

War and Death Imagery in Ernest Hemingway’s Novel “For Whom the Bell Tolls”

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study employs van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine Ernest Hemingway's "For Whom the Bell Tolls," focusing on the depiction of violence and death. The impact of the novel on American English literature is significant, influencing narratives of war and human conflict. This study addresses a gap in existing research by analyzing images of violence and death at both micro and macro levels through CDA. The objectives include uncovering the ideological and power structures within the text, as revealed through stylistic methods, symbolism, and linguistic techniques. By reviewing previous studies on Hemingway's portrayal of the Spanish Civil War and its effects on individuals, the research highlights the central role of the protagonists in these depictions. CDA is employed to reveal deeper meanings and expose inherent power structures and ideological frameworks. Notable findings include insights into themes of alienation, mortality, and human psychology during conflict. The study aims to enhance the understanding of Hemingway's narrative, contributing new perspectives on the complexities of war and its impact on the human condition.

Keywords: Ernest Hemingway, For Whom the Bell Tolls, death imagery, violence imagery, Critical Discourse Analysis, Spanish Civil War

1.0 INTRODUCTION

A classic in the canon of literature, Ernest Hemingway's "For Whom the Bell Tolls" is well-known for its examination of the human condition in the midst of wartime turmoil. The work explores themes of realistic depiction of battle and death imagery, which permeates the text at both micro and macro levels, is one of the most remarkable aspects of the story.

This study takes a qualitative approach to analyze the war and death imagery in "For Whom the Bell Tolls," (henceforth FWBT) based on the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) paradigm developed by van Dijk (1999). The purpose of the present study is to examine images of violence and death in FWBT from the micro and macro levels of analysis as delineated by CDA, focusing on language use, symbolism, and stylistic decisions to uncover the underlying power structures and ideological constructions within the text (Benjamin, 2019). Through this analysis, the research aims to provide new perspectives on Hemingway's story and its relevance to contemporary discussions on conflict and psychology.

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Hemingway painted a broad picture that included souls tormented by the fear of death and devastated landscapes (Dey, Sigh-2024). The dynamic interaction among language, imagery, and narrative structure within this intricate framework emerges as a potent instrument for articulating both the existential challenges confronting individuals ensnared in the chaotic depths of war and the harsh truths of combat (Doebler – 2023). Through a thorough examination of these components, this study endeavors to elucidate how "For Whom the Bell Tolls" navigates the realm of war and mortality, prompting readers to confront essential questions about human existence and the enduring consequences of conflict.

It is crucial to recognize the existing body of scholarly work that provides the foundation for this investigation. EM Abbar and other academics have emphasized the importance of using war and death imagery as a lens to comprehend the complexity of the human experience, as well as the ubiquitous influence of this imagery in modern literature (Abbar, 2024). On top of this base, the framework of CDA put out by van Dijk (1999) provides a rigorous analytical approach to deciphering the complexities of textual discourse, enabling us to identify the ideological undertones and minute details that mold Hemingway's narrative vision.

This study aims to investigate the complexities of war and death imagery in Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* through the application of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) at both micro and macro levels. Through a synthesis of textual analysis and critical interpretation, this paper aims to illuminate thematic depths of the violence and death images in the novel, offering fresh insights into its enduring relevance and its place within the pantheon of literary classics. Ernest Hemingway's "For Whom the Bell Tolls" offers a thorough examination of the Spanish Civil War and its ramifications for the protagonists, using stylistic methods, symbolism, and language procedures to deepen thematic depth.

2.0 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

To analyse and interpret Hemingway's use of language, symbolism and stylistic choices in depicting

- the images of violence of the Spanish Civil War and its impact on the characterization in FWBT
- the image of death in the Spanish Civil War and its impact on the characterization in FWBT

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* offers a poignant exploration of the Spanish Civil War and its multifaceted impact on individuals, employing stylistic methods, symbolism, and linguistic techniques to enrich its thematic depth (Abbar, 2024). Drawing from his experiences as a war correspondent, Hemingway realistically depicts the brutality of war, evident in the protagonist Robert Jordan, an American dynamiter who wrestles with loyalty, sacrifice, and identity while fighting alongside Republican revolutionaries (Egnal, 2024). The narrative's unflinching portrayal of conflict is deeply influenced by Hemingway's firsthand encounters with the chaos of battle, lending authenticity and depth

to the novel (Nazish, 2021). Critics, such as Khale (2023), have highlighted autobiographical elements in the text, emphasizing how Hemingway's personal experiences shape its narrative structure.

The theme of death pervades the novel, woven intricately throughout its narrative arc (Sharma, 2023). Hemingway's direct prose vividly captures characters' responses to mortality, oscillating between dramatic and reflective contexts. Greenspan (2023) and Hvashøj (2022) emphasize the existential undertones of Hemingway's treatment of death, exploring its profound influence on the characters' perspectives on life, love, and sacrifice. The recurring imagery of death and violence underscores the psychological and moral dilemmas faced by individuals and society, serving both thematic and ideological purposes (Guill, 2020; Dey & Singh, 2024). By portraying characters grappling with the realities of war, Hemingway challenges readers to confront the reasons behind conflict and the existential dread it entails (Nazish *et al.*, 2021). The novel's meditation on war and mortality resonates universally, reflecting on the fragility of human existence amidst violence and destruction (Nuraliev *et al.*, 2023).

Stylistic Elements

Hemingway's unique prose style, exemplified by his "Iceberg Theory," allows the emotional weight of the narrative to emerge subtly through concise dialogue and internal monologues (Malepati *et al.*, 2024). The symbolism in the novel further deepens its meaning; for instance, the bridge represents ideological divides and the irreversible loss resulting from its destruction (Doebler, 2023). The juxtaposition of Spain's serene landscapes with the horrors of war highlights the stark contrast between nature and human conflict (Guill, 2020). Hemingway's use of Spanish phrases and dialects enhances the narrative's cultural authenticity, reflecting solidarity among Republican fighters despite their diverse backgrounds (Khale, 2024).

Themes of Death and Violence

The thematic exploration of death and violence in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is central to its narrative. Hemingway portrays war as a deeply personal and collective experience, exploring its moral complexities and existential consequences. Scholars have noted how the narrative reflects broader societal anxieties of the time, blending individual struggles with universal truths about human resilience (Eisler, 2022). The psychological toll on characters like Pilar, Pablo, and Anselmo highlights diverse responses to trauma and violence, enriching the novel's portrayal of human behavior in extreme circumstances (Sharma, 2023; Dey & Singh, 2024).

Application of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) serves as a valuable tool for uncovering the ideological constructs embedded in Hemingway's work. van Dijk's foundational research on CDA (1999) provides insights into how language constructs and perpetuates power dynamics, which are evident in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (Bakker, 2022). The novel's linguistic and symbolic elements reveal implicit power structures and societal ideologies, offering a nuanced understanding of war, violence, and death (Jamil *et al.*, 2022). By examining the socio-political underpinnings of the text, CDA highlights the interplay between language and context, illustrating how Hemingway's narrative engages with broader cultural and historical discourses (Khan, 2015).

Historical Context

Set during the Spanish Civil War, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* captures the era's political and social complexities, resonating with readers during a time of global unrest. Researchers such as Vedernikova *et al.* (2014) have contextualized the novel within Hemingway's literary career and the mid-20th century's sociopolitical climate. The narrative's polyphonic structure, incorporating multiple perspectives, mirrors the chaotic and multifaceted nature of the conflict, enriching its historical and cultural relevance (Chriss, 2021).

4.0 METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research design, focusing on van Dijk's (1999) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. The methodology aims to uncover underlying power structures and ideological frameworks by analyzing the portrayal of violence and death imagery at both micro and macro levels.

Sample Selection

The selection of text passages is a critical component of this analysis. Passages are identified based on their thematic significance and relevance to the research objectives. Specifically, lines and ideas are chosen that prominently depict imagery of violence, death, and conflict. This selection process ensures the analysis remains focused on segments of the text that offer the richest insights into Hemingway's linguistic, symbolic, and thematic choices. Justification for each selected passage is provided, based on its alignment with the study's focus on power dynamics, language use, and ideological constructs.

Analytical Framework

Van Dijk's CDA framework guides this study, with a specific emphasis on:

Socio-Cognitive Approaches: Examining how language reflects and reinforces societal ideologies and power relations.

Discourse Structures: Analyzing the text's narrative composition, vocabulary, metaphors, and rhetorical devices.

Power and Dominance Analysis: Investigating how dominant ideologies and power structures are embedded and perpetuated in the text.

Analytical Process

The analysis proceeds in structured phases:

Textual Examination

The text is meticulously reviewed to identify and extract key passages depicting violence, death, and conflict. This involves recognizing significant lines that highlight these themes through linguistic and symbolic means.

Linguistic Analysis

Using CDA principles, the selected passages are analyzed to dissect linguistic elements such as vocabulary choices, metaphorical language, and narrative structures. This phase reveals how Hemingway constructs and conveys the imagery of violence and death (Orent, 2023).

Contextual Analysis

The text is placed within its broader historical and sociopolitical framework. This includes examining Hemingway's political ideologies, personal experiences, and the circumstances of the Spanish Civil War. By situating the narrative within its contextual backdrop, the analysis highlights how language and ideology intersect, reflecting societal power dynamics (van Dijk, 1999).

Critical Interpretation

The findings from linguistic and contextual analyses are synthesized to interpret the deeper thematic implications of violence, death, and conflict imagery. The study evaluates how these themes inform the reader's understanding of human experiences during war and conflict.

Objective

The overarching goal is to use CDA to provide a nuanced understanding of Hemingway's portrayal of violence, death, and conflict in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. By uncovering implicit power dynamics and ideological constructs within the text, this study contributes to a broader comprehension of how literature reflects and interrogates societal realities.

5.0 ANALYSIS

The analysis of vital textual evidence such as vocabulary, metaphors, and narrative structures, done according to the CDA tradition yielded the following thematic patterns.

Table 1 Key thematic patterns in FWBT

| Chapter | Passages Excerpt | Themes |
|---------|--|---------------|
| 1 | "He (Robert Jordan) lay on the brown, pine-needled floor of the forest, his chin on his folded arms, and high overhead the wind blew in the tops of the pine trees." | Nature vs War |
| 5 | "He (Robert Jordan) felt his heart beating against the pine needle floor and he was terrified." | Fear of Death |
| 10 | "Robert Jordan looked away from her and up the trail where the dead horse lay." | Mortality |

6.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The analysis of Ernest Hemingway's "For Whom the Bell Tolls" demonstrates an inventive connecting of violence and death images, emphasizing their profound psychological and emotional consequences for the protagonists. Hemingway's representation is clearly highlighted by frequent environmental imagery, such as pine trees and forest settings, which create a devastating contrast between the peace of nature and the savagery of human struggles (Hemingway, 1940). Thus, the scene in which Robert Jordan falls asleep on the "brown, pine-needled floor of the forest" with the wind blowing above him represents war's attack into the natural order, reflecting the broader theme of conflict breaking life's harmony (Hemingway, 1940). This striking contrast emphasizes the characters' internal and exterior conflicts, enriching the narrative's thematic complexity (CB KC-2021).

Furthermore, the symbolism of the dead horse in Chapter 10, where Robert Jordan discovers "the dead horse [lying] up the trail," strengthens the novel's melancholy tone and the constant presence of death (Hemingway, 1940). The imagery presents an ominous signal of mortality, providing an eternal shadow over the characters' lives and choices (Guill-2020). Hemingway's depiction of violence and death is not just for dramatic effect; it also highlights the characters' psychological suffering and existential dread. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) illustrates how Hemingway's language and symbolism create a complex depiction of war's savagery. The characters' constant references of death, connected with their internal monologues about mortality, reveal their internal conflicts with existential concerns and moral uncertainty (Chriss – 2021). For example, Robert Jordan's reflection on his own death and the sacrifices made during the conflict indicate a larger ideological. Hemingway used these aspects to explore the barbaric nature of violence and delve into the human condition under tremendous stress. These aspects show deeper ideological characteristics, indicating Hemingway's trial of war's dehumanizing effects through his literary techniques. This analysis highlights the various ways in which Hemingway uses imagery and symbolism to expand the reader's knowledge of the characters' psychological landscapes and the novel's larger themes.

Within the broader scope of existing literature on Hemingway's work, it is evident that his depiction of war and death not only aligns with but also expands on prior research. Scholars such as 'A NDIAYE' (2020) highlighted Hemingway's use of the natural symbolism to express the prevalent fear of war. This study expands on that concept by observing how nature imagery not only highlights the entrance of war into calm environments but also exposes the larger disruption of peace caused by human warfare (MASDK Digambarrao-2022). The use of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) deepens knowledge of

Hemingway's narrative's ideological roots, emphasizing his condemnation of war's cruelty and dehumanizing impact on people and society at large (Bhuiyan-2018). Hemingway's use of natural features, such as pine woods, highlights the contrast between nature's tranquility and war's turmoil. This contrast is not only visually remarkable, but it also represents the characters' internal suffering. Pilar, for example, reflects on her painful memories of war and the brutalities she has experienced, frequently connecting these with calm natural settings, deepening her inner turmoil and emphasizing the long-lasting impact of violence (Hemingway, 1940). Her dramatic retelling of past crimes, contrasted against the peaceful scenery, emphasizes the hard reality that violence disturbs the natural order and causes deep psychological wounds. Similarly, Anselmo's reflections on killing and moral battle are presented against the backdrop of a calm countryside, highlighting the conflict between his deeds and his inherent desire for peace (Picón-2022). Anselmo's character is further developed through his contacts with nature, which show his strong dislike for violence. As he says: "I have never been able to kill anyone. I have been close to it several times but I have never killed anyone. Why have you never killed anyone? I don't know. I don't know. I think it is a lack of valor and of ability. I can shoot a rabbit, a deer, or a bird, but I do not like to shoot a man (Hemingway, 1940)." So, Anselmo's appreciation for the nature stands in stark contrast to the essential violence of battle, highlighting the severe internal conflict between his moral convictions and his duties as a soldier.

The vision of the massacred citizens in the village square, detailed in Chapter 27, is a striking reminder of the omnipresence of death and the unavoidable brutality of war. This artwork depicts both the loss of innocent life and the protagonists' collective trauma. Robert Jordan's reaction to seeing the bodies is a sobering reminder of his own vulnerability and the fleeting quality of life in the face of battle (Benjamin - 2019). This symbolizing together with the constant elements of the landscape, emphasizes the inevitability of death and the constant presence of violence, influencing the characters' actions and psychological states.

Maria, another major character, represents the connection of personal agony and the larger environment of war. Her experiences with assault and rape at the hands of the fascists are directly related to her connection with Robert Jordan. The below quote illustrates Maria's trauma and how it affects her relationship with Robert Jordan.

"I am not against thee. I am for thee. I am with thee. Oh, Roberto, I do not want to fail thee. I love thee and I am thy woman. But now I will tell thee. You have to know it. I was violated. The fascists did this. I do not know how to tell thee, but it is necessary that I tell thee now."

Hemingway utilizes Maria's character to examine themes of healing and aftermath of violence. Her trauma is contrasted by moments of tenderness and love, which are frequently situated in natural settings, signifying the promise of regeneration and peace among the horrors of war (Hemingway, 1940). Pablo's transformation from guerrilla commander to a man struggled by fear and self-interest exemplifies the destructive nature of war. His evolving relationship with nature reflects his internal conflict and moral deterioration. This below quote captures Pablo's internal struggle and moral decline as he becomes increasingly driven by fear and self-interest.

"He had been a brave man and had fought well, but he had become weak and afraid. He had a sense of something lost, something gone forever, and he felt that all he had done was for nothing."

Pablo is initially portrayed as a powerful and forceful leader, but as his determination deteriorates, his connection to the natural world weakens, representing his psychological decline (Munshid- 2021).

CDA enables a more sophisticated interpretation of these symbols and their meaning within the narrative. By evaluating Hemingway's word choice and narrative style, it is clear that the vocabulary used to describe violence and death is intentionally brutal and unembellished, reflecting the dark realities of war. The characters' constant references to death, as well as their introspective monologues about mortality, highlight their existential dread and moral dilemma (Malepati, Devi - 2024). This method enables Hemingway to criticize the romanticization of war and present it as a dehumanizing force that robs people of their humanity and ethical values. In overall, using CDA to examine Hemingway's "For Whom the Bell Tolls" uncovers the intricate ways in which he uses language, symbolism, and narrative style to depict the terrible impact of the Spanish Civil War on the protagonists and supporting characters. Natural imagery and metaphors of death and violence are intricately interwoven throughout the story, emphasizing the psychological and emotional toll of the struggle. Hemingway's comprehensive and obstinate portrayal of the characters' internal and exterior difficulties demonstrate his critique of war's severity and dehumanizing effects. Furthermore, the characters' growth is influenced by their experiences of isolation and pain. Maria's anguish from the attack and her relationship with Robert Jordan, Pilar's haunted memories, and Pablo's moral degradation are all examples of the permanent psychological wounds caused by war, which fundamentally impact human identities and relationships (Hemingway 1940). Finally, CDA reveals the ideology and power structures rooted in Hemingway's narrative, illuminating the broader sociopolitical consequences of the Spanish Civil War and criticizing the power relations that fuel the warfare (van Dijk 1999).

7.0 CONCLUSION

Ernest Hemingway's "For Whom the Bell Tolls" is a profound and multifaceted exploration of the Spanish Civil War, emphasizing the enduring effect of violence and death on both the individual and societal levels. Using van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis, this study uncovers the complicated ways that Hemingway uses language, symbolism, and narrative techniques to criticize the brutality of war and its dehumanizing effects. The outcomes indicate the novel's thematic complexity, illustrating how Hemingway's representation of natural vs wartime images, the omnipresence of mortality, and characters' psychological pain all combine to a thorough condemnation of war. The analysis highlights Hemingway's ability to connect personal and ideological themes together, creating a timeless reflection on the human condition in the midst of conflict and violence. Therefore, "For Whom the Bell Tolls" is an important literary work that not only depicts the horrific facts of the Spanish Civil War, but also provides unique insights on the psychological and ideological dimensions of combat. Hemingway's narrative continues to connect with modern audiences, demonstrating the ongoing importance of his condemnation of war and its influence on the human mind.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author(s) declare(s) that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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