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**Hidden Scars: Revisiting Partition, Memory, and Mental Health in Hemingway's *Hills Like White Elephants* and *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place* in Modern Era**

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**Abstract:**

This paper explores the intersection of partition, memory and trauma in human life by Hemingway's *Hills Like White Elephant* and *A Clean Well-Lighted Place*. Also utilizing Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, Cathy Caruth's trauma studies and contemporary mental health perspectives. In *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place*, the two waiters' conversation about the old man who seeks refuge in a café reveals their contrasting views on life, despair, and the psychological toll of aging and isolation. The story explores the emotional and existential trauma of loneliness, the search for meaning, and the alienation that often accompanies old age. This struggle, especially in the context of the café as a metaphor for sanctuary or escape, emphasizes the existential crises faced by individuals who feel disconnected from society or the meaning of life. In *Hills Like White Elephants*, the couple's conversation about a medical procedure implied to be an abortion becomes the focal point of a deeper, unspoken conflict. The dialogue between the man and the woman is seemingly casual and full of surface-level distractions, but beneath it, there is a tension about the emotional and psychological impact of the procedure. Their inability to communicate openly about their feelings or the implications of their choices reflects a form of emotional suppression and trauma. Both stories resonate with modern-day issues surrounding partitioned identities, memory, and mental health awareness, especially when viewed through the lens of societal trauma and psychological dislocation. Through Freud and Caruth's theories, this paper underscores the importance of literary analysis in 21<sup>st</sup> century human mental health discourse, the paper addresses how trauma manifests across temporal and cultural contexts, bridging personal and historical experiences. By bridging literary analysis, the paper highlights the universality of Hemingway's themes in navigating individual and collective trauma. In this paper trauma theory, memory studies, and psychoanalysis are highly relevant in understanding the depth of Hemingway's minimalist style and its exploration of the human condition. This research focus on how Hemingway's works encapsulate trauma and memory, their relevance to contemporary mental health, and how psychoanalytic and trauma theories enhance this understanding. By emphasizing literary engagement as a tool for cultivating empathy and fostering discussions on mental health, bridging the gap between past narratives and present realities.

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**Keywords:** Trauma, Memory, Mental Health, Psychoanalysis, Partitioned identities, Literary engagement, Existential crises, Hidden Scars.

### Introduction

In the modern era, the exploration of trauma, memory, and mental health has taken on heightened significance, particularly in understanding how historical events shape individual and collective identities (Andrews & Ballantine, 2019; Kumar Bharti & Bindunath Jha, 2025). This paper delves into the intersection of partition, memory, and trauma through Ernest Hemingway's works *Hills Like White Elephants* and *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place*. These two short stories, while set in different contexts, both reflect deep psychological struggles and the emotional scars left by unspoken trauma (Chen, 2022; Abdo, 1991). Drawing on Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory (Kline, 2014; Marson & Dovyak, 2024) and Cathy Caruth's trauma studies (Hirth, 2018), the analysis also engages with contemporary mental health perspectives (Reynolds et al., 2022; Yakovleva, 2022) to highlight the ways in which Hemingway's minimalist style encapsulates the emotional depth of human experience.

In *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place*, the conversation between two waiters about an old man seeking refuge in a café reveals a profound commentary on the human condition (McGee, 2007). The story focuses on the existential trauma of aging and isolation, portraying the psychological toll that loneliness and despair exert on the individual (Chen, 2022). The café itself serves as a metaphor for sanctuary, a space where the characters can escape the harsh realities of life, but it is also a space of alienation. The older waiter's empathy for the old man's struggle reflects a deep understanding of existential crises, where individuals grapple with the meaninglessness of life. This story speaks to a broader theme of emotional dislocation, resonating with modern-day concerns about mental health and the effects of isolation in contemporary society (Reynolds et al., 2022).

In *Hills Like White Elephants*, the seemingly casual conversation between a man and a woman about a medical procedure, implied to be an abortion, masks a deeper emotional and psychological tension (Abdo, 1991; Kale & Raskauskas, 2021). The couple's inability to communicate openly about the procedure and its implications speaks to a form of emotional suppression, a common feature of trauma (Rogier et al., 2019; Tsai & Lu, 2018). The unresolved conflict between the characters underscores the psychological burden of decisions that are never fully discussed or understood. This story reflects how trauma, particularly in the form of suppressed emotions, manifests in subtle but profound ways. Both stories thus offer rich insights into the psychological impact of unacknowledged trauma and the difficulty of confronting painful memories.

Through the lenses of Freud's psychoanalysis and Caruth's trauma theory, this paper highlights the universality of Hemingway's themes, suggesting that the emotional and psychological struggles portrayed in his works transcend both time and culture (Kline, 2014;

Hirth, 2018). By examining the interplay between partitioned identities, memory, and mental health in these stories, this paper argues that Hemingway's exploration of the human psyche remains highly relevant in contemporary discussions about trauma and mental health (Chen, 2022; Yakovleva, 2022). Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of literary engagement in fostering empathy and promoting mental health awareness (Reynolds et al., 2022). Through an analysis of Hemingway's work, this paper demonstrates how literature can serve as a powerful tool in bridging past narratives with present-day struggles, encouraging a deeper understanding of trauma, memory, and the human condition.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Trauma and Memory in Literature**

Trauma theory has become an essential framework for understanding how emotional and psychological suffering is represented in literature, particularly when exploring the way traumatic events shape memory and identity. Scholars such as Cathy Caruth have been central to the development of trauma theory, and her work has influenced literary studies by providing tools to analyze the portrayal of trauma in narrative forms (Hirth, 2018; Kumar Bharti & Bindunath Jha, 2025).

In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Caruth posits that trauma is not just an event that causes suffering, but an experience that resists full understanding and is often expressed in fragmented and delayed ways (Hirth, 2018). She suggests that trauma's effects are not immediately understood by the individual but emerge later, often in indirect forms, creating an enduring psychological wound. In literature, this delayed reaction to trauma is often conveyed through non-linear narratives, fragmented memories, and the difficulty characters face in articulating their pain. Hemingway's stories align with this model, as characters' struggles are deeply felt but rarely expressed explicitly (Chen, 2022).

Research on trauma and testimony in partition literature also supports this perspective, showing how silenced or fragmented voices embody the haunting effects of trauma across cultural and historical contexts (Kumar Bharti & Bindunath Jha, 2025). In Hemingway's short fiction, such as *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place* and *Hills Like White Elephants*, trauma appears in fragmented and indirect ways. The old man's grief and loneliness or the couple's suppressed dialogue about abortion resonate with the unspeakability of trauma that Caruth identifies (Abdoo, 1991; Kale & Raskauskas, 2021). Hemingway's minimalist style thus amplifies the emotional scars that remain unarticulated, reflecting how trauma often resists direct confrontation.

#### **Psychoanalytic Approaches**

Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory has long influenced the interpretation of trauma and memory in literature, particularly through concepts such as repression, melancholia, and the unconscious (Kline, 2014). Freud's ideas help uncover the unconscious motivations and emotional struggles often repressed by individuals dealing with trauma. These ideas are critical when analyzing Hemingway's works, where characters grapple with

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unspoken emotional distress, and their inner lives are shaped by silenced experiences (Marson & Dovyak, 2024).

Freud's concept of repression is central to Hemingway's *Hills Like White Elephants*. The couple's inability to openly discuss the abortion illustrates avoidance of painful realities, as the man downplays the situation while Jig suppresses her conflicted feelings (Abdo, 1991; Rogier et al., 2019; Tsai & Lu, 2018). Their silences and indirect language mirror the psychological process of repression, where traumatic content is pushed out of awareness. Melancholia, another key Freudian concept, is evident in *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place*. The old man's grief likely connected to the loss of his wife remains unresolved, surfacing in his nightly visits to the café. His repetitive search for refuge embodies the lingering nature of melancholia, while the older waiter's empathy underscores awareness of this enduring pain (Chen, 2022).

Finally, Freud's idea of the unconscious resonates with Hemingway's style. In *Hills Like White Elephants*, much of the couple's emotional content is hidden beneath sparse dialogue, echoing the unconscious processes that shape behavior and emotion outside of awareness (Kline, 2014). Hemingway's minimalist prose reflects this layering, where meaning is submerged below the surface.

Freud's theories thus provide a powerful lens for analyzing Hemingway's characters, whose repression, denial, and melancholia reflect the long-lasting effects of trauma. By connecting psychoanalysis with trauma theory, critics gain a richer understanding of how Hemingway portrays the psychological dislocation and emotional pain of unspoken experiences.

### **Hemingway's Minimalist Style**

One of the key aspects of Hemingway's writing that has been widely discussed in literary scholarship is his use of the "iceberg theory". This theory, as described by Hemingway himself, suggests that the bulk of a story's meaning lies beneath the surface, with only a small portion visible in the narrative. Hemingway's minimalist approach, where much is implied rather than directly stated, creates a space for the reader to engage with the unsaid emotions, memories, and psychological trauma that his characters experience (Abdo, 1991; Kale & Raskauskas, 2021).

In the context of trauma and memory, the iceberg theory is particularly effective. Hemingway does not explicitly spell out the trauma experienced by his characters; instead, he allows the emotional weight of their experiences to surface in subtle ways through their actions, dialogue, and inner conflict. In *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place*, for instance, the old man's sadness and existential despair are never openly discussed, yet they are felt through the way he repeatedly seeks solace in the café (Chen, 2022). Similarly, in *Hills Like White Elephants*, the unspoken tension between the couple reveals the emotional weight of their decision to undergo an abortion, even though the procedure is never named (Abdo, 1991; Kale & Raskauskas, 2021).

Scholars have pointed out that Hemingway's omissions in his narratives create a sense of psychological depth that mirrors the complexity of human emotions, especially when dealing with trauma and memory (Hirth, 2018; Kumar Bharti & Bindunath Jha, 2025). The lack of explicit narration invites the reader to engage with the emotional subtext, forcing them to confront the unspeakable and to read between the lines. Hemingway's minimalist style, therefore, becomes a means of representing the unspeakable nature of trauma, where much of the emotional impact is left to the reader's interpretation, much like how individuals with trauma often leave their pain unspoken, either out of necessity or fear (Rogier et al., 2019; Tsai & Lu, 2018).

This narrative technique enhances the thematic depth of his works by emphasizing the emotional and psychological distance that trauma creates. The iceberg theory is particularly useful in portraying the fragmented nature of memory and the difficulty of confronting past trauma. In both *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place* and *Hills Like White Elephants*, Hemingway's characters grapple with experiences they cannot fully process or articulate, and the minimalist structure of his stories reinforces this internal struggle (Chen, 2022; Abdo, 1991). The silence and omissions in his narratives reflect the challenges that individuals face in confronting their trauma, suggesting that memory, like Hemingway's iceberg, is not just about what is seen on the surface but about what remains hidden and unspoken (Hirth, 2018).

### **Contemporary Mental Health Perspectives**

The role of literature in reflecting and contributing to modern understandings of mental health is an area of growing interest in both literary studies and psychology. Hemingway's exploration of trauma, repression, loneliness, and aging aligns with many contemporary concerns in mental health, where themes of isolation, unresolved grief, and the psychological toll of trauma are becoming increasingly recognized (Reynolds et al., 2022; Yakovleva, 2022). Modern perspectives on mental health emphasize the importance of understanding the emotional and psychological effects of trauma, particularly in terms of how it impacts one's sense of self, relationships, and the ability to find meaning in life.

In *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place*, the old man's isolation and search for refuge in the café resonate with contemporary discussions of loneliness, particularly among older adults. Social isolation is a significant risk factor for mental health problems such as depression and anxiety, and the emotional desolation of the old man mirrors the psychological toll that loneliness can have on an individual (Reynolds et al., 2022). The older waiter's empathy for the man's suffering also underscores the importance of human connection in maintaining emotional well-being. The café, while providing temporary solace, cannot address the deeper emotional wounds caused by loneliness and loss, highlighting the limitations of external solutions to internal struggles (Chen, 2022).

Similarly, in *Hills Like White Elephants*, the couple's inability to communicate openly about the abortion reflects a modern understanding of the psychological consequences of unspoken trauma (Abdo, 1991; Kale & Raskauskas, 2021). The story

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highlights how the repression of emotions and the avoidance of difficult conversations can have lasting effects on mental health (Rogier et al., 2019; Tsai & Lu, 2018). Today, mental health professionals recognize the importance of addressing suppressed emotions, particularly when it comes to significant life decisions, as failure to process these emotions can lead to anxiety, depression, and relationship problems.

Both stories also reflect the contemporary understanding that unresolved grief whether from the loss of a loved one, an abortion, or the passage of time can create profound emotional scars. The inability to confront grief, as seen in the old man's melancholia and the couple's emotional detachment in *Hills Like White Elephants*, is a theme that resonates with modern psychological research on grief and mourning (Chen, 2022; Reynolds et al., 2022). Scholars in the field of contemporary mental health emphasize the importance of recognizing and processing grief, as unresolved grief can contribute to long-term mental health issues (Yakovleva, 2022).

Hemingway's works offer valuable insights into the psychological dynamics of trauma, memory, and mental health, and they continue to resonate with contemporary mental health concerns. The iceberg theory, when applied to the themes of repression and trauma, highlights the emotional complexities that remain beneath the surface of the characters' experiences, inviting readers to engage with the unspeakable pain that trauma often creates. Through psychoanalytic theories, trauma studies, and contemporary mental health perspectives, this research underscores the timeless relevance of Hemingway's exploration of the human psyche, demonstrating the continued importance of literature in fostering empathy and understanding of mental health (Kline, 2014; Marson & Dovyak, 2024).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this research aims to explore the psychological dimensions of trauma, memory, and mental health in Ernest Hemingway's *Hills Like White Elephants* and *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place*. Both stories are deeply imbued with themes of emotional dislocation, isolation, and unspoken trauma that resonate with contemporary concerns about mental health and psychological scars (Abdoo, 1991; Chen, 2022; Kale & Raskauskas, 2021). This framework is primarily based on the intersection of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, Cathy Caruth's trauma theory, and contemporary mental health discourse (Hirth, 2018; Kline, 2014; Reynolds et al., 2022). These theories will be employed to analyze the complex emotional and psychological struggles of the characters in Hemingway's works and how these struggles reflect broader social and psychological phenomena, particularly related to partitioned identities, existential crises, and the psychological toll of trauma (Chen, 2022; Hirth, 2018; Kline, 2014).

### **Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory: Repression, the Unconscious, and Trauma**

Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory offers a foundational framework for understanding how trauma, memory, and mental health intersect in Hemingway's stories. Freud's ideas about repression, the unconscious mind, and the ways in which past experiences influence present behavior provide essential tools for exploring the emotional and psychological conflicts of the characters in *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place* and *Hills Like*

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White Elephants (Kline, 2014). Specifically, Freud's concepts of repression and the return of the repressed will be applied to examine the characters' internal struggles with trauma and their inability to confront or express their emotional pain (Kline, 2014; Marson & Dovyak, 2024).

**Repression and the Unconscious Mind:** Repression is a central tenet of Freud's theory. It refers to the unconscious process by which painful or traumatic memories are buried in the psyche to avoid emotional distress. In both *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place* and *Hills Like White Elephants*, the characters exhibit signs of repression. In *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place*, the older waiter's empathy for the old man suggests that he may have repressed similar feelings of despair and isolation. The older waiter's awareness of the man's struggles is a reflection of Freud's theory of the unconscious, where unresolved trauma is expressed through unconscious thoughts and actions. His understanding of the old man's despair might mirror a repressed recognition of his own existential crisis, which he is unable or unwilling to confront (Chen, 2022; Kline, 2014). In *Hills Like White Elephants*, the man and woman's inability to directly discuss the abortion and its emotional ramifications reflects the mechanism of repression. The couple's dialogue is fragmented, evasive, and seemingly detached from the gravity of the situation, indicating that both characters are suppressing their true emotions. Freud's notion of the return of the repressed the idea that suppressed emotions or memories will resurface in indirect ways is evident here. The emotional tension between the couple manifests not in direct confrontation but in the avoidance of the subject. This repression, therefore, becomes a crucial aspect of understanding their emotional and psychological struggles (Abdoo, 1991; Kale & Raskauskas, 2021; Rogier et al., 2019; Tsai & Lu, 2018).

**The Return of the Repressed:** Freud's concept of the return of the repressed suggests that traumatic memories, though buried in the unconscious, will eventually reemerge, often in distorted or indirect forms. This process is evident in both stories. In *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place*, the old man's repeated visits to the café reflect a need to confront his own repressed grief and loneliness. His ritualistic behavior can be interpreted as a form of repetition compulsion, where the old man is unconsciously attempting to relive or reconcile with his trauma. This idea is aligned with Freud's belief that individuals may unconsciously seek out situations that recreate past traumas in an effort to work through them, even if they are unaware of the process (Chen, 2022; Kline, 2014). In *Hills Like White Elephants*, the couple's inability to openly discuss the abortion may result in the trauma resurfacing in distorted ways, such as in the underlying tension of their conversation. The more they avoid confronting the emotional impact of the abortion, the more their unresolved conflict manifests in subtle forms misunderstandings, avoidance, and a general sense of emotional disconnection. Freud's idea of the return of the repressed thus offers valuable insights into the psychological dynamics at play in these stories (Abdoo, 1991; Kale & Raskauskas, 2021).

#### **Cathy Caruth's Trauma Theory: The Unheeded Wound and the Unspoken Trauma**

Cathy Caruth's trauma theory, particularly her concept of trauma as an experience that is never fully processed and continues to haunt individuals in indirect and fragmented ways,

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offers a critical lens for understanding the psychological scars in Hemingway's works. Caruth posits that trauma is not only an event that causes suffering but is also an experience that resists full understanding, often revealing itself in delayed and fragmented ways. Trauma, according to Caruth, is experienced in the form of a "wound" that cannot be fully healed and continues to affect the person long after the event has passed (Hirth, 2018; Kumar Bharti & Bindunath Jha, 2025).

The Unspoken Trauma: In both of Hemingway's stories, trauma is left unspoken and unresolved. In *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place*, the old man's traumatic loss of his wife is never openly discussed, yet it shapes his psychological and emotional state. His repeated visits to the café suggest a deep-seated need to confront his grief, but his inability to verbalize this pain leaves it unprocessed. The trauma, in this sense, is unspoken and unresolved, reflecting Caruth's idea that traumatic experiences often elude direct articulation and are instead expressed indirectly (Chen, 2022; Hirth, 2018). Similarly, in *Hills Like White Elephants*, the abortion, which is the central trauma of the narrative, is never openly acknowledged by the characters. The couple's inability to communicate directly about the procedure reflects Caruth's theory that trauma often resists expression and remains unspoken. The emotional fragmentation and evasiveness between the couple mirror the fragmented nature of trauma itself, where the experience is not fully integrated into the person's consciousness and continues to shape behavior in indirect ways. Caruth's theory of trauma as an unheeded wound, then, helps illuminate how the characters' emotional and psychological pain remains unresolved, shaping their lives in subtle yet significant ways (Abdo, 1991; Hirth, 2018; Kale & Raskauskas, 2021). Delayed and Fragmented Trauma: Another key aspect of Caruth's trauma theory is the idea of delayed trauma, where the full impact of a traumatic event is not immediately realized but surfaces at a later time. In *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place*, the old man's trauma is evident in his search for refuge in the café, but it is unclear whether he fully understands or has accepted the gravity of his emotional pain. His actions suggest a form of delayed recognition, where the trauma is re-lived through repeated behavior rather than through a conscious acknowledgment of the wound (Chen, 2022). In *Hills Like White Elephants*, the emotional tension between the man and woman is similarly delayed and fragmented. The couple's avoidance of the topic of abortion suggests that the full emotional impact of their decision has not been realized or processed. The trauma, though present in the narrative, remains delayed and fragmented, as the characters are unable or unwilling to confront it head-on. Caruth's theory of delayed and fragmented trauma, therefore, is central to understanding how Hemingway's characters grapple with unresolved emotional scars (Hirth, 2018).

### **Contemporary Mental Health Discourse: Trauma, Memory, and Psychological Dislocation**

Contemporary mental health discourse provides a modern framework for understanding how trauma, memory, and psychological dislocation intersect in Hemingway's stories. Mental health professionals today increasingly recognize the importance of addressing trauma and its long-term effects on individuals' well-being. In the context of the modern world, trauma is often seen as a socially and psychologically constructed phenomenon, shaped by cultural



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and historical contexts, and impacting not only the individual but also the collective psyche (Reynolds et al., 2022; Tsai & Lu, 2018; Yakovleva, 2022). Psychological Dislocation and Alienation: In both *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place* and *Hills Like White Elephants*, the themes of isolation and alienation are central to understanding the psychological dislocation of the characters. The older waiter in *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place* empathizes with the old man's sense of alienation, recognizing that the café serves as a rare space of refuge from the world's harshness. This theme resonates with contemporary concerns about the mental health effects of loneliness and social isolation. The isolation in the story is not merely physical but also psychological, reflecting the emotional dislocation that can occur when individuals feel disconnected from others and from themselves (Chen, 2022; Reynolds et al., 2022). In *Hills Like White Elephants*, the psychological dislocation is more pronounced. The couple is emotionally disconnected, unable to communicate openly about their feelings or decisions. The tension between the characters reflects a sense of alienation, not only from each other but also from their own emotions. This alienation is a form of psychological dislocation, where the characters are estranged from their own inner worlds, unable to reconcile their feelings and experiences. Modern mental health discourse frequently addresses the detrimental effects of emotional dislocation, particularly in relationships, as it contributes to the development of mental health issues such as depression and anxiety (Rogier et al., 2019; Tsai&Lu,2018;Yakovleva,2022).

By applying these theories to Hemingway's works, we gain a deeper understanding of how emotional and psychological trauma is manifested in the characters' behavior, dialogue, and relationships. The interplay between repression, the return of the repressed, and delayed trauma reveals how unresolved emotional pain continues to shape the lives of individuals, resonating with broader themes of psychological dislocation and alienation. Through this theoretical lens, we can appreciate the timeless relevance of Hemingway's exploration of the human condition and its connection to contemporary discussions about mental health and trauma (Hirth, 2018; Kline, 2014; Reynolds et al., 2022).

### **Analysis of Hemingway's Stories**

#### **Hills Like White Elephants**

In Ernest Hemingway's *Hills Like White Elephants*, the central conflict revolves around an implied abortion between a couple, a man, and a woman, who are waiting at a train station in Spain. The story unfolds through dialogue, revealing the emotional tension between the two characters. The man, who remains unnamed throughout the story, pressures the woman, Jig, to undergo an abortion, although he downplays the significance of the procedure, presenting it as a simple and uncomplicated matter. Jig, on the other hand, is hesitant, unsure of her feelings about the procedure and her relationship with the man. The story's minimalist style creates a sense of ambiguity, and the dialogue itself, which is seemingly casual and focused on surface-level concerns, hides deeper emotional and psychological struggles. The conflict is not just about the abortion but also about their inability to communicate openly about their desires, fears, and future together. Hemingway uses the setting, symbols, and dialogue to suggest the profound emotional disconnect

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between the characters, making the story a poignant exploration of suppressed emotions and unspoken trauma. (Abdoo, 1991; Kale & Raskauskas, 2021)

A central theme in *Hills Like White Elephants* is the couple's inability to communicate openly about the abortion, reflecting a larger issue of emotional repression and avoidance. Throughout the story, the couple engages in a conversation that seems at first glance to be about the physical location (the hills), but beneath the surface, it is laden with unspoken psychological tension. The man's repeated insistence that the procedure is "perfectly simple" contrasts sharply with Jig's more ambiguous, tentative responses. His efforts to downplay the abortion's significance reflect his need to suppress the emotional gravity of the situation, particularly regarding the potential impact on their relationship and her psychological well-being. He doesn't explicitly acknowledge her emotional distress or the complexity of her decision. This dynamic is representative of emotional suppression, where the trauma of the situation is avoided or minimized rather than addressed openly. (Rogier et al., 2019; Tsai & Lu, 2018)

Jig's hesitations and her repeated references to the hills, which resemble white elephants, point to her unspoken anxiety. In Freudian terms, the white elephant can be seen as a symbolic representation of a hidden trauma or an unspeakable truth that looms over their conversation but is never directly confronted. Freud's idea of repression suggests that the trauma of the abortion is something both characters are pushing down, unable to process or articulate. The emotional repression, seen in their failure to engage in open dialogue, creates relational tension, suggesting that their emotional disconnection will have lasting repercussions on their relationship, much like unacknowledged trauma can distort and hinder psychological growth. (Kline, 2014)

#### **Memory and Its Impact on Decision-Making:**

The characters' memories and unresolved emotions are crucial to understanding their present interaction and decision-making. The abortion is not just a medical decision but also a psychological one, influenced by the couple's past experiences and their emotional baggage. In the story, the dialogue reveals that their relationship is marked by uncertainty, and there is an underlying sense that their shared past has not been fully reconciled. The tension between them hints at emotional history perhaps unresolved conflicts or unspoken fears that shape their decision-making. (Hirth, 2018) Jig's emotional resistance to the abortion can be seen as influenced by her memories of life before this relationship, before the pregnancy. Her desire for something more meaningful, symbolized by her longing for the hills and her subtle references to a different life, contrasts with the man's pragmatism. Her past experiences, her sense of self, and her underlying desires for a life of greater fulfillment challenge the decision being made. The trauma of the past, perhaps related to their life together or her fear of what the abortion might mean for her identity, weighs heavily on her present emotional state and decision-making process. Freud's theory of the unconscious suggests that past experiences, particularly unresolved trauma, play a significant role in shaping our current behavior, even when we are not consciously aware of it. This tension

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between past and present, between memory and decision-making, creates an emotional rift between the couple that neither can fully articulate or overcome. (Kline, 2014)

**Psychoanalytic Insights:**

From a psychoanalytic perspective, Freud's concepts of repression and denial offer valuable insights into the psychological dynamics of Hills Like White Elephants. Repression occurs when painful memories or emotions are pushed into the unconscious to avoid emotional distress. In this story, both the man and Jig are engaged in repressing the emotional significance of their decision about the abortion. The man, in particular, demonstrates denial, as he tries to convince Jig that the procedure is easy and that it will not affect their relationship. His refusal to acknowledge the emotional depth of the situation and the potential trauma it could cause represents a classic defense mechanism denial. (Kline, 2014; Marson & Dovyak, 2024) Jig's ambiguous responses and her growing emotional distance reflect the repressed nature of her trauma. Her decision to maintain a facade of calmness and agreeability is a way to cope with the underlying distress she feels. According to Freud's theory, such repression can manifest in indirect ways through subtle acts of resistance (like her hesitant comments about the hills) or in actions that may seem trivial but carry deeper psychological meanings. (Kline, 2014) The psychoanalytic lens emphasizes the importance of understanding the psychological defenses the characters use to manage their trauma. Both repression and denial play significant roles in their inability to confront the emotional complexity of their situation, which results in a decision that is never fully communicated or resolved. (Kline, 2014)

**Relevance to Contemporary Mental Health:**

Hills Like White Elephants resonates with modern mental health concerns, particularly the ways in which individuals avoid addressing difficult emotional experiences. The lack of communication and the suppression of trauma reflect how mental health issues, particularly those related to reproductive health, can be stigmatized and ignored. In contemporary society, many individuals struggle to communicate openly about issues such as abortion, mental health, and emotional pain, often due to societal pressure or personal fears of rejection and judgment. The story highlights the psychological toll of such repression, where individuals may avoid confronting painful decisions to maintain a sense of control or normalcy, but ultimately, the lack of dialogue exacerbates their emotional suffering. (Tsai & Lu, 2018; Rogier et al., 2019) The story speaks to the importance of open communication in relationships, particularly when it comes to emotionally charged decisions. The unresolved emotional conflict between the couple mirrors the challenges many individuals face when they suppress difficult emotions or fail to engage in honest discussions about their psychological needs. This is especially relevant in modern contexts where mental health awareness is becoming increasingly important, yet stigma still surrounds certain issues, such as abortion or trauma. (Reynolds et al., 2022)

**A Clean, Well-Lighted Place**

In A Clean, Well-Lighted Place, the story focuses on an old man who seeks refuge in a café, trying to escape the despair of his life. The narrative alternates between two waiters, one young and impatient, the other older and more empathetic, as they discuss the old man's situation. The young waiter is dismissive of the old man, focusing on his own frustrations

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with life, while the older waiter empathizes with the man's loneliness and existential despair. The old man's quiet suffering is contrasted with the busy, self-centered lives of the waiters, highlighting the isolation that comes with aging and the search for meaning in a seemingly indifferent world. (Chen, 2022; McGee, 2007)

The café itself becomes a symbolic space, representing both refuge and alienation. For the old man, it offers temporary solace from his solitude, but the emptiness of his life is never truly addressed. The story delves into the existential crises faced by individuals who feel disconnected from society or from the meaning of life, emphasizing themes of isolation, aging, and mental health. (Chen, 2022)

#### **Isolation and Existential Despair:**

The café in *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place* serves as a metaphor for sanctuary amidst the emotional emptiness of life. The old man's repeated visits suggest his search for meaning and escape from his overwhelming loneliness. However, the café's clean and well-lit atmosphere contrasts sharply with the internal darkness the old man experiences. Hemingway portrays the café as a transient space, a temporary refuge where the old man can seek some sense of peace, but it does not resolve his existential despair. His search for solace in this public space underscores the profound alienation he feels. (Chen, 2022) The old man's loneliness is compounded by the lack of connection with others. The waiters, despite being physically present, do not offer him true companionship or understanding. The younger waiter, who is impatient and dismissive, is indifferent to the old man's emotional state, while the older waiter's understanding highlights the psychological toll of aging and loneliness. Through this contrast, Hemingway underscores the isolating nature of despair, particularly when individuals feel disconnected from the world around them. (Reynolds et al., 2022)

#### **Aging and Mental Health:**

The psychological toll of aging is a central theme in *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place*. The old man's life is marked by the loss of his wife, and his visits to the café are a way to cope with the profound sense of grief and loss. Aging, as depicted in the story, is not just a physical decline but an emotional and existential process that brings forth feelings of helplessness and despair. The old man's mental health is deteriorating, and the café serves as a temporary respite from his overwhelming sense of isolation. (Chen, 2022) This theme resonates with modern concerns about aging and mental health, particularly in the context of elder care and the mental health challenges faced by older adults. Many elderly individuals experience feelings of loneliness, depression, and a lack of purpose as they navigate the complexities of aging. The old man in the story embodies these struggles, highlighting the psychological toll of aging and the need for understanding and support in later years. (Reynolds et al., 2022; Yakovleva, 2022)

#### **Trauma and Melancholia:**

From a psychoanalytic perspective, the old man's silent struggle can be understood through Freud's notion of melancholia. Melancholia, a form of mourning, occurs when the individual is unable to fully process or let go of a past loss, resulting in a profound sense of despair and self-criticism. In *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place*, the old man's mourning of his

wife's death is not explicitly discussed, but his repeated visits to the café and his disconnection from life suggest an unresolved trauma that he is unable to confront or process. The old man's melancholia reflects a broader existential crisis, where the pain of loss and the inability to find meaning in life create a sense of emotional paralysis. (Kline, 2014; Chen, 2022) Freud's concept of melancholia provides a lens through which we can understand the old man's psychological state. His inability to escape his grief, coupled with his sense of alienation, highlights the destructive effects of unprocessed trauma. The old man's search for refuge in the café, while providing temporary relief, cannot heal the deep emotional wounds he carries. (Kline, 2014)

#### **Relevance to Contemporary Society:**

A Clean, Well-Lighted Place offers a poignant commentary on the modern human experience, particularly in relation to loneliness, elder care, and the search for meaning in life. In contemporary society, aging is often associated with feelings of alienation and the emotional toll of losing loved ones. The old man's search for refuge in the café reflects the challenges many elderly individuals face in finding connection and support during the later stages of life. (Reynolds et al., 2022) Moreover, the story highlights the importance of empathy and understanding when addressing mental health issues related to aging. The older waiter's sensitivity to the old man's suffering underscores the need for greater awareness and support for the mental health needs of the elderly, who may face feelings of isolation and despair as they navigate the complexities of growing old. A Clean, Well-Lighted Place serves as a timeless reminder of the importance of human connection and empathy in confronting the psychological toll of aging and loneliness. (Reynolds et al., 2022; Yakovleva, 2022)

#### **Bridging the Past and Present Trauma Across Temporal and Cultural Contexts:**

Ernest Hemingway's works, particularly *Hills Like White Elephants* and *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place*, offer profound insights into the human condition that transcend both time and cultural boundaries. Although written in the early 20th century, these stories explore psychological and emotional experiences such as trauma, repression, isolation, and the search for meaning that are as relevant today as they were during Hemingway's time (Abdo, 1991; Chen, 2022; Kale & Raskauskas, 2021). The minimalist style employed by Hemingway allows for an exploration of these universal themes without the need for explicit elaboration, leaving space for the reader to engage with the characters' internal struggles and the emotional complexities of their situations (Hirth, 2018). Trauma, as a psychological concept, is timeless and cross-cultural. While the specific historical or societal contexts may shift, the human experience of emotional pain, psychological dislocation, and suppressed memories remains largely unchanged (Tsai & Lu, 2018; Rogier et al., 2019). In *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place*, the old man's existential struggle with isolation and meaninglessness reflects the universal human confrontation with aging, loss, and the inevitability of death (Chen, 2022; Reynolds et al., 2022). Similarly, in *Hills Like White Elephants*, the couple's inability to confront the emotional gravity of the abortion speaks to the universal human experience of suppressed emotions, unspoken conflicts, and the psychological burdens of difficult decisions (Abdo, 1991; Kale & Raskauskas, 2021). Freud's psychoanalytic theory and Cathy Caruth's trauma theory help bridge the gap between the temporal and cultural divides, offering a deeper understanding of how these

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timeless themes manifest across different contexts (Kline, 2014; Hirth, 2018). By applying these psychological frameworks to Hemingway's stories, readers can appreciate the way in which the characters' emotional and psychological struggles speak to broader human experiences that transcend any specific time or place (Kline, 2014). Hemingway's works continue to resonate with readers because they explore these universal aspects of the human condition, which remain relevant regardless of historical or cultural shifts (Hirth, 2018; Reynolds et al., 2022).

### **Relevance to Partition and Collective Trauma:**

The personal traumas portrayed in Hemingway's stories especially the repression and emotional dislocation experienced by the characters can be seen as microcosms of larger historical traumas, such as the trauma of partition, migration, and displacement (Kumar Bharti & Bindunath Jha, 2025). Partitioned identities, particularly in the context of the 1947 partition of India and Pakistan, provide a stark parallel to the emotional and psychological dislocation observed in Hemingway's characters. Just as the man and Jig in *Hills Like White Elephants* avoid confronting the emotional consequences of their choices, individuals and communities affected by partition often struggle to process the collective trauma associated with separation, loss, and dislocation (Abdoo, 1991; Kale & Raskauskas, 2021; Kumar Bharti & Bindunath Jha, 2025). The trauma of partition, as experienced by individuals who were uprooted from their homes, torn from their communities, and forced to navigate new, often hostile environments, mirrors the psychological isolation and existential despair seen in Hemingway's characters (Kumar Bharti & Bindunath Jha, 2025). Partition caused not only physical dislocation but also emotional and cultural fragmentation, creating a shared sense of trauma that affected entire populations. This collective trauma is often passed down through generations, contributing to the psychological struggles of individuals who never fully come to terms with the events that shaped their histories (Hirth, 2018). In *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place*, the old man's isolation and melancholy can be likened to the experiences of those who have been displaced by historical events such as partition. The emotional detachment and sense of meaninglessness that pervade the old man's life are echoes of the collective trauma of migration, where individuals are left to reconcile with the loss of their homeland and identity (Chen, 2022; Reynolds et al., 2022). The story's portrayal of alienation and despair resonates with those who have experienced similar dislocations in their own lives, where the search for meaning becomes intertwined with the emotional scars of the past (Chen, 2022). Similarly, the themes of suppressed emotion and relational tension in *Hills Like White Elephants* can be understood as a metaphor for the emotional suppression that often accompanies collective trauma (Abdoo, 1991; Kale & Raskauskas, 2021). The characters' inability to openly discuss their feelings or make sense of their choices reflects the silencing of trauma experienced by individuals and communities affected by historical events such as partition (Hirth, 2018; Kumar Bharti & Bindunath Jha, 2025). The reluctance to confront painful memories or acknowledge the psychological impact of displacement and separation can create generational cycles of trauma that continue to affect individuals long after the original event has passed (Tsai & Lu, 2018; Rogier et al., 2019). By examining Hemingway's works through the lens of collective trauma, this research underscores how personal trauma is often linked to broader historical and cultural contexts (Hirth, 2018).

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Hemingway's exploration of emotional dislocation, memory, and repression offers important insights into the psychological consequences of partition, migration, and displacement, making his stories relevant to understanding the emotional and psychological impact of historical trauma (Chen, 2022; Kumar Bharti & Bindunath Jha, 2025).

### **Mental Health Discourse in the Modern Era:**

The modern era has seen significant advancements in the understanding of mental health, with growing recognition of the psychological toll of trauma, isolation, and emotional repression (Reynolds et al., 2022). However, mental health issues remain heavily stigmatized in many cultures, and the importance of open dialogue and empathy in addressing these concerns is often overlooked (Tsai & Lu, 2018). Literature, including the works of Hemingway, provides a valuable tool for fostering empathy, understanding, and dialogue around mental health by presenting the emotional and psychological struggles of individuals in ways that are relatable and accessible to readers (Hirth, 2018; Chen, 2022). Hemingway's stories offer a unique opportunity to engage with the complexities of human psychology. In *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place*, the emotional dislocation of the old man and the waiters' contrasting responses to his loneliness mirror the way in which mental health issues are often misunderstood or dismissed in society (Chen, 2022). The younger waiter's impatience and lack of empathy reflect the way in which individuals struggling with mental health issues are often marginalized or overlooked. In contrast, the older waiter's empathy demonstrates the importance of understanding and acknowledging emotional pain, providing a more compassionate perspective on the human experience (Reynolds et al., 2022). Similarly, in *Hills Like White Elephants*, the couple's avoidance of the emotional and psychological consequences of the abortion reflects the stigma surrounding difficult personal decisions, particularly those related to reproductive health and emotional well-being (Abdo, 1991; Kale & Raskauskas, 2021). The lack of open communication about their feelings mirrors the silence surrounding mental health issues in contemporary society, where individuals may be reluctant to express their struggles due to fear of judgment or rejection (Tsai & Lu, 2018; Rogier et al., 2019). By applying psychoanalytic and trauma theories to these stories, we can better understand the ways in which Hemingway's characters grapple with their emotional and psychological struggles (Kline, 2014; Hirth, 2018). This engagement with literature offers readers an opportunity to reflect on their own experiences, fostering greater empathy and understanding for others who may be facing similar challenges. Literature can thus play a crucial role in promoting mental health awareness and encouraging open discussions about psychological well-being (Reynolds et al., 2022). Furthermore, Hemingway's exploration of trauma and memory highlights the importance of addressing both individual and collective emotional pain (Hirth, 2018). The themes of repression, emotional dislocation, and existential despair in his works invite readers to consider the lasting impact of trauma on mental health, encouraging a more holistic approach to mental health care that takes into account both personal and historical trauma (Reynolds et al., 2022; Yakovleva, 2022). In the modern era, where mental health discourse is increasingly prominent, Hemingway's works serve as a powerful reminder of the importance of empathy, understanding, and the need for open dialogue about emotional pain (Reynolds et al., 2022). Through literary engagement, readers can gain a deeper appreciation for the complexities of the human psyche, fostering

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greater awareness of the emotional and psychological challenges faced by individuals and communities (Tsai & Lu, 2018). By bridging the past and present, Hemingway's works continue to offer timeless insights into the human condition, making them an invaluable resource for cultivating empathy and promoting mental health discourse (Hirth, 2018; Chen, 2022).

Hemingway's exploration of personal and psychological dislocation provides important insights into the emotional scars left by unspoken trauma, highlighting the enduring relevance of these themes in both personal and collective experiences (Kline, 2014; Hirth, 2018). By drawing parallels between Hemingway's characters and the larger historical traumas of partition, migration, and displacement, this research underscores the continued relevance of his works in understanding the psychological consequences of traumatic experiences (Kumar Bharti & Bindunath Jha, 2025). Furthermore, Hemingway's stories offer valuable lessons for modern mental health discourse, fostering empathy, understanding, and dialogue around the emotional struggles that continue to shape the human experience (Reynolds et al., 2022; Tsai & Lu, 2018). Through literature, we are reminded of the importance of confronting emotional pain, acknowledging trauma, and fostering open communication to support mental health and well-being (Rogier et al., 2019; Yakovleva, 2022).

### **Implications for Literary and Mental Health Studies**

Hemingway's Contributions to Trauma Literature: Ernest Hemingway's minimalist style, characterized by its sparse language, indirect communication, and unspoken emotional tension, has long been admired for its ability to convey deep psychological themes. In works such as *Hills Like White Elephants* and *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place*, Hemingway masterfully articulates complex psychological struggles through subtle dialogue, allowing the reader to uncover layers of emotional turmoil beneath surface-level conversations. This approach to writing reflects a nuanced understanding of the human psyche, particularly the psychological toll of trauma, repression, and existential despair. (Abdo, 1991; Chen, 2022; Kale & Raskauskas, 2021; Kline, 2014)

Hemingway's contributions to trauma literature are significant because of how he engages with the subtleties of trauma and memory. His characters often do not express their psychological distress explicitly, but their internal struggles are made clear through their actions, silences, and interactions. This minimalist style mirrors the reality of many people who experience trauma but are unable or unwilling to articulate it, either due to social stigma, emotional repression, or psychological dislocation. The way Hemingway navigates these unspoken aspects of trauma is invaluable in trauma literature because it emphasizes how unacknowledged pain can linger beneath the surface of everyday life. (Hirth, 2018; Tsai & Lu, 2018; Rogier et al., 2019)

In *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place*, for example, the old man's struggle with isolation and the quiet suffering he experiences reflect the lingering emotional effects of trauma that are never fully processed. The young waiter's dismissal of the old man's despair highlights



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how society often disregards the emotional consequences of aging, loss, and trauma. On the other hand, the older waiter's empathy allows the reader to see the depth of the old man's struggle, even though the trauma is never explicitly discussed. Hemingway's ability to convey trauma through the simple yet profound silences between characters enriches the reader's understanding of how trauma can be both experienced and suppressed in subtle ways. (Chen, 2022; Reynolds et al., 2022)

Similarly, in *Hills Like White Elephants*, the couple's conversation about abortion represents a form of unspoken trauma. The man's insistence that the procedure is simple contrasts with Jig's hesitations, indicating a deeper psychological conflict that is never directly addressed. The emotional tension between them underscores the trauma of the decision, revealing how difficult it is to openly confront the psychological impact of life-altering decisions. Through Hemingway's minimalist style, the trauma associated with the abortion becomes an unspoken yet powerful force that shapes the characters' interactions and psychological states. (Abdo, 1991; Kale & Raskauskas, 2021; Kline, 2014)

Hemingway's contribution to trauma literature lies not only in the themes he explores but in the way he structures his narratives. By leaving much of the emotional conflict unsaid, Hemingway invites readers to engage with the complexities of trauma in a more direct and personal way, allowing them to explore the depths of psychological suffering without the need for explicit explanation. This subtlety is particularly valuable in the study of trauma, as it encourages a deeper understanding of the emotional and psychological toll that trauma can take, both on an individual and on a collective level. (Hirth, 2018; Tsai & Lu, 2018)

#### **Literature as a Tool for Empathy:**

One of the most important roles that literature can play in modern society is its ability to foster empathy and understanding, particularly in the realm of mental health. Hemingway's works, through their exploration of trauma and psychological dislocation, offer readers the opportunity to engage with characters who are experiencing deep emotional pain. In doing so, these stories invite readers to reflect on their own emotional struggles and to develop a greater sense of empathy for others facing similar challenges. (Hirth, 2018; Reynolds et al., 2022)

Literary engagement with mental health themes allows readers to step into the emotional lives of characters, experiencing their psychological turmoil firsthand. This empathetic connection can help to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health, as it encourages readers to recognize the shared humanity in those who struggle with mental illness or trauma. By presenting the emotional lives of characters in such an intimate and nonjudgmental way, Hemingway's works break down the barriers between individuals and the stigma often associated with mental health issues. (Reynolds et al., 2022; Tsai & Lu, 2018)

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In *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place*, the older waiter's understanding of the old man's suffering offers an empathetic response to the loneliness and despair that the old man feels. The older waiter's perspective helps to humanize the old man's emotional struggles, making his pain more accessible and understandable to the reader. The younger waiter's indifference, on the other hand, highlights the disconnect that often occurs in society when it comes to mental health issues. By contrasting these two responses, Hemingway encourages the reader to reflect on their own reactions to those who may be struggling emotionally or psychologically. (Chen, 2022; Reynolds et al., 2022)

Similarly, in *Hills Like White Elephants*, the couple's inability to communicate openly about the abortion creates a sense of emotional distance between them, underscoring how difficult it can be to discuss deeply personal and emotionally charged topics. Hemingway's subtle handling of this trauma allows the reader to engage with the characters' internal struggles and to empathize with their emotional pain. The story encourages readers to consider the complexities of making difficult decisions and the psychological toll that these decisions can take, particularly when they are avoided or suppressed. (Abdo, 1991; Kale & Raskauskas, 2021; Rogier et al., 2019)

Literature has the unique power to cultivate empathy by presenting human experiences in a way that is both personal and universal. By allowing readers to see the world through the eyes of characters who are grappling with trauma, memory, and emotional pain, Hemingway's works foster a deeper understanding of the complexities of the human experience. This empathetic engagement is essential in promoting mental health awareness, as it allows individuals to recognize that emotional suffering is not something to be feared or stigmatized but something that connects us all as human beings. (Reynolds et al., 2022; Tsai & Lu, 2018)

#### **Integration of Theory and Practice:**

The integration of trauma theory and psychoanalytic theory into the study of literature deepens our understanding of how psychological struggles are depicted in literary works and how these depictions can be applied to real-world mental health contexts. By applying Cathy Caruth's trauma theory and Freud's psychoanalysis to Hemingway's stories, we gain insights into the emotional dynamics of his characters and the ways in which trauma and repression shape their behavior and relationships. (Hirth, 2018; Kline, 2014)

Caruth's trauma theory, which emphasizes the fragmented, delayed, and unspoken nature of trauma, helps to illuminate the ways in which Hemingway's characters experience psychological suffering. In *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place*, the old man's emotional pain is never fully acknowledged or verbalized, yet it shapes his actions and his sense of self. This delayed trauma, as Caruth suggests, continues to haunt the old man in ways that he may not fully understand or articulate. Similarly, in *Hills Like White Elephants*, the couple's avoidance of discussing the abortion reflects a form of delayed trauma, where the emotional impact of the decision is not immediately recognized or processed. (Chen, 2022; Hirth, 2018)

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Freud's psychoanalytic theory, particularly his concepts of repression and the return of the repressed, also provides valuable insights into the characters' emotional struggles. In *Hills Like White Elephants*, the man's insistence that the abortion is simple and the woman's hesitations reflect a dynamic of repression, where the emotional significance of the situation is pushed down and avoided. This dynamic is indicative of how trauma can manifest through defense mechanisms such as denial and repression. Freud's theory helps to explain how the emotional burden of trauma can affect relationships and decision-making, particularly when individuals are unable to confront or express their feelings directly. (Kline, 2014; Marson & Dovyak, 2024)

In real-world mental health contexts, the application of these theories helps to illuminate the psychological dynamics that individuals face when grappling with trauma. For example, individuals who experience trauma often struggle with repression and denial, avoiding the emotional weight of their experiences. This avoidance can have lasting effects on their mental health, as the trauma is never fully processed or integrated. Hemingway's portrayal of trauma, memory, and repression offers important insights into how these psychological processes manifest in everyday life and how they can affect emotional well-being. (Reynolds et al., 2022; Tsai & Lu, 2018)

Furthermore, the integration of literary theory with real-world mental health practice underscores the importance of understanding the complex interplay between trauma, memory, and mental health. By studying literature through the lens of psychoanalysis and trauma theory, mental health professionals can gain a deeper understanding of the emotional struggles that individuals face when dealing with trauma. This understanding can inform therapeutic approaches, helping to foster empathy and compassion for individuals who are navigating the difficult terrain of emotional pain and psychological dislocation. (Reynolds et al., 2022; Yakovleva, 2022)

Hemingway's contributions to trauma literature, particularly through his minimalist style, offer profound insights into the psychological struggles of his characters. His ability to convey trauma, repression, and emotional dislocation in subtle yet powerful ways has made his works enduringly relevant to both literary and mental health studies. The role of literature in fostering empathy and understanding cannot be overstated, as it allows readers to engage with the emotional lives of characters and recognize the shared humanity in those who experience psychological suffering. By integrating trauma theory and psychoanalytic theory into literary analysis, we deepen our understanding of how trauma shapes behavior and relationships, and we also gain valuable insights into real-world mental health contexts. Hemingway's works, through their exploration of trauma and emotional pain, continue to serve as a powerful tool for promoting mental health awareness, fostering empathy, and reducing the stigma surrounding mental illness. Through literature, we are reminded of the importance of confronting emotional pain, acknowledging trauma, and fostering open communication to support mental health and well-being. (Abdo, 1991; Chen, 2022; Hirth,

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2018; Kline, 2014; Reynolds et al., 2022; Rogier et al., 2019; Tsai & Lu, 2018; Yakovleva, 2022)

### **Conclusion**

This research has explored the intersection of trauma, memory, and mental health in Ernest Hemingway's *Hills Like White Elephants* and *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place*, revealing key insights about the emotional and psychological struggles embedded within his minimalist narratives (Abdo, 1991; Chen, 2022; Kale & Raskauskas, 2021). Hemingway's exploration of unspoken trauma, repression, and existential despair presents complex psychological themes that resonate both in their historical context and in contemporary mental health discourse (Hirth, 2018; Reynolds et al., 2022).

Through a psychoanalytic and trauma-focused lens, this study has shown how Hemingway's characters grapple with psychological dislocation (Kline, 2014; Hirth, 2018). In *A Clean, Well-Lighted Place*, the old man's silent suffering and the contrasting perspectives of the two waiters underscore the psychological toll of aging, isolation, and loss (Chen, 2022; Reynolds et al., 2022). The story illuminates how unresolved trauma, particularly the loss of a loved one, can lead to existential despair, which remains largely unspoken and unprocessed (Kline, 2014). The café, as a metaphor for refuge, highlights how environments can serve as temporary sanctuaries for those struggling with deep emotional pain (McGee, 2007).

In *Hills Like White Elephants*, the story's minimalist dialogue about an implied abortion reflects the emotional and psychological complexities of difficult personal decisions (Abdo, 1991; Kale & Raskauskas, 2021). The couple's inability to openly discuss the procedure is a form of emotional suppression, representing the traumatic impact of unspoken conflicts within relationships (Rogier et al., 2019; Tsai & Lu, 2018). The use of repression and denial, explored through Freud's theory, reveals how the trauma of their unacknowledged emotions can disrupt communication and decision-making, leaving lasting psychological scars (Kline, 2014; Marson & Dovyak, 2024).

The paper also utilized Cathy Caruth's trauma theory, emphasizing the fragmented, delayed, and indirect nature of trauma (Hirth, 2018). Both stories illustrate how trauma remains unresolved, continuing to affect characters' behavior, relationships, and mental states in subtle but profound ways (Chen, 2022; Abdo, 1991). Hemingway's minimalist style and the depth of his characters' emotional experiences make his work a rich source for understanding the ongoing impact of unacknowledged trauma, both on personal and collective levels (Hirth, 2018; Reynolds et al., 2022).

### **Significance of the Study:**

This study highlights the critical importance of bridging literary analysis with mental health discourse in contemporary society (Reynolds et al., 2022). Hemingway's exploration of trauma, memory, and mental health offers timeless insights into the complexities of the human psyche (Hirth, 2018). By analyzing these themes through a psychological lens, we gain a deeper understanding of how unspoken trauma and emotional

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dislocation manifest in both individual lives and within the broader cultural and historical contexts (Kline, 2014; Chen, 2022).

The significance of this research lies in its ability to show how literature specifically Hemingway's works can serve as a vehicle for understanding and empathizing with the psychological struggles that individuals face in real life (Reynolds et al., 2022). Literature offers a unique space to explore the nuances of trauma and mental health, fostering empathy and helping to reduce stigma around emotional and psychological struggles (Tsai & Lu, 2018). Hemingway's characters, despite their lack of direct communication about their pain, offer a window into the internal worlds of individuals dealing with unresolved trauma (Abdoo, 1991; Chen, 2022). This engagement with literary works encourages readers to reflect on their own experiences, fostering a greater sense of understanding and compassion for others dealing with similar psychological burdens (Rogier et al., 2019).

Furthermore, by using Hemingway's works as a lens for examining modern mental health issues, this study underscores the relevance of literary engagement in promoting awareness and reducing stigma surrounding mental health (Reynolds et al., 2022; Tsai & Lu, 2018). In a time when mental health awareness is becoming more prominent, yet still stigmatized in many contexts, engaging with literature that reflects the emotional and psychological dimensions of human suffering provides a powerful tool for fostering open discussions and cultivating empathy (Yakovleva, 2022).

#### **Future Research Directions:**

While this study offers significant insights into the intersection of trauma, memory, and mental health in Hemingway's works, there are several areas for further exploration that could deepen our understanding of these themes and their broader implications in both literary and mental health contexts (Hirth, 2018; Kline, 2014).

**Comparative Studies with Other Authors:** One potential area for future research is to extend the analysis of trauma in Hemingway's works by comparing them with those of other authors who explore similar psychological themes. Authors such as Virginia Woolf, William Faulkner, or Franz Kafka also delve deeply into themes of existential despair, isolation, and trauma. A comparative study could illuminate how different literary styles and cultural contexts shape the portrayal of mental health issues, offering a broader perspective on how trauma is represented in literature. This would also allow for a deeper examination of how narrative techniques such as Woolf's stream of consciousness or Faulkner's fragmented narrative structures contrast with Hemingway's minimalist approach to trauma (Hirth, 2018). **Deeper Analyses of Trauma in Cultural and Historical Contexts:** Another avenue for further research could be to explore trauma and memory in the context of specific historical and cultural experiences, such as the effects of war, migration, or displacement. For example, examining Hemingway's works in relation to post-World War I trauma or the broader cultural effects of the Great Depression could deepen our understanding of how historical events shape the psychological lives of individuals. In addition, exploring how collective trauma (such as the trauma experienced during social upheavals or geopolitical events like

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partition) is reflected in literature would provide important insights into the interconnection between personal and collective trauma. This line of inquiry would also contribute to contemporary discussions on how societies can heal from historical traumas and the role of cultural memory in the recovery process (Kumar Bharti & Bindunath Jha, 2025).

Expanding Psychoanalytic Approaches in Literary Analysis: Further research could explore the application of contemporary psychoanalytic theories to Hemingway's works, expanding beyond Freud and Caruth to include newer psychological frameworks such as attachment theory or trauma-informed care. Examining Hemingway's characters through these modern psychological lenses could reveal new dimensions of emotional dislocation and trauma, particularly in terms of relational dynamics and attachment patterns. Additionally, exploring the neurobiological impacts of trauma as seen in literature could provide a richer understanding of how trauma affects the brain and emotional processing, particularly when these processes are left unaddressed (Reynolds et al., 2022; Yakovleva, 2022).

Trauma and Mental Health in the Contemporary Literary Canon: Finally, it would be valuable to examine the role of trauma and mental health themes in contemporary literature, focusing on how modern authors represent these issues compared to Hemingway's time. Authors like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Yaa Gyasi, or Elena Ferrante have engaged with themes of trauma, displacement, and mental health in contemporary settings, and a study of their works could offer insights into how cultural shifts, globalization, and modern-day mental health discourses influence the representation of psychological struggles in literature. This could offer a nuanced understanding of how literature continues to be a site for grappling with the emotional and psychological complexities of the human experience (Tsai & Lu, 2018; Rogier et al., 2019).

This research has demonstrated that Hemingway's exploration of trauma, memory, and mental health is not only relevant to the early 20th century but also resonates with contemporary concerns about psychological suffering, repression, and emotional dislocation (Hirth, 2018; Kline, 2014; Reynolds et al., 2022). Through his minimalist style and nuanced depiction of the human condition, Hemingway offers readers valuable insights into the lasting impact of trauma, both on the individual and the collective psyche (Abdo, 1991; Chen, 2022). By engaging with literary works that address mental health and trauma, we can cultivate greater empathy, understanding, and compassion in our approach to these issues, ultimately contributing to a broader societal shift in how we perceive and address emotional and psychological pain (Reynolds et al., 2022; Tsai & Lu, 2018). The integration of trauma theory, psychoanalysis, and mental health discourse in literary analysis provides a powerful framework for understanding the complexities of the human experience and highlights the importance of literature in bridging the gap between personal, historical, and collective trauma (Hirth, 2018; Kumar Bharti & Bindunath Jha, 2025).

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As we move forward, future research can continue to expand on these insights by examining trauma in broader cultural contexts, comparing Hemingway's works with those of other authors, and exploring the neurobiological and relational dimensions of trauma (Reynolds et al., 2022; Yakovleva, 2022). This continued engagement with literature and mental health will not only enrich our understanding of trauma but will also help to foster a more empathetic and informed approach to mental health in both academic and real-world contexts (Reynolds et al., 2022).

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