining the injury, Fredric Henry explains, “I felt myself rush bodily out of myself and out and out and all the time bodily in the wind. I went out swiftly, all to myself, and I knew I was dead and that it had all been a mistake to think you just died” (54). In Hemingway’s own words, immediately receiving his injury, he felt “his soul ..fly out of his body like a handkerchief” (Donaldson 126).

Although known to embellish his own war experiences throughout his life, whether covering the Spanish Civil War or World War II, viable proof exists that Hemingway was wounded in World War I, a wounding similar to Fredric in A Farewell to Arms; “four documents lend credibility to Hemingway’s assertion that he told the truth in A Farewell
to Arms” (Lynn 80). Even with the scarred legs and medals pinned to his chest as proof of Hemingway’s wounding and heroic actions thereafter, consistent dubiousness reigned. Lending sustenance, these “four documents,” consist of “a telegram that the Red Cross in Washington sent to his parents, informing them that their son had been hit by ‘a trench mortar bomb’” (80). Next, there exists a telegram that Hemingway sent to his parents that read, “WOUNDED IN LEG BY TRENCH MORTAR. WILL RECEIVE MEDAL” (80). This is followed by the previously cited Report of the Department of Military Affairs January to July 1918, detailing the shell explosion. Lastly, the Silver Medal of Military Valor that he received from the Italian Army, specifically citing “courage and self-sacrifice” and “he rendered generous assistance to the Italian soldier’s more seriously wounded by the same explosion and did not allow himself to be carried elsewhere until after they had been evacuated” (81). Fredric Henry too, upon entering an aid station, saw “the dead were off to one side. The doctors were working with their sleeves up to their shoulders and were red as butchers” (Hemingway, AFTA 57). Henry, like Hemingway, altruistically sends the doctors away to care for the more severely wounded, saying “I’d rather wait. There are much worse wounded than me. I’m all right” (58).

As Jim Barloon wrote in his essay, “Very Short Stories: The Miniaturization Of War in Hemingway’s In Our Time” (2005), the Hemingway soldier, and soon to be veteran, “are loners....they make a separate peace and go their own ways” (15). With A Farewell to Arms concluding with Fredric Henry alone, walking in the rain, the reader remains unaware of Fredric’s future. Labeled a deserter by the Italian Army, Fredric is unable to resume a military life in Italy. Being an American, Fredric may reside in the neutral
Switzerland, yet the trauma and memories of Catherine may be too much to reconcile. Although no one will ever truly know, Fredric’s return to American soil would appear likely, especially if the character of Fredric Henry is based on Ernest Hemingway. Fictionally, the shell shocked Fredric would return, replicated in the person of Nick Adams, a character in many Hemingway short stories. These tales, believed to Hemingway’s greatest works, detail the traumatized, shell shocked soldier’s inability to conform to post World War I American society. Fredric Henry would be one of “the many former soldier’s, including some of the most decorated of the war, who were not up to the challenge of reentering civilian life without support economic or otherwise” (Trout 10).

The following chapter explores 4 legendary Hemingway short stories, each tale portraying dejected young men, Nick Adams and Harold Krebs, dashed hopes and dreams aside, simply yearning for basic survival. Fredric Henry, in these stories, is possibly transformed into the shell shocked Hemingway characters, Nick Adams and Harold Krebs, each a solitary man pursuing recovery from their war experiences as well attempting to find purpose in their lives.
Chapter III: The Short Stories

Although chronologically out of order, for the purpose of this thesis, Fredric Henry from *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), will take on the identity of Nick Adams and Harold Krebs, literary characters introduced 5 years earlier in Hemingway's seminal short story collection, *In Our Time* (1925). Nick Adams and Harold Krebs epitomize the World War I soldier returning to America. In the stories, "Big Two-Hearted River: Part I," "Big Two-Hearted River: Part II," "Cross Country Snow," and "Soldier's Home," both Harold Krebs and Nick Adams, although fictitious, were modeled, to a certain degree on the war and post-war experiences of Ernest Hemingway. Again, for the purpose of this thesis, it can be assumed Fredric Henry returns to America after the war. Nick Adams makes his introduction in *In Our Time* and can be found in later Hemingway short story collections *Winner Take Nothing* (1933), and *Men Without Women* (1927). Similar to Fredric Henry, Nick Adams survives the horrors of World War I, yet the comparison ends there. The reader is left confused and unsure where Fredric will go; Nick, however, returns home to America, shell shocked, unappreciated by an apathetic government and greatly disillusioned.

The World War I veterans' disenchantment with the United States government was immediate and with great legitimacy, "American Veterans of the Great War faced a difficult homecoming; for many, the great Depression....basically began in 1919" (Trout 8). The reasons were quite clear, supply and demand the proverbial bias. Within weeks of the Armistice (Nov. 1918), "nearly 600,000 soldiers went home," another "3,400,000 received their discharges by the summer of 1919" (8). With nearly 4,000,000 men crashing the American job market, viable employment was difficult to procure. Peace
brought the end to lucrative war time contracts and “American Agriculture had entered a slump that would last for decades” (8). The U.S. Government was ignorant and oblivious to this crucial situation. In 1919, the U.S. Government’s ingratitude was clearly evident, offering a benefits package to Veterans that included “a sixty dollar cash bonus.....a travel allowance of five cents per mile for the train ride home,....and a small pension designed to offset any wages that might be lost due to a missing limb or some similarly severe wound” (8).

Bringing the plight of the World War I veteran to the forefront and writing about war as only a wounded veteran could, Ernest Hemingway, in possessing intrinsic indignation and emotional fragility, was able to capture the degradation only war could create. Hemingway’s short stories clearly indicate war fails to discriminate and is cruel to everyone. Not only is innocence lost, it becomes evaporated amidst the celebrations and parades welcoming the young men home. Once the parade is over and the streets are swept, where does the soldier go?

The disgruntled Hemingway veteran, also referred to in this discourse as the “wandering soldier,” “appears in desperate struggle with the awful problem of finding a new value orientation” (Colvert 376), seeking this and paths of escape. The tranquility and peace of the open road, accompanied by the vastness of nature, provides what was often an open trail for the wandering soldiers attempting to find themselves. The enduring comfort of nature and its inherent qualities, the power of reminiscing to more innocent times in life, or the choice to live indifferently, enable former soldiers a temporary break from the confining demons of the war. The introduction of Nick Adams in In Our Time, provides the reader with a Hemingway veteran, one whose war trauma
resonates through 3 works of short stories. Other than Harold Krebs from “Soldier’s Home,” all stories in this study, “Big Two-Hearted River: Part I,” “Big Two-Hearted River: Part II,” and “Cross Country Snow,” will examine Nick Adams as the wandering soldier.

“Soldier’s Home,” although only eight pages in length, tells the story of a returning World War I soldier, Harold Krebs, who was reared in an all white, middle class Christian home in Oklahoma, attended a Methodist college in Kansas, and voluntarily joined the United States Marines. Once home, much later than the other soldiers, Krebs discovers the citizens of the small town have little interest in his exploits and his parents act as if nothing has changed, his mother letting him know his father is “willing for you to take the car out in the evenings” (Hemingway, “Soldier’s Home” 113). Informing us, “he lost everything” (112), as well as resistant to work and shiftless and idle all day, Krebs feels like the “bacon fat hardening on his plate” (115). As the “young war veteran whose faith in the old values has been destroyed by his combat experience” (Colvert 374), Krebs, similar to many Hemingway characters, “rebels against a society which relies upon traditional moral attitudes and beliefs” (374). Unable and unwilling to comprehend her son’s behavior, Mrs. Krebs, the white middle class Christian mother, asks her son to pray, yet he cannot. Declaring, “I’m not in his kingdom” (115), and responding a defiant “no” when his mother asks if he loves her, Krebs realizes the only solution is to leave the familial home, his parents sacrosanct views too much to bear. Wanting to “keep his life from being complicated” and “wanting his life to go smoothly” (116), Krebs seeks escape to the big city, “he would go to Kansas City and get a job and he would feel all right about it” (116). The reader is left as lost as the Krebs character, fully coherent to the fact that Krebs will never settle down, will take life as it comes, and live an eternal
fragmented and apathetic existence, "the army had prepared him for war, and the war had prepared him for a life without consequences" (Petrarca 666).

The quintessential "lost generation" story, Krebs's apathy toward his hometown, family and American society, mirrors that of many World War I Veterans. Before he became a member of this "generation," certain factors arose and contributed to the eventual sealing of his membership. Raised as one to revere family, honor thy mother and father, obey their dutiful commands and love the Lord Jesus Christ, Krebs, once exposed to the human created horrors of World War I, finds God powerless and can no longer believe in these parental instilled values. Hemingway purposely hails Krebs from the mid-west, Kansas and Oklahoma, respectively, states well known for their excessive white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant population. Removing Krebs, from his uniformed college life, and "his fraternity brothers, all of them wearing exactly the same height and style collar," (111) and placing him in five of the bloodiest battles of the war: Belleau Wood, Soissons, the Champagne, St. Mihiel and the Argonne, Hemingway shatters the young Protestant's innocence.

The ancestral home, synonymous with love, support, empathy and patience, is put to task rather critically by Hemingway, portraying Krebs's parents as an unsympathetic duo incapable of providing love when necessary. Mr. and Mrs. Krebs reflect the demeanor of many, participants of "a nation without a clear and honest picture of what its soldiers have endured .... incapable of understanding them when they return, and, therefore .... incapable of insuring their successful reentry into civilian life" (Trout 13). Failing to adhere to the proclamations they so feverishly bestowed upon their son in the course of his upbringing, Krebs' mother and father's actions towards their emotionally scarred
child ream of hypocrisy and insincerity. Their “Home” is not where their shell shocked
descendant is finding the emotional stability he so desperately needs. Their inadequacy
as parents sends their son deeper into a solitary abyss. The “Home” in “Soldier’s Home”
accelerates Krebs’s isolation from society. Hemingway’s title “Soldier’s Home” exhibits a
“powerful irony here when you consider his mother and father have flatly refused to
acknowledge his war experiences” (Petrarca 667).

Similar to many parents, Mr. and Mrs. Krebs want to forget the war, their son’s own
involvement, and move on with their passive lives, “what Krebs’s parents really want is
to push him back into his prewar past, back into the docile conformity” (Trout 12). At this
point, Krebs has experienced not only war, but travel, sex, fine food and drink, as well
as European culture. Meanwhile, his parents still live in the same house, in the same
town, and drive the same car. One “characteristic of Hemingway’s war stories and
sketches is the frequent inclusion of non-combatants” (Barloon 11), in the case of
“Soldier’s Home,” the author provides a mother “whose attention always
wandered” (112), a “noncommittal” father and “so many good looking young girls” (112),
all of whom Krebs does not want to interact with, and remain unaffected by the war. The
World War I survivor of 5 fierce battles, now has permission to drive the family car, as
long as he takes out girls his mother picks out for him, is chastised for “mussing up the
paper” (114) and his mother still expects him to call her “Mummy” (116).

This reluctance to interact with anyone, including pretty girls, leads Krebs to a mental
and physical reclusiveness. Initially, upon his return home, Krebs “felt the need to talk
but no one wanted to hear about it,” eventually realizing that, “to be listened to at all he
had to lie, and after he had done this twice he, too, had a reaction against the war and
against talking about it” (111). Accepting, “there seems to be no one with whom he can share the truth of his combat experience. It is not melodramatic enough for the townspeople, not predictably fearful enough for fellow combat veterans” (Cohen, “Vagueness and Ambiguity in Hemingway’s ‘Soldier’s Home’” 162), Krebs understands he must depart, leaving his parents and hometown, yet bringing his war memories with him:

Harold Krebs finds that he can no longer fit into the prosaic molds of his home town; he has outgrown them as he has his uniform in the postwar snapshot. Having proven himself in extensive combat and having flourished under the sexual freedom of army life in France and postwar Germany, he cannot return to a prewar morality of pretense and lies. (Cohen, “Soldier’s Voices in In Our Time: Hemingway’s Ventriloquism” 27)

Parallel with Ernest Hemingway, Krebs vacates his youth, rejects his family and wanders on. Unable to coexist within the realm of a structured, spurious environment, Krebs, the reader is informed, will venture to Kansas City and find a job. However, the shell shocked World War I veteran, already viewed as misanthropic, will undoubtedly, the reader feels, continue on from Kansas City, unable to settle, forever searching for stability. A victim of a blatant miscarriage of justice on the part of the U.S. government, fed by their ineptitude in assisting the war veterans, combined with deficient parenting, Krebs, akin to other Veterans, will assuredly wander. “The soldier is now homeless everywhere in the universe, and he must bitterly accept this homelessness as his home” (Petrarca 667). Eventually, Harold Krebs may fall prey to homelessness, seeking independence and refuge in various outlets, the seclusion and beauty of nature among
them. Perhaps resurfacing in the person of Nick Adams in the following legendary war stories, famous for never mentioning the word “war,” Harold Krebs’ future possesses one certainty; that he is a guaranteed member of the lost generation.

At the forefront of Hemingway War stories that never mention the word “war,” yet is dominated by wars ravages, is “Big Two-Hearted River: Part I,” and “Big Two-Hearted River: Part II.” The story is “about the trauma of war, although the story never mentions the war” (Flora 147). In explaining his true intent in deleting the word “war” from the stories, Hemingway said, “the boys coming home from the war in Nick’s condition could not suffer that it (war) be mentioned in their presence. So the war, all mention of the war, anything about the war, is omitted” (Hemingway, “The Art of the Short Story” 130). In the beginning of “Big Two-Hearted River: Part I,” Nick Adams descends a moving train, the lost generation’s preferable mode of transportation, owning a car a blatant act of responsibility. Noting the “burnt timber” and “the burned-over country” (Hemingway, “Big Two-Hearted River: Part I” 163), as “evidence of the war was clear in Nick’s arrival in the burned town and the blackened hoppers” (Hannum 106). Once off the train, Nick needs to sit, “from shock. The narrator does not tell us that Nick is shocked, but we know that he is, we experience the shock with him” (Flora 149). Nick, in his efforts for solace in fishing for trout in the “Big Two-Hearted River,” finds himself in the midst of what he is trying to run away from, fire ravaged barren land serving as a reminder of the war. In contrast to the end of “Soldier’s Home,” where the shell shocked protagonist leaves, Nick remains in the woods, camped along side the river. Perhaps discovering the peace he’s yearning for, a permanent residence or an ephemeral one, for the moment at least, an evasion from the war. The actions of Nick Adams in “Big Two
Hearted River: Part I," "Big Two-Hearted River: Part II" and "Soldier's Home," certainly meet the "requirement of Hemingway's therapeutics ....that the person meeting challenges does so not in ignorance, but after experiencing trauma and accepting the pains and risks involved" (Barker 8).

To reiterate, if Harold Krebs failed to settle in Kansas City, his quest for a solitary life may take Krebs fishing in the Michigan woods, arriving in the persona of Nick Adams, "Nick Adams solo journey in "Big Two-Hearted River" portrays another veteran seeking escape from social allegiance. For an American to escape war, he must escape social ties" (Vernon 51). Although a young Hemingway famously confessed to Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas that in "Big Two-Hearted River," "nothing happens," numerous critics, including Mark Cirino, are quick to contradict this statement. Hemingway's opinion is "self-deprecatory and misleading, because something does happen; the arena of activity has merely turned inward from the Italian Front to the consciousness of a shell-shocked veteran" (125). In fact, war symbolism reigns throughout the story, beginning with the use of "burnt" or "burned" four times in the first two paragraphs to describe the landscape. Throughout Nick's journey from the train to his camp site, Hemingway repeatedly adopts the words, "burnt," "burned," "cinders," "scarred," "charred," "black," "sooty black," and "fire." Similar to A Farewell to Arms, Hemingway portrays the flatlands and plains as war-scorched carnage. As Nick begins his journey, hiking from the "burned over country" (173), ascending the mountains, passing where "the fire line stopped," he leaves this ruined land behind and walks into "sweet fern...clumps of jack pines....sandy underfoot and the country alive again" (165). This description of the land could possibly serve a dual purpose. Are Nick's emotions
reflective of the changing scenery? Does Nick undergo an attitude and emotional state of mind adjustment as he treks up the mountain and leaves the ravaged earth and possibly the war behind? Leaving the scorched land, feeling relaxed and content, as "the earth felt good against his back" (166), Nick falls asleep, at peace, temporarily at least, with his life.

As Nick Adams attempts "to try and reconstruct a separate peace in a landscape scarred by war" (Carey 14), and seeks escape from "a universe that accommodates the horrors of a world war," and a world which "simply no longer makes sense" (Trout, "Antithetical Icons" 280), his importance, in this particular story, as a model for future Hemingway characters, must be recognized and discussed. As previously declared, "'Big Two-Hearted River' remains perhaps the most famous piece of fiction about war with no mention of the war in it," as "Nick Adams, a recently returned Veteran of the Great War, attempts to forget the war....by engaging in his favorite prewar adolescent activity, fishing" (Vernon 36). However, the reader must contextualize Nick's injuries as more than psychological, possibly a severe physical wounding haunts Nick as well.

Placed between the short stories in In Our Time, are vignettes: terse, yet powerfully written. Chapter 6, although a mere 13 lines, "represents the young Hemingway's answer to the challenge of rendering catastrophic, mind shattering experiences" (Barloon 7). Noted Hemingway scholar Philip Young remarks as to the power of the very first line of this vignette,

It would be quite impossible to exaggerate the importance of this short scene, which to ....serve as climax for all of Hemingway's heroes for at least the next twenty-five years...From here on in the Hemingway hero
is to be a wounded man, wounded not only physically but...psychically as well. (Young 40-41)

This scene could possibly serve as the physical wounding Nick is trying to recover from in “Big Two-Hearted River: Parts I and II.” Hemingway’s vignette reads, “Nick sat against the wall of the church where they had dragged him to be clear of machine gun fire in the street. Both legs stuck out awkwardly. He had ben hit in the spine” (105). In “Big Two-Hearted River: Part I,” Nick’s physical struggles are immediately evident. The moment he departs the train, on the second page of the story, his knapsack around his shoulders is described as “too heavy...it was much too heavy,” he continually “feels the pull of the heavy pack” and “his muscles ache” (164), before his journey even commences. Throughout the pages, Hemingway chronicles Nick’s struggles, as he is “tired” and “stiff and cramped” (166). Parallel with the wounded Nick leaning against the church wall where “both legs struck out awkwardly” (105), is the relaxing Nick in the woods, smoking, “his legs stretched out in front of him” (165), apparently recovering. Nick’s physical ailments and his body formation in each scene lends proof that he is suffering and he is the wounded soldier in the vignette. His scars permeate every move, serving as a constant reminder of the war.

Nick’s mental incapacity escalates profusely, exhibiting nervous tension, while seeking affiliation with the tranquility only the great outdoors could provide. Effortlessly casting a fly fishing line into the river, imbibing the florid sounds of water running over rocks and through the roots of trees, Nick’s immersion is interrupted by the ever present recollections of the war. Although fishing, Nick’s attire resembled that of an infantry soldier, “equipment hanging from him,” “a bottle swung against his chest,” “in his shirt
the breast pocket bulged" ("Big Two-Hearted River: Part II" 175). Stepping into the stream, "it was a shock" and a "rising cold shock" (175). Once hooking a trout, the true moment every fisherman desires, "Nick's hand was shaky. He reeled in slowly. The thrill had been too much. He felt, vaguely, a little sick, as though it would be better to sit down" (177). Proof that Nick's agitation may be lessening, due to his present environment, is evident when he tries to keep his emotions in check. The excitement proving too much, Nick needs to "sit down" and confesses later, "he did not want to rush his sensations any" (177).

Aware of his condition, Nick knows his progress will be slow, yet is determined to get better. Moving at a snail's pace, Nick is taking it gradually, yet methodical in his approach. Nick unhurriedly hikes into the woods, sets-up camp, cooks, makes sandwiches and catches fish. No movement or event is rushed. Meticulous in every detail concerning this venture, Nick acknowledges there is only so much he can do and must bide his time. His hesitancy is displayed upon encountering where "the river narrowed and went into the swamp" (179). The dark and mysterious swamp triggers emotions Nick fails to grasp. A memory of a battle in or near a swamp may haunt Nick's mind. Hemingway writes, "he (Nick) felt a reaction against deep wading" (180), and the swamp is described as "the banks were bare, the big cedars came together overhead, the sun did not come through" (180). Is Hemingway saying Nick fears being drawn in and under, similar to what he may have suffered in trench warfare? Twice, Hemingway uses the word "tragic" to detail the scene, "fishing would be tragic" and "in the swamp, fishing was a tragic adventure" (180). Nick acquiesces to the lurking danger pervading
the swamp, "he was going back to camp, in no rush, content, for now, realizing, 'there were plenty of days coming when he could fish the swamp" (180).

Nick Adams is surely a member of the lost generation. The psychological and physical trauma he experienced, the failure of the U.S government and the Veteran's Bureaus' to assist veterans, and the apathy directed by the majority of the country's population eager to forget the war, has produced in Nick, disillusionment and cynicism towards the human race. Because young men such as Nick "had a peculiar experience in the Great War, they felt hopelessly detached....had feelings of estrangement....and became alienated from the rest of the world" (Toker 25). Unable to interact and identify with society, Nick seeks refuge in nature and its inhabitants. Having more in common with grasshoppers than people, "Nick notices the 'sooty black' grasshoppers' he identifies with their traumatized state, the grasshoppers having 'turned black from living in the burned over land" (Cirino 123). Nick becomes envious of the trout in the clear running stream, in the sun, free to "float down the stream with the current, unresisting" ("Big Two-Hearted River: Part I" 164). Unlike "Soldier's Home," Hemingway produces, other than than the trainman, no human characters.

Although Nick turns his back on society and chooses to be alone, a man must communicate with some form of living entity. Hemingway never mentions or alludes to Nick's parents or any family at all. Nick discovers a viable connection within the confines of the woods, living, breathing creatures that propose little threat and allow him to live the life he desperately seeks. "The only characters," in "Big Two-Hearted River: Parts I and II," "spring from nature, and Nick relates to each one: grasshoppers, trout, a mosquito, a mink, a kingfisher" (Cirino 116). Finding insects and bugs preferable to
people, Nick remains in the woods, left to combat the raging internal conflict prevalent in his mind, body and soul.

Equivalent to “Big Two-Hearted River: Parts I and II,” as an expose detailing a World War I Veterans quest to find meaning in their lives, while quelling the agony torturing their individuality, is another story that utilizes nature as a possible panacea for these ills. “Cross Country Snow” places Nick Adams amidst the beauty of the mountains, always a palliative symbol in Hemingway. The shell shocked and wounded Nick tries to assuage his fears by immersing himself in a life of ease. Mesmerized by the lush mountains of Switzerland and the purity of the whiteness enveloping his being, Nick skis, belonging to the slope, longing for acceptance in the virginity surrounding him.

When first published, “Cross-Country Snow” was labeled a story the unhappy Hemingway penned explaining his own dread upon learning his first wife, Hadley Richardson, was pregnant with child. Hemingway, “portrayed his sullen response in Nick’s series of mechanical replies.....muttered as the two friends stare at the empty bottle that symbolizes empty life” (Myers 120). Upon greater review, “Cross Country Snow” can also stand on its own as another tale detailing the plight of the damaged soldier. Referred to as “very much a war story, or rather a post war story” (Vernon 52), “Cross Country Snow,” according to critic Shelley Fisher-Fishkin opines on Nick, war and skiing, “it is only after Nick has confronted death and pain first hand in the war that he can truly appreciate the miracle of that which is peaceful and beautiful and good in life” (152). Critic Matthew Stewart adds, “Nick refers to having a bad leg that interferes with his ability to ski. From these clues alone it is not reckless to hypothesize that Nick’s unspecified problems in the ultimate story may have their origins in the war” (212).
The lost generation has claimed another victim in the person of Nick Adams in "Cross Country Snow." When the war ends, Nick stays behind in Europe, refusing to join the four million veterans descending on America. Presumably cognizant of the poor treatment and sorry state of affairs awaiting the World War I veteran, Nick remains, languishing in the beautiful mountains of Switzerland. Nick resides in a neutral country, where little English is spoken and one historically apolitical. He does not have to worry about Switzerland declaring war. Dealing with his wounds in his own way, Nick pushes his personal and physical boundaries regardless of the consequences. Skiing provides contentment as it “plucked Nick’s mind out and left him only the wonderful flying dropping sensation in his body” (143). Demanding, often arduous, Nick fails to relinquish, “he knew the pace was too much. But he held it. He would not let go and spill” (143). When Hemingway writes that Nick “held it,” two meanings are proposed. Granted, Nick holds it together while skiing, allegedly too fast, but he also “holds” mental control, as he is “determined to secure a separate peace, a momentary stable condition where the torn fragments of his mind and body are in peaceful balance” (Carey 20).

Meeting the physical challenges skiing provides preempts Nick from thinking of the war. Although his wound prohibits him from performing on the same level as his companion, conceding, “I can’t telemark with my leg” (144), Nick acknowledges skiing can be a solution to his problems. Declaring, “there’s nothing really can touch skiing, is there?” (145), Nick is confessing that the ability to ski and the strength of the sport keeps the war from infiltrating his mind. Skiing is the only event and practice powerful enough to override the horror of the war.
Nick's participation in the sport of skiing serves as a counseling session in hope of curing his shell shock. As noted earlier, therapy was limited for veterans, shell shocked soldiers often medically abused or deemed feminine. The veterans were forced to fend for themselves, broaching various methods, on their own, pursuing rescue from demoralization. Nick Adams, as a member of the lost generation, is wistful in living a carefree life, without consequences or responsibilities. This desire becomes fractured in "Cross Country Snow." Near the story's end, the reader learns Nick's wife is pregnant, and he will return, quite reluctantly, to the United States. Up to this point, Nick is living the life of the wandering soldier: skiing, drinking and dreaming of a carefree life. "Don't you wish we could just bum together," he's asked, retorting a simple "yes" (145). Appearing so submerged in his own life, Nick is reneging on his duties as a husband and future father. At the end, Nick "comes off as a somewhat immature young man, indulging himself on the ski slopes, away from his wife and pregnancy" (Hannum 111).

One must consider the wandering soldier's inability to care for himself, let alone a wife and child. There is not one moment of happiness in Nick's voice when discussing his impending fatherhood, his wife Helen, or his return to family and native country. When George refers to Nick's life as "hell," Nick unaffectedly retorts, "no, not exactly" (146), failing to offer the slightest rebuttal. The final conversation between Nick and George, as they sit in the restaurant drinking wine and eating apple strudel, is filled with war imagery, coupled with Nick's inability to process his demons. Sitting, not skiing, allows the war to permeate Nick's mind. Hemingway is saying, only the act of skiing, can numb Nick's thoughts, and help him forget, sedentariness and inaction dangerous.
Consequently, when Nick states the “ski areas in America are too rocky. There’s too much timber and they’re too far away” (146), war visuals are spread upon the page. Blasted trees and rocks, pictured in every photo of World War I, come before the reader, so blatant, the reader forgets that Nick is discussing a ski area, not a war zone. Nick confirms his presence in this scenario, when he confesses, without emotion, “that’s the way it is everywhere I’ve ever been” (146). Once again, the reader feels Nick is recalling his war experience as he sits contemplating his life. Later, when George suggests they should ski again and Nick returns with, “it isn’t worth while if you can’t” (146), I believe Nick is alluding to more than skiing. The simple word “it,” could possibly define Nick’s life, if he is declaring, that his own life is not worth living, if he cannot ski and use skiing to forget the war. Nick’s reigning despondency could very well produce “life isn’t worth while if you can’t (ski).” When Nick says “there isn’t any good in promising” (147), he is again reflecting on his war tenure, a victim himself of broken promises and engagements.

Often aligned with “Big Two-Hearted River: Parts I and II,” where Nick seeks salvation through fishing, “Cross Country Snow,” in using skiing much the same way, concludes with Nick not holding a fishing pole, but strapping on a pair of skis. As “Big Two-Hearted River: Parts I and II” ends with Nick fishing, “Cross Country Snow” ends with Nick skiing. The reader is left to his own opinion as to where Nick will go from here. On their return to America, the future of anyone tied to the wandering soldier is bleak. Soldiers suffering from shell shock, presumably do not make good husbands and fathers. Nick’s wife and child may be collateral damage, subject to the horrors of war, without ever being involved. Innocent victims, inevitably will also suffer, ones forever
linked to an individual connected to the war, whose only placid moments in his life involve skiing. With his wife and new born child attached to his life, and only adding more responsibility to a man who does not want any, where will this wandering soldier go?

Harold Krebs from “Soldier’s Home,” Nick Adams from “Big Two-Hearted River: Parts I and II”, and “Cross Country Snow,” painstakingly reflect attributes of extreme disengagement favored by members of the lost generation and Hemingway’s wandering soldiers. Their quest to find peace and meaning in their shattered lives forever alters their existence. Incapable of holding jobs or even accepting the slightest responsibility attached to a meaningful, productive existence, these men, although we may assume productive in war, will remain unproductive in society, a society they sacrificed themselves to protect. Altruistically offering their minds, bodies and future to a cause many did not understand, has left them vagrant of the mind and soul. With nothing to live for, these men will go through life as empty shells, symbolistic caricatures, vacuous of feeling. Living solely to seize the moment and live, regardless of penalties, the wandering soldiers created a population that seized an entire decade.

Stealing the 1920s as their own, the World War I veterans lived for the pursuit of pleasure, finding self-prosperity in alcohol and women, devoid of religious and spiritual beliefs. Culminating in a virtual wasteland, 1920s America became famous for bootlegging, celebrity criminals, and promiscuous, scantily clad women frequenting bars. This haphazard, lawless lifestyle, promoted by the wandering soldier, led America into a financial abyss that lasted over a decade, the American economy only recovering from entrance into another “War to end all Wars.”
Although Ernest Hemingway admitted he was greatly affected by his experience in World War I, this involvement never deterred the author from actively participating in other wars fought in his lifetime. Most notably, the Spanish Civil War and World War II, Hemingway engaged in combat; initially as a war correspondent; eventually partaking in conflicts with the enemy. His willingness to pursue war coverage assignments perplexed family, friends and his editor at Scribner’s Publishing, Max Perkins. Did Hemingway spend his life attempting to cure his own shell shock by indulging in war? Is Hemingway scholar Philip Young correct in theorizing that every move Hemingway ever made was due to his wounding in World War I? Perhaps biographer Kenneth Lynn is accurate by assessing all Hemingway’s actions in his life, were not due to war, but to his autocratic mother? Regardless, the aforementioned hypotheses’, accompanied by others, could very well explain Hemingway's suicide at age 61. Due to extensive combat experience, from ages 19-46, while coinciding with numerous health issues such as depression and physical breakdown, Hemingway may have killed himself due to his life long suffering from PTSD. The similarities between Hemingway’s suicide and suicide by other combat veterans should not be ignored. The physical and mental health of battle fatigued veterans is known to deteriorate as they grow older. In addition, the depression a veteran endures as “friends with combat and military experience, begin dying, significantly disrupting the veterans social network and thus their sense of belonging” (Castro 460), certainly has an adverse effect. Similar to the lost generation, wandering soldier, Ernest Hemingway, due to his own volition, was ostracized by many friends and family. Married 4 times and constantly traveling, Hemingway, like the wandering soldier he wrote about, could never settle in one place for an extended
period of time. Because many life long friendships quickly ceased, without explanations, brother and sisters shunned, sons John, Patrick and Gregory often estranged, Hemingway died virtually alone. With his wife Mary sleeping, Hemingway walked into the tiny foyer of a spartanly furnished, 2 bedroom home in the wilderness of Idaho, placed the barrel of a shotgun in his mouth and pulled the trigger with his toes.
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