Of all ecocritical concepts, it is bioregion which centralizes place more than any others. Ecosphere has been least considered as a field of study in literature. To a large extent literary studies focus on either cultural sphere or social sphere. This chapter focuses on the significance of ecosphere in human life as highlighted in the short stories of Hemingway. The following stories are chosen to study the role of place and its influence on the character.

1. *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*
2. *The Cross-Country Snow*
3. *Indian Camp*
4. *A Clean Well-Lighted Place*
5. *Soldier’s Home*

A brief knowledge of bioregion enables the reader to understand clearly the concept of ecosphere. Bioregion is alternatively termed as “life-place.” Though bioregion privileges place more than any other ecocritical theory, the thematic idea in bioregion is again “bios.” Mark C. Long defines bioregion as “geography, climate, soils, plants, and animals, as well as the specific history of human life in a place-specifically local human adaptations to the natural systems on which their lives depend” (2008: 33). However, the term “bioregion” is used to define place in ecological terms. The study shows a deeper awareness of the natural and cultural history of a place.

The first story *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* is set in the neighbourhood of the mountain Kilimanjaro. The story elegantly reveals the protagonist, Harry’s relationship with the place. Harry, a writer, takes a journey to the mountain called Kilimanjaro. He hopes to renew his old spirit of writing in this region. The main theme of the story is the loss of the literary talent of Harry. Harry prepares to write many things during his life time but fails to do so.
The story reveals his efforts to draw inspiration from the mountain. As a writer, Harry dreams of achieving immortality through art. He blames his wife, Helen, and her wealth, for his aesthetic decay. Because of her, he has followed a life of ease and sloth instead of realizing his dream to be a great writer. Helen, an intelligent and good looking woman, suffers much in life. She was a widow when she met Harry: She had lost her first husband and one of her two children. She wants to share her life with someone whom she respected. She likes what Harry wrote, has a high opinion, falls in love, and starts building a new life for herself. But Harry who is in Africa in order to get training in writing, is dying of gangrene. Hemingway uses the snow covered mountain of Kilimanjaro for signifying the choice of place by Harry.

Harry’s journey to Africa is not a casual one, but an earnest effort to revive his writing skills. He prefers to enter the wilderness for its purity. The term “wilderness” refers to deserts and uninhabited continents. So the idea of wilderness signifies a place that is uncontaminated by civilization. Hence the term has a sacramental value. Similar to all wilderness narratives which share the motif of escape and return, Harry too, in the story, escapes from his home and reaches Kilimanjaro. Unfortunately, his health fails at the summit and he dies without achieving anything.

The story makes a good ecocritical study, for each symbol, in the story, reflects some role Harry plays in his life. He blames his wife for her money, comfort, and pleasure. "Your bloody money," he said. "That's not fair," she said. It was always yours as much as mine. I left everything and I went wherever you wanted to go. But I wish we'd never come here" (55). Helen takes care of Harry and is really worried over his serious infection. Harry's spiritual rot, "It wasn't this woman's fault. If it had not been she it would have been another" (55). Harry's earlier disparagement of Helen, thus gives way to his self-disparagement. He comes out with resentful and exceptionally harsh self-criticism:
He had destroyed his talent himself. Why should he blame this woman because she kept him well? He had destroyed his talent by not using it, by betrayals of him and what he believed in, by drinking so much that he blunted the edge of his perceptions, by laziness, by sloth, and by snobbery, by pride and by prejudice, by hook and by crook (61).

The springs of creativity dries up and consequently, he is destroyed as a writer. He neglects to treat a scratch he has got on his leg during a hunt; but that leads to gangrene. He has landed in Africa with his wife to revive his writing skills. He hopes to derive new spirit from nature. His only hope now, with his leg gangrened, is to be on the mountain and write all that he wishes to write.

He knows that he is dying physically, but he also knows that he had died spiritually long ago, through his choice of comfort over the lean joys of more dangerous pursuit. E.Nageswara Rao comments:

Harry the writer, perhaps at the worst juncture of his life, approaching death, is shaken thoroughly. He tries to take refuge in his sprightly and fertile past; unfortunately underutilized or even unutilized. Harry goes down the memory lane through retrospection (2000: 24).

He chooses Africa for the safari. “Africa was where he had been happiest in the good time of his life, so he had come out here to start again.” But when he suffers from the gangrene Helen comments: “You never would have gotten anything like this in Paris. You always said you loved Paris. We could have stayed in Paris or gone anywhere. I’d go anywhere you wanted. If you wanted to shoot we could have gone shooting in Hungary and been comfortable” (55).
Harry’s choice of place is obvious, because he prefers Africa to Paris and Hungary. He is aware that no facilities are available in the mountains, yet he deliberately opts to be in the snows of Kilimanjaro. Hemingway describes a large part of Africa, beginning with the plains, with their glare and heat, their rot, sordidness and filth, along with the parasitic hyenas, and the obscene vultures as part of the landscape. A true and clear picture of nature illustrated in the story reveals the uncontaminated life of nature and its inhabitants. The birds, animals, plants, plains all seem to live in interconnected harmony with one another. Harry longs for such a harmony and seeks inspiration from the place.

For Harry the whole purpose of the journey to Africa is to achieve some sort of renewal, for Africa means hope of moral regeneration. Africa, the dark continent evokes a series of symbols. Darkness is traditionally associated with the principles of evil and death. Hyena stands as a dramatic correlative for death. Hyena stands for the sorrowful and the unnatural and symbolizes danger, foulness, sorrow, the abnormal, and death. The symbolic function of hyena is more complex. It is a paradox that the smell of decay attracts Harry rather than the revival of his writing skills.

In the epigraph there is a direct reference to the leopard but it has nothing to do with the story. The leopard on the slopes of the mountain assumes a meaning in the light of Harry's dream about his flight towards the peak of Kilimanjaro. The leopard has meant various things to various critics during the last three decades. It has been interpreted as a symbol of immortality and permanence. The leopard dies while moving towards the summit and Harry dies while moving towards it in his dreams. There is no doubt that the spotted animal is a dramatic correlative for the gangrened writer who dreams of immortalizing himself through his art. The mountain rises above
the plain where death moves in the form of gangrene, vultures, and hyenas. The whiteness on the top of the mountain stands for a life after death. The leopard, whatever it was seeking at that altitude, has achieved a kind of permanence on the snowy heights as contrasted with Harry's rotting body on the plain below, and Harry, as a writer, has dreamed of achieving immortality through art all his life. There is a poignant irony in this seeming antithesis between Harry and the leopard, which is a dramatic correlative for him.

The leopard's successful journey is ultimately nothing more than a means of failure and death. It is, in fact, the leopard's inability to survive in its new environment which enables the reader to understand the relationship between the epigraph and Harry's story. Scott Macdonald says: “Harry is like the leopard in failing to withstand the high altitude he achieved as a result of his struggles as a young writer............It is true that Harry has returned to Africa in order to try to "work the fat off his soul," but his attempt clearly comes too late” (1974: 67).

Thus, like the physical journey of the leopard in the epigraph, Harry's early successful journey as a creative artist is nothing more than a means of creative failure and death. The dying man's thoughts revert again and again to the experience in the high altitude and snow. Harry, whose body is surrounded by symbols of mundane life like a wife, who loves him and tries to give him pleasure, and vultures and Hyenas which represent death, thinks nostalgically of his "undone years," and makes a supreme mental effort to rise above his physical condition. Hyena and vultures are associated with the death-in-life of the second phase of Harry's career; they are contrasted in the story with the leopard, which is associated with the earlier, purer phase of his life, the period of idealism which is achieved only in death-in-life. It is
ironic that while the birds are waiting in the hope that he will die, Helen is waiting in
the hope that he will live. Apparently, when Helen talks about the expected aeroplane
and insists that it will surely reach them in time, Harry's eyes inevitably turn to the
birds that are always waiting around the tent. Every time the birds are mentioned, they
are described as if they were planes.

The birds are referred to as aeroplanes. The birds' sinking their heads in their
hunched feathers, their "planing" down and then "waddling" slowly on the ground
evoke a picture of the landing of the aeroplanes. These birds, like the hyena, are
always moving around the "hill," against which is Harry's tent, and to the top of which
he would like to fly in the plane. The hyena's first appearance occurs just at dark when
there was no longer enough light to shoot.

Harry, lying on a cot, recalls his life in Paris and at one point he thinks of death.
He has felt death come and rest its head on the feet of the cot, and he could smell its
breath. Here Harry is losing control of his thoughts as he drifts into death, his speech
and reflections become less clear, less rational, and his association of the hyena with
death seems once more quite simple. The Hyena has been to Harry a symbol of life
that he has followed to that "evil-smelling emptiness." Although Harry is a writer,
more importantly he was also a hunter. While Harry does lament his artistic failure, he
considers himself as much a moral failure because he has not been a good hunter. This
is what Hemingway has to say about Harry's failure:

No, he had never written about Paris. Not the Paris that he
cared about. But what about the rest that he had never
written? What about the ranch and the silvered grey of the
sage brush, the quick, clear water in the irrigation ditches, and
the heavy green of the alfalfa?.....And behind the mountains,
the clear sharpness of the peak in the evening light and riding along the train in the moonlight, bright across the valley. Now he remembered coming down through the timber in the dark holding the horse’s tail when you could not see and all the stories that he meant to write (70).

Harry's wasted talent is referred to as spiritual decay. Alone on his cot, he recalls the bygone years and recalls the spiritual rot which left him dead long before the infection of his leg. It is at this moment that he senses death as an evil-smelling emptiness. He associates the smell of his physical death with the look of his wife which reminds him of his moral decay.

Harry lies in the wide shade of a mimosa tree and points to three vultures on the plain. The vultures are associated with rotten flesh and are associated, in his imagination, with his gangrene. The wide shade of the tree in which he lies, and the quickly moving shadows of the vultures signify the shadow of death. P.G.Rama Rao comments on the symbols of vultures and Hyena:

Harry, whose body is rotting on the tropical plain and who is surrounded by symbols of mundane life like a wife who loves him and tries to give him pleasure and comfort, servants, a beautiful country, and vultures and hyenas representing death, thinks nostalgically of his “undone years” and makes a supreme mental efforts to rise above his physical condition (1970: 14).
However, the "Snows" is basically the story of the protagonist’s confrontation with his conscience while he is dying. It is true that the snow covered mountain stands for a kind of perfection that is attainable only in death. Nature appears in the story not as a symbol of death but of life in death. The snow with which the mountain is covered is of course a traditional symbol of purity. Mountain tops are traditionally symbolic of the ideal, and the low lying plains, by contrast, symbolize earthly and material values. Harry on his death bed dwells wistfully on thoughts of snow and high places. The mountain is the mountain of immortality, and it raises high above the plain, which symbolizes disaster.

In deep ecological terms, environment influences persons and inspires them. Here, we observe the efforts taken by Harry to be in the snows of Kilimanjaro for getting inspiration to write. Those who wish to ‘find’ themselves enter the wilderness almost instinctively. Peter Barry gives some archetypal examples. “Moses ascends the mountain to receive the commandments, Christ goes to wilderness to pray, the aboriginal initiate goes ‘walkabout’ in the Bush, Huck Finn ‘lights out for the territories, and so on’” (2002: 257).

Apparently, Harry enters the wilderness in the hope of finding his creative skills. But his physical condition deteriorates to the extent that he lives a life-in-death. Helen hopes that the plane will arrive because for her it is only a means to save Harry's body from rotting in the forest. But for Harry himself the plane seems to have a larger significance; it is a symbol of his aspiration to escape mortality, from his degeneration as artist. When Harry finally boards the plane, it is only in his dream. Ironically, he dies while he is still dreaming of achieving the immortal height. Harry has been longing to write his immortal writing about various aspects of life he had so keenly registered in his memory. Roger Whitlow says that "Harry has been both a parasite and a whore for years. Like a whore, his affection, if not his sexual-gratification, is fake" (1984: 45).
Finally, Hemingway reveals that pure snow, the snow on the mountains, represents something that Harry has never experienced before. We know that his final vision is only a dream, but he believes that he died in victory. Although he is alive, he had remained dead as a writer. The irony is that Harry, who comes to Africa in the hope of moral regeneration, is instead killed there. Hemingway develops a parallel between the preservation, in the snows of Kilimanjaro, of the carcass of leopard which failed to stay alive on a high peak and the preservation, in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," of the story of a writer who failed to stay artistically alive at the high level represented by his early writing.

The story highlights Harry's choice of being on Kilimanjaro to derive new spirit and energy. Ironically, his physical health fails and he could not fulfill his task. He dreamed of achieving immortality in art by being on the mountains. Although Harry fails his effort made at such a crucial moment of his life is highly appreciable. The story concludes on the note that Harry dies at the summit. Harry flees from the city to the mountain to revive his writing skills; it shows his longing to be in nature. The story implies the emotional bond between a human being and nature.

At this juncture it is interesting to refer to Arne Naess’s “Ecosophy T”. The T refers to Tvergastein, in the mountains of Norway, where Naess has worked out his personal ecosophy. From his mountain hut, Naess looks out and sees great diversity of individuals and cultures, and he feels good about this. He says that this alpine mountainous setting is an extreme environment and his life there is very different from that in the city. Very few people live high on a mountain such as Hallingskarvet, where Naess’s hut is. However, he never says that Ecosophy T is right for everyone because it is his personal life style. He gives his own philosophy as an example of how
we might formulate our own philosophies of life. Moreover, he wants us to share, that there are principles of ecological responsibility that cut across culture and personal philosophies.

Harry chooses the place Kilimanjaro with the hope of fulfilling his ambition to write. The interconnectedness of human beings and nature is exhibited by Harry's desire to revive his writing skills on the mountain. Probably, this is so because he succeeded during his previous visit. The story exhibits an autobiographical element; Hemingway has undertaken few trips to Africa on account of hunting and has written two long short stories that are located in Africa. One such story is the present one.

The next story *Cross-Country Snow* adopts a similar pattern of escape from home to nature and a return home. The protagonist of the story Nick and his friend George drive together into a country. Due to the winter season, the surface of the country is covered by snow. Both the friends ski on the snow covered country. The story begins with natural snow fall and Nick’s experience in the snow-ski with George.

The rush and the sudden swoop as he dropped down a steep undulation in the mountainside plucked Nick's mind out and left him only the wonderful flying, dropping sensation in his body. He rose to a slight up-run and then the snow seemed to drop out from under him as he went down, down, faster and faster in a rush down the last, long steep slope (146).

Unlike the previous story, here, Nick enjoys skiing and is educated in the course of time that he spends in nature. Nick battles with the snow that drives like a sand-storm. Hemingway narrates how a patch of soft snow spilled on Nick and his
friend, they felt like a shot rabbit as their nose and ears were jammed full of snow. George too has the same experience and he knocks the snow with big slaps. They have to cross the hill, and ski together. "Nick Adams came up past George, big black and blond head still faintly snowy, then his skis started slipping at the edge and he swooped down, hissing in the crystalline powder snow and seeming to float up and down as he went up and down the billowing khuds" (147).

Beneath the surface layer, the story is about Nick's unwanted fatherhood. On the surface, Nick enjoys skiing with his friend. Hemingway employs the symbol of "snow" in a complex pattern. The snow indicates freedom, youth, purity, innocence, illusion, loss and happiness. Nick's skiing on the slopes symbolically presents his rejected responsibilities. George follows Nick down the slope skiing and his sticks resemble insect's thin legs, kicking up puffs of snow as they touch the surface. Both of them experience the depth of snow, and they thrust along the road which is polished by ice. They travel through the woods, where they could see a long, low-eaved, weather-beaten building, that appears yellow in color through the trees. They climb steep road and reach the inn.

The second half of the story takes place in the inn. Nick and George order a bottle of sion, to a waitress who covers her swelling pregnancy with the apron. Interestingly, the waitress turns out to be a serious matter of discussion between the friends. George suspects that she isn't married because she has no wedding ring. Meanwhile a gang of woodcutters come to the inn and order three liters of new wine while their horses are outside making noise occasionally.
As they drink, their topic of conversation shifts to Nick’s personal life. George asks Nick, "Is Helene going to have a baby?" (150) Nick says that she is due for next summer. Nick seems to be glad of his fatherhood. George enquires if he would go skiing with Helen in the States. Nick says that it would not be possible as it is too rocky over there and there’s too much timber and they’re far away.

Meanwhile the Swiss woodcutters, "got up and paid and went out." In contrast to the native woodcutters, Nick and George leave the inn without paying. Hemingway's method of concealment is sensed by the reader. The motif of "nonpayment" evokes those inescapable obligations arising from Helen's pregnancy. Metaphorically, Nick Adams certainly has to "pay" for his alliance with the feminine world and its irreversible consequences. The carefree period of male fellowship in the "presocial" realm of Alpine heights will yield to Nick's painful adjustment to social and domestic pressures back in America. Away from the society Nick is able to connect himself with nature and realize his responsibility.

For the two skiers, the pace is mind-stopping, and at times they seem to soar up and away from the earth and all its cares. The biggest impediments to their freedom of movement, however, are the fences they themselves have erected, the self-imposed responsibilities. George had to leave that night to go back to school. Although Nick adds a few touches to George's ski-bum fantasy, he seems to have finally resigned himself to his new role of family man. The boys’ carefree holiday is contrasted with the work break of the woodcutters, who have time only for a smoke and a drink at the inn. The gang of woodcutters and the boys are served by the waitress whose careless, carefree days apparently are at an end, for she is pregnant and unmarried.
In Arnee Nassee’s terms, the cross country rejuvenates Nick. Nick and George thoroughly enjoy their fling of freedom on the high mountain slopes. Before coming to this country Nick’s views on life were different. Richard Hovey, alluding to the hidden motivation of this apparently Freudian oversight argues: "He did not see it, of course, because a part of him did not want to, because unconsciously Nick does not want to recognize pregnancy" (1968: 14).

Thus the story implies that the character and elements of the landscape influence each other. According to Bakhtinian concept of ecology “the language associated with the particular element of the landscape may be analyzed to understand better the writer’s perception on the mountains or animals’ relationship with other parts of the landscape and with humans” (The Ecocriticism Reader 1996: 373).

The story concludes with a final conversation between Nick and George. A sense of numbed disappointment and entrapment at Nick’s relationship with his pregnant wife Helen, is made obvious by their lamenting at the poor skiing conditions in the States. This gloominess shifts to forced hopefulness as Nick and George insist they ski again together some day. As Nick is no longer capable of self-delusion and denial he rests at a moment of steady acceptance of his lot. He has made up his mind to return to the States so that Helen can have the baby and that's that.

Pfeiffer comments on the symbolic significance of the story:

On a surface level, the apparently trivial gesture of the woodcutters contrasts with the negligence of the skiers; on a symbolic level, it provides an oblique commentary on Nick’s predicament. Metaphorically, Nick Adams certainly has to “pay” for his alliance with the feminine world and its irreversible consequences (1996: 98).
Nature plays a prominent role in shaping the mind of the characters. A balanced ecosystem enables human to live a harmonious life. Here, Nick’s skiing mirrors his sexual experience with Helen. Though his mind rides on a wave of sensation, he works to hold his pace; the language used reveals a struggle for control. At the same time he experiences a rush of sensations, building up until he lands in a heap, felled by a patch of soft snow. Full of energy, Nick moves instinctively, having given over his mind to emotion and desire. Still even in his passion, Nick works to maintain control. He would not let himself fall. Falling would aggravate further his bad knee. Nick is tumbled by the soft snow, spilling into it as he had spilled into the softness of Helen. The news of his impending fatherhood, just like his fall on the slopes, leaves him feeling shot through, stuck, his legs crossed.

Nick feels strong after skiing and is able to shoulder the load of fatherhood. Nick regains control of his life by accepting responsibility for the outcome of his desire, just as he regains control of his skis by accepting the limitations imposed by his knee. Nick shows his resilience by modifying his actions to regain and maintain control.

Nick's decision to move back to America redefines him as a tourist, and as a tourist Nick has to negotiate his surroundings, just as he has to come to terms with his own mixed feelings about fatherhood. Though he is resigned; his observations to George show that Nick, still, may be coming to terms with the responsibilities of fatherhood. Thus Nick's encounter with the snow ends in gloom as he accepts marriage, fatherhood, and a forthcoming return to the States where the mountains are "too rocky" to ski.
In stark contrast with the previous story, where Harry dies because of gangrene and fails in his mission, here Nick succeeds in his adventure and accepts his fatherhood. The story illustrates that the skiing in the snows has ultimately helped Nick to accept his responsibilities and bind him to the family. In fact the trip helps him to develop an emotional bond with his wife. Both the stories demonstrate the dwelling of the protagonist in a specific place.

The next story further illustrates Nick’s experience in an Indian Camp. **Indian Camp** was already considered under the head *Ecofeminism*. The story also exhibits another dimension of eco consciousness. The story portrays young Nick’s exposure to the facts of life and death during his adventure in the Indian Camp. Unlike the previous stories where the protagonist takes up a journey to Africa and cross-country, here, Nick accompanies his father into the Indian Camp. This story illustrates the ecological wisdom gained by Nick.

The story is strikingly profound with many layers of meaning. The influence of the place Indian Camp on Nick, needs an observation. The story portrays the whiteman’s entrance into an Indian world. The story begins in darkness and mist where young Nick Adams accompanies his father, a physician, to attend a pregnant woman who suffers labor pain for two days. The darkness and mist signify the basic innocence of Nick. The story opens with the following lines: “As the lake shore there was another row boat drawn up. The two Indians stood waiting. Nick and his father got in the stern of the boat and the Indians shoved it off and one of them got in to row” (86). The journey across the lake to the primitive camp will offer Nick a rare opportunity to learn about life and death.
The pregnant woman’s husband cut his foot with an axe and lies helpless in his bunk. Deep in the forest, the Indians are employed to cut wood and peel bark. In the process of environmental destruction they too are destroyed. Nick observes the pathetic condition of the Indian, in the camp. Dr. Adams takes the help of Nick, by making him hold a basin of hot water while four American Indian men hold down the woman. Using his fishing jackknife as a scalpel, Dr. Adams performs a cesarean operation on the woman, delivers the baby boy, then sews up the woman’s incision with some gut leader line from his fishing tackle. Subsequently, the doctor looks into the top bunk and discovers that the young American Indian husband, unable to withstand the sound of her shrieks, in addition to his own pain cuts his throat and dies.

Although the story deals with violence and suffering, with birth and death, it focuses more on the effect of birth and death on young Nick Adams. Nick is made witness to the agony of primitive birth. Dr. Adams attempts to educate Nick in the facts of life. Soon the fact of death, too is visualized.

The bond between father and son is an important dimension of the light that ends the story. Nick stumbles back into the sheltering arms of his father, who is seen trying to blunt the harsh reality of life and death. As the story ends, the cold dawn is breaking and Nick is seen warming himself with the comforting illusion that he is invincible to the forces of death.

The “Indian camp” serves as a place of education for Nick. He learns that by destroying nature, man suffers. In one night Nick witnesses the entire circle of life. The young protagonist reaches a moment of higher understanding as he and his father leave the Indian Camp in the light of a new day. Nick feels confident that he would not die. As he rides on his boat he puts his fingers in the water and experiences the flow.
The story ends as: “The sun was coming up over the hills. A bass jumped, making a circle in the water. Nick trailed his hand in the water. It felt warm in the sharp chill of the morning. In the early morning on the lake sitting in the stern of the boat with his father rowing, he felt quite sure that he would never die” (90).

The story demonstrates how Nick is exposed to the adult world. Nick with his father Doctor Adams enters Indian Camp at night and returns in the morning. The story progresses from darkness to light, night to day. The journey undertaken by Nick to the Indian Camp is a major symbol for his education. Hemingway portrays a baby’s birth and a man’s suicide in a short period of time at the Indian Camp to be witnessed by Nick. Thus the journey undertaken by Nick helps him to learn about the facts of life from the Indian Camp.

The next story *A Clean Well-Lighted Place* is a very short story with hardly any action except the fear of Nada seen in the older waiter. The story is set in a Spanish café in Spain. Hemingway has deliberately set this story in Spain, a Catholic strong hold, and he stages his stark drama at night.

Darkness, a traditional symbol of man’s spiritual ignorance, helps to reveal that Hemingway’s characters are lost in a moral wilderness. In Hemingway’s stories, one is forever coming upon the characteristic setting of a café, a station restaurant, a waiting room, or a railway carriage that are utterly anonymous places.

The tale gives a complex series of interactions between characters in a Spanish cafe-stoic old waiter, a brash young waiter, and a wealthy but suicidal old man given to excessive drink. The old man seems to be a regular customer to the café. He belongs to the class of the affluent Americans who are in despair, in spite of their richness and
outward prosperity. They cannot face the realities of life and a feeling of loneliness overwhelms them. They go either to the café to forget their miseries with the help of brandy or they try to commit suicide. ‘Nada’ is a Spanish word, meaning emptiness. Nada is represented by darkness and shadows. For the old man the cafe is a place of relief from his loneliness. As a result he drinks until late night and is reluctant to move from the cafe.

All the three characters experience nada, though only the older waiter seems to be aware of what he is experiencing. Two waiters at the café talk about the old man. Among the two waiters one is young and the other is old. While the younger one wants to go home and is impatient, the older waiter is more understanding, for he senses a kinship between himself and the old man. The old waiter holds a balanced position, showing courage of his convictions.

The old man prefers to stay in the café till late night. The clean, well-lighted place is a metaphor for an attitude toward the self. But its existential context, a psychological perspective like the café itself with its fabricated conveniences, and electric light, represents the man-made artifacts. Unlike the protagonist in the previous stories, who travel to a place for enlightenment, here the old man stays in the café. The story begins with a brief narration of the café:

It was late and everyone had left the café except an old man who sat in the shadow the leaves of the tree made against the electric light…The two waiters inside the café knew that the old man was a little drunk, and while he was a good client they knew that if he became too drunk he would leave without paying, so they kept watch on him (310).
The old man desires to overcome his fear and anxiety. The “light” refers to a special kind of vision, the clear-sightedness and absolute lack of illusion necessary to look into the darkness and thereby come to grips with the nada which is felt by him everywhere. The old man’s frustration and his desire for peace are psychologically represented through the bright light in the café which is lacking in him. The waiters talk about the old man’s plight:

“Last week he tried to commit suicide,” one waiter said

“Why”

“He was in despair.”

“What about?”

“Nothing”…… . (310)

It is not the absence of other things like money, but basically it is loneliness that troubles the eighty year old man. His suicidal despair is shared by the older waiter, who cannot confront a meaningless universe without the comforts of good lighting and orderly surroundings. Here the old waiter interprets the “nada” or nothingness as a social phenomenon. He realizes that there are cleanliness, darkness, and disorder in society. So unlike Nick and Harry who travel away from home to be in nature and draw inspiration, the old man stays in the café. Nada appears to dominate the story. Carlos Baker notes,

The word nothing (or nada) contains huge actuality. The great skill in the story is the development, through the most carefully controlled understatement of the young waiter’s mere nothing into the old waiter’s something—a something called nothing which is so huge, terrible, over bearing, inevitable and omnipresent that once experienced it can never be forgotten (1969: 34).
The old man stays for a long in the café. The egotistic young waiter does not understand the impact of nada, and for him it can only signify a personal physical privation. But the old waiter clearly sees the darkness surrounding him. All that is needed is just light to dispel the sense of darkness and nothingness implied in the word nada. Each character shows a value of affection and communication, and an awareness that love is necessary to self-realization. Like the old man the old waiter sees clearly, in fact more clearly, the fearsome nothing but he reacts far differently to his discovery. The concept of nada is raised by the prayer “Hail nothing full of nothing, nothing is with thee.” The conversation between the waiters depicts the intensity of the nothingness and suicide attempt.

The old man is reluctant to leave the well-lighted café, for he knows that he will not sleep until the coming of the dawn. He is comfortable in the café. The cleanliness and the pleasant café are well represented: “This is a clean and pleasant café. It is well lighted. The light is very good and also, now, there are shadows of the leaves”.

Despite Hemingway’s great skill in depicting the external world and physical action, it was the inward terrain that concerned him most. Each character represents a basic attitude towards life, and the word nada or nothing finally becomes the basic symbol upon which the meaning of the story turns.

The old man searches for peace in the café. He suffers internally, but hopes that the “light” in the café and the place may ignite his mind. The café serves as a substitute for home.

In contrast to these stories the last story presents a soldier who is uprooted from his home town. Soldier's Home describes the geographical displacement of a war-
returned soldier, Harold Krebs, from the Great War to a small town Oklahoma. The story exhibits a two-fold dimension of Kreb’s life, one before the war and the other after the war. However, the influence of place is strongly projected in the soldier.

Krebs goes to war in 1917 and returns after two years. He is displaced from his home town for two years. So when he returns from war no one celebrates. He is disabled by his experiences; and is no longer able to embrace the conventional goals, beliefs, and attitudes of his parents and the townspeople. He is not a normal man and thus becomes a burden to family and community. Kerbs pulls back from social commitment and interaction and withdraws from everything around him. In order to relieve his tension from war, Kerbs takes comfort in the order and ritual of sport, especially pool. His lack of recognition within the community parallels the more humiliating situation that he faces at home.

As Krebs arrives late to his hometown he prefers indoor activity to outdoor activity. He loves to spend time playing in the pool. Due to the dislocation he no longer feels at home. He is neither interested in girls. Social change as well as the war has separated both the mother and the son. She tries to motivate Kerbs to be normal. Kerbs life style changes after the war. Hemingway narrates Kerbs’ life style:

During this time, it was late summer, he was sleeping late in bed, getting on to walk down town to the library to get a book, eating lunch at home, reading on the front porch until he became bored and then walking down through the town to spend the hottest hours of the day in the cool dark of the pool room. He loved to play pool (123).
Kerbs wants to protect himself from emotional wounds and escape ridicule. He is not interested in girls. Kerbs convinces himself that he does not need a girl. As a soldier, Nick discovers his lack of control over the future. The world seems very complex to him. Kerbs longs for a simple life where he can relax and avoid the thoughts of war. He feels that he cannot love any one and that he cannot pray. The reader tends to witness a kind of inner debate which Krebs is confronting and consequently rejecting life in his home town. The title is ironic. If home is a place of love, understanding, and shared beliefs, then Kerbs is not at home.

Two years of Krebs life in the Marines has matured him and radically altered his attitudes and values. He returns home impatient with mindless conformity which has not changed. His father drives the same car; his mother voices the same blind faith and the same conventional ambitions for her son. So what he finds at home is not peace, but conflict and tension. He needs time to readjust, to sort out his life and to find himself. His mother is depicted as well-intentioned but blind to his emotional needs.

The story mirrors the psychological impact of the war on Kerbs and his inability to get back to a normal life. Kerbs is unable to accept his home. His emotional death is the result of his lack of involvement. So he has become an introvert. He is restless and anxious, unable to readjust to civilian life. The physical appearance of the town has not changed in his absence except that some of the girls have become women. Kerbs likes to watch them, but he does not want to be a part of their lives. He does not want to get involved in the politics or the lying involved in a courtship. Kerbs does not want any consequences. The army had taught him that he did not need a girl, even though many men claimed that they could not live without one. Kerbs likes the looks of the girls, but does not wish to talk to them.
His mother insists on his finding a job but he is reluctant to do so because he is unable to be a normal one. The geographical dislocation has resulted in the dislocation of his faith as well as the web of his social obligations. Aptly the story expresses the lostness of the soldier in his home town.

The above study reveals that the place plays an important role in defining the protagonist. Hemingway’s characters, being affected by war, show a sense of inexplicable bond with a specific place be it the café, mountains, the snow, and the Indian Camp. The first four stories exhibit the factors binding the protagonist to the place. In fact they dwell in these places to learn and grow through their experience. The last story Soldier’s Home reveals the plight of a soldier due to physical displacement from his home town. Thus the study concludes on the note that the relationship between human beings and the physical environment is inevitably strong and positive.
REFERENCES


