Hemingway's Nick Adams | Archetype of an era

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INTRODUCTION

With all the critical material on Ernest Hemingway, very few of his Nick Adams stories have ever been analyzed. In his study of Hemingway, Philip Young titles one chapter "The Adventures of Nick Adams."¹ As far as I know, this criticism is the closest any critic has come to a systematic study of this portion of Hemingway's short stories. While much of what Young says is good, his analyses of these stories are too short and, for the most part, too general. He also seems to discuss these stories from a pre-conceived position which does not always prove accurate. His approach serves more as a point of reference from which to understand the total of Hemingway than it does to examine that one specific character, Nick Adams. It is the purpose of this thesis to discuss each story in more detail for a better understanding of Nick Adams. In analyzing the stories, I have tried to discuss them in relation to each other, as if they are the chapters of a novel. This consideration has involved ordering the stories chronologically.

While Nick Adams is a prototype of the "Hemingway Hero," he has his own identity and his own history. Much of his history is violent, as Young has pointed out,² but not nearly so much as Young's reader

would be led to assume. In fact, Nick's history is more marked by a speculation of the world which he inhabits; it is primarily a primitively philosophical history. It is not so much the history of the psychically-wounded youth as it is the history of a long-forgotten man: the pre- or early civilized man who first inquired into the nature of the universe. In this sense Nick is an archetypical figure, for he calls up that questioning of life that is part of man's inheritance but which is only too soon lost in the process of growing up in a civilized society. Nick Adams did not grow up in a civilized society, as the analyses of his stories should point out. He did not have a "normal" family life; he did not have a "normal" environment; he did not have a "normal" education. He did not, in short, ever become normal.

And this, I think, may be the answer to Hemingway's appeal: Nick is the archetype who spans the centuries from the present to the hazy past. He does manage to evoke a dark, non-modern world which is buried in our unconscious. It is all there: the superstition, the recognition of nature as the certain reality, the concern for form and art, the mythological approach to explain the unknown, the reality of death and suffering, the subordinate role of women, and always the subdued fear of the mysterious and the unknown.

In calling Nick Adams an archetype, I am relying on a theory of Carl G. Jung. This psychologist states that a society's negation of its collective unconscious--its loss of orientation to its primordial
beginnings—carries the debt of catastrophic readjustment. World War I may have been that catastrophe. Demanding some explanation for the genocide, the artist would provide the explanation in the form of an archetypal character or experience. Nick Adams, I think, is the archetype who does this by referring us once more to our past. Hemingway's appeal, in short, lies basically in his prototypical Nick Adams and the characters who spring from him—Jake Barnes and Lieutenant Henry, for example—because Nick Adams is the unique and needed archetype of the first half of this century.


CHAPTER ONE: HOME AND FAMILY

There is no particular trouble in ordering five of the Nick Adams stories: "Indian Camp," "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife," "Ten Indians," "The End of Something," and "The Three-Day Blow." "Indian Camp" is first in thematic importance, and the first in textual order.¹ "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife" follows "Indian Camp" in textual order, and it also provides a background from which we can understand the other stories better. "Ten Indians" would be later than the first two stories because Nick has now found a girl, but he is not yet the adolescent of the last two stories---"The End of Something" and "The Three-Day Blow." These two stories are complementary, the second story helping to explain the first.

All five stories compose a specific phase of Nick's life: the family and environment in which his first and most important attitudes on life are formed.

* * *

"Indian Camp," the first story in the series of Nick Adams, is probably the most important. When we review all the stories about

¹ As a text for all of the Hemingway short stories, I have used the Modern Standard Authors edition entitled The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway (New York, 1953), hereafter referred to in the text simply by page number. In this edition all of the Nick Adams stories are listed in order of publication; by "textual order," then, I mean the chronological order of publication.
Nick, none so well define his philosophy and the influences which helped form that philosophy as "Indian Camp." While it is not the most violent—Nick is only a spectator—it is the most traumatic, and its implications are the most far-reaching.

The story concerns an Indian woman who has "been trying to have her baby for two days" (p. 92). Nick's father, Dr. Adams, performs a cesarian with a jack-knife and fishing leader, and without the benefit of an anaesthetic. During the successful operation, unable to stand the screams of his wife, the Indian woman's husband cuts his throat with a knife. Nick is rushed out of the shack, but he has seen it all.

The most obvious effect of this experience on Nick is philosophic. He has just viewed the whole cycle of life stripped to its basic elements. A child is born in pain; a man dies violently but quietly; and all the while there is the screaming and the suffering. In an Indian village in the woods Nick has learned what life is all about. That the fact of pain is the fact of life will be substantiated as Nick grows older, and his personal outlook on life will be an attempt to come to grips with this fact.

While the Indian woman suffers physically, Nick suffers psychically. Nick's suffering begins with the recognition of the woman's pain; "She screamed just as Nick and the two Indians followed his father and Uncle George into the shanty" (p. 92). When she screams again, Nick asks his father to "give her something to make her stop screaming" (p. 92). This is the first revelation of Nick's sensitivity for the feeling of others. As the operation proceeds, the attention switches from the woman to
Nick. All through the operation he stands there with a basin of water; and all the while Nick is suffering silently: "He was looking away so as not to see what his father was doing....Nick didn't look at it....Nick did not watch. His curiosity had been gone for a long time" (p. 93). The quality of endurance, which will be a mark of Nick Adams, is already evident. More importantly, the objective reality of the birth has subjective repercussions in Nick, the physical mirrors the abstract; pain is not so important physically as it is psychically. This point is made clear by the suicide of the father; it is his mental or spiritual suffering which kills him, not the physical pain from where he "cut his foot very badly with an ax three days before" (p. 92).

Nick has seen the suicide; he "had a good view of the upper bunk when his father, the lamp in one hand, tipped the Indian's head back" (p. 94). And it is the suicide, the silent suffering, which most occupies his mind. On their way home Nick asks his father several questions—Nick's statements in this story are almost completely in the form of questions—and four of the questions concern suicide and death, the quiet reality; only one question concerns the birth, the noisy reality. While this priority signals the well-known preoccupation of Nick with death, death does not emerge as a problem because of the pain involved, but because of its philosophical implications. The husband seems to suffer much less than his wife, yet it is the husband who engages Nick's attention. Death is the release from a particular kind of suffering, and it is the inescapable reality.
While death emerges as the central fact of life, there is still a source of consolation—nature. As they start back across the lake, "Nick trailed his hand in the water. It felt warm in the sharp chill of the morning" (p. 95). The whole experience has abstract considerations which Nick cannot comprehend; but the purely physical, the sensuous reality of nature, can be understood. Nature becomes a point of reference to which he can return when other influences become too confusing. It is more than nature for nature's sake; it is nature as a philosophical reality, the only certain good.

Dr. Adams, the person to guide Nick through the confusion, proves to be a questionable guide. Several important questions are raised about both his judgment and his character. The first question we would ask is why does he subject Nick to this ordeal? There are several passages that indicate Dr. Adams is trying to educate Nick:

Listen to me. What she is going through is called being in labor. The baby wants to be born and she wants it to be born. All her muscles are trying to get the baby born. That is what is happening when she screams (p. 92).

Or again:

You see, babies are supposed to be born head first but sometimes they're not. When they're not they make a lot of trouble for everybody. Maybe I'll have to operate on this lady. We'll know in a little while (p. 93).

While these passages indicate that Dr. Adams may be attempting to educate Nick, there is evidence that this motive is primarily one of rationalization. If we have a teacher-student relationship, it is for the benefit of the teacher. Dr. Adams does make two explanations, but his summarizing lesson is a discourse on his own cleverness:
That's one for the medical journal, George....Doing a caesarian with a jack-knife and sewing it up with nine-foot, tapered out gut leaders "(p. 94). And Uncle George responds properly: "Oh you're a great man, all right (p. 94). Essentially, Dr. Adams does not play the part of the teacher.

It would be unjust at this point to suggest that there is a touch of sadism in Dr. Adams, but if there is, we should also remember that Hemingway is not prone to explicit statement. Any judgment of Dr. Adams must be inferred from other facts of the story.

One of the most damaging indictments against Dr. Adams is his lack of judgment. Besides his bringing Nick to the Indian Village for no apparent reason, a strong case against the doctor in itself, there are the situations of irony in which many of his pronouncements are laid. Dr. Adams is taken completely by surprise when the father commits suicide. At one point Dr. Adams says that the woman's screams "are not important "(p.92). The next sentence--a one paragraph sentence--calls attention to the husband: "The husband in the upper bunk rolled over against the wall "(p. 92). The statement of Dr. Adams is ironical when placed beside the seemingly insignificant motion of the father. But especially the doctor is unwittingly ironic just before he discovers that the husband has committed suicide:

"Ought to have a look at the proud father. They're usually the worst sufferers in these little affairs," the doctor said. "I must say he took it all pretty quietly."

He pulled back the blanket from the Indian's head. His hand came away wet (p. 94).
Although other stories fill in the character of Dr. Adams, this story furnishes several observations about him. There is something sinister in the doctor's temperament. We can say that the doctor does not see things in perspective; many of his statements are ironical comments on his judgment. And we can say that the doctor is self-centered; that is, Nick, the woman's screams, the suffering of the father, all escape his attention as he taken the spotlight during the operation, and afterwards he feels as if he has starred, as if he were a football player "in the dressing room after a game" (p. 94). The idea of self-centeredness may really be the key to his character. He may be attempting to play a dramatic role in the eyes of Nick, assuming a pose the reasons for which emerge gradually in other stories.

Other stories are also related to this story in the symbolic significance of the lake. Nick and Dr. Adams, the educated American physician, are taken from their spared and secure shore to render a service for the more primitive Indians across the lake. The mission results in a life lost as well as a life gained: the Indian village has not really benefited by the doctor's visit. For Nick, the journey is an omen of things to come. In his later years he will travel across an ocean to render service to a war-ravaged Europe. His service in Europe will be as ineffectual as his father's in an Indian village. The traumatic incident of "Indian Camp" will be paralleled by the traumatic incident of a wound. In both cases Nick finds that the American culture has left him ill-prepared to
assimilate his experience. Already Nick is discovering the gap between a civilized culture and certain elemental realities.

* * *

"The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife" is about the parents of Nick Adams. It is not, as Philip Young contends,\(^2\) another phase of Nick's initiation into violence. Rather, so far as it concerns Nick, the story merely depicts the home environment of Nick. What we suspect from the story "Indian Camp"—a peculiarity in the relationship of Nick and his father—becomes more evident in "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife" and is extended into Nick's relationship with his mother.

The story opens with Dick Boulton, a half-breed, his son Eddy, and Billy Tabeshaw, an Indian, coming to the Adams' lakeside cottage to cut up some driftwood for Dr. Adams. Dick Boulton owes Dr. Adams some money for medical services, and his labor will help to offset this debt. Dick, however, calls Dr. Adams a thief, provokes Dr. Adams into threatening him, calls Dr. Adam's bluff, and leaves without having to cut the wood. Mrs. Adams quizzes her husband on the argument, warns him against violence, and asks him to send Nick home. The father finds Nick who does not want to see his mother, and father and son go shooting.

In general this story talks about various approaches to conflicts between human beings. Dick Boulton is a half-breed, which

\(^2\)Young, p. 5.
sets him off, and a bully. He relies on his strength and meanness to carry him through the situation. He is physically stronger than Dr. Adams and knows it: "Dick was a big man. He knew how big a man he was. He liked to get into fights. He was happy" (p. 101). Dick, then, creates a situation where he is secure. Dr. Adams, on the other hand, lets his temper run away with his intelligence. It is Dr. Adams who says, "I'll knock your eye teeth down your throat" (p. 101). But Dr. Adams is unable to back up this statement. Dr. Adams is not necessarily afraid—we are merely told that he is "angry" (p. 101)—but the fact is that he does renegade.

Mrs. Adams is quite upset by the incident. A Christian Scientist, she tries to soothe her husband by telling him, "he who ruleth his spirit is greater than he that taketh a city" (p. 101). She is lying in a "darkened room," symbolically, with her "Bible, her copy of Science and Health and her Quarterly" (p. 102). When Henry Adams tells her what Dick Boulton has done, Mrs. Adams answers, "I really don't think that any one would really do a thing like that" (p. 102). When Dr. Adams leaves the house and slams the door, he "heard his wife catch her breath" (p. 102). Nick's mother, then, is a naive—purposefully naive—woman who refuses to admit the fact of violence or evil into her life. She is also nervous and easily frightened. Her responses are the responses of a neurotic.

Furthermore, there is a distinct breach between the father and mother. When she asks him about the incident with Dick Boulton, he twice refuses to answer her, and his usual reply is the one word,
"no". The very obvious indication of their separation is when Henry Adams tells Nick his mother wants him; and when Nick indicates an unwillingness to see his mother, Dr. Adams completely ignores his wife's request and lets Nick go hunting with him.

The details of the story do not support the view that the story teaches Nick something which can be "just as unsettling to a boy as violence." Nick's reaction suggests he is anything but unsettled. When his father finds him, Nick is "sitting with his back against a tree, reading" (p. 103). Nick hardly seems upset. There is no detail to show that Nick heard either the argument with Boulton or his mother's remarks. The comment that Nick "cannot stomach his mother's naive refusal to admit evil" is unjustified. It would be better to read this story if not as a commonplace event, as a typical event in the lives of the doctor and the doctor's wife. The camera is off Nick for this story and pictures instead the subtle influence of his home atmosphere. We see a father who is tactless (even, perhaps, cowardly), and a neurotic mother who lives in a "darkened room." That Nick is not close to his mother is shown by his unwillingness to see her, an unwillingness which does not arise from this specific story. This leaves Nick with respect and trust for only his father and his father—as suggested by this story, by "Indian Camp," and by the next story, "Ten Indians"—proves a perilous model.

\[2^{\text{Young, p. 5.}}\]
\[3^{\text{Ibid.}}\]
In the story "Ten Indians" young Nick Adams is returning home from a July 4th celebration with the Garner family. Nick becomes the object of some teasing—which he secretly enjoys—about his Indian girl friend, Prudence Mitchell. After arriving at the Garner household, Nick runs across some fields to his own home. His father has a meal ready for Nick, and while Nick is eating, his father tells him that he had seen Prudence Mitchell "in the woods with Frank Washburn...having quite a time...thrashing around" (p. 335). Nick loses his appetite, begins to cry, and goes to bed convinced his "heart must be broken." (p. 336).

What Nick experiences in this story is infidelity. The girl he is secretly proud of betrays him, and in doing so becomes the tenth Indian of the story title. (The other nine were drunk.) The theme of the story is Nick's painful education into the problem of infidelity.

The bulk of the story dramatizes the theme and raises the problem of Nick's father again. On the ride home, the discussion of the Garner family is centered on Indians. While the Garners are at best condescending towards the Indians, Nick is very serious. Mrs. Garner says "Them Indians" (p. 331) several times; she is humorously tolerant of the race. "All Indians wear the same kind of pants" (p. 331), says the father; he utilizes one of those grand generalizations which indicates a lack of understanding and sympathy. One of the boys, Carl Garner, says that Indians and skunks "smell about the same" (p. 332). (And Joe Garner laughs at this remark.) Carl is the
cruelest, but then his mother says that Carl can't win a girl, "not even a squaw" (p. 332). The other boy, Frank, who seems younger than Carl, about Nick's age, corroborates this: "Carl, ain't no good with girls" (p. 332). The lack of real sympathy on the part of the Garner family is in sharp contract with Nick's attitude; Nick "felt hollow and happy inside himself to be teased about Prudence Mitchell" (p. 332). Nick makes no judgments about Indians, except Prudence Mitchell. About her he is serious. He takes the teasing lightly because he has not yet learned that cynicism which would make Prudence a squaw. This opposition of views, then, provides the dramatic context for Nick's disillusionment.

But the presence of the Garner family is functional in dramatizing another theme: Nick's peculiar home environment. In spite of the remarks directed at Carl by his mother and brother, there is the sense of family unity. There is a friendly joking between Joe Garner and his wife:

"Yes, that's what you would say," Mrs. Garner moved close to Joe as the wagon jolted. "Well, You had plenty of girls in your time."
"I'll bet Pa wouldn't ever have had a squaw for a girl."
"Don't you think it." Joe said. "You better watch out to keep Prudie, Nick."
His wife whispered to him and Joe laughed.
"What you laughing at?" asked Frank.
"Don't you say it, Garner," his wife warned. Joe laughed again.
"Nickie can have Prudence," Joe Garner said. "I got a good girl" (p. 333).

And when the family arrives home there is the sharing of duties. Joe and Frank milk the cows; Carl puts away the things from the back of the wagon; and Mrs. Garner begins to prepare supper.
Nick goes to a different kind of home. He eats cold chicken and pie prepared by his father; there is no mention of Nick's mother. While Nick does say that the food is "grand" (p. 334), there is something lacking in the Adams' home. It is cold and empty in comparison to the Garner home.

More suggestive than this lack of family life, however, is the way in which the elder Adams drops the news about Prudence. He does not deliver this information consolingly or even matter-of-factly; he delivers it slyly. Rather than state the fact that Prudie was seduced, he implies it. And this is the most damaging way to educate Nick. "I saw your friend, Prudie" (p. 335). While Nick is told the story, "his father was not looking at him" (p. 335). When Nick begins to realize the importance of what his father is saying, his father lends no assistance:

"Who was it with her?" Nick asked.
"Frank Washburn."
"Were they--were they--"
"Were they what?"
"Were they happy?"
"I guess so" (p. 335).

As in "Indian Camp" there is again the suggestion of something wrong with the father, something perverse in his attitude toward his son. At first glance it would seem that the father is trying to educate Nick, but that he is merely bungling the job. This view must be qualified by the father's reaction at finding Nick crying over the

4 My Italics.
5 My Italics.
news of Prudie. At best the father is trying to console but failing; at worst he is unconcerned or even pleased: "Have some more? His father picked up the knife to cut the pie" (p. 336). Nick's father appears as somewhat of an actor: in "Indian Camp" he shows Nick his medical skill; in "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife" he plays, unfortunately, a tough-guy role; and in "Ten Indians" he is the dramatic messenger of ill-tidings. Perhaps the father may be best understood as a frustrated man who attempts to fulfill himself by pretending to a stature he does not have. And Nick is his private and captive audience. But the boy is being forced to recognize the adult predicament before he is old enough to cope with it.

"Ten Indians" is the story of Nick's first broken heart. It is a tragedy of youth which is seldom traumatic. For Nick, however, the incident is traumatic; it becomes traumatic because Nick's father is unable to offer salve for the wound. Nick must look elsewhere for consolation, and he finds it in nature:

In the morning there was a big wind blowing and the waves were running high up on the beach and he was awake a long time before he remembered that his heart was broken (p. 336). Nature, in fact, is becoming the parent of Nick Adams. He is being formed by more subtle forces than he is aware of.

* * *

"The End of Something" opens with a description of a deserted lumbering town, Hortons Bay:

The one-story houses, the eating-house, the company store, the mill offices, and the big mill itself stood deserted in the acres of sawdust that covered the swampy meadow by the shore of the bay (p. 107).
Into these ruins row Nick, now sixteen or seventeen years old, and Marjorie on their way to set night lines for trout. They land on a beach and build a fire. Nick doesn't feel like eating, and Marjorie wonders what is wrong. As they sit by the fire, Nick picks an argument with the girl. Marjorie sees that he is attempting to end their affair, and so she leaves. Bill, Nick's friend, comes by later and asks Nick how it went; Nick is disturbed and doesn't want to talk about it.

Unlike "Ten Indians" this affair does not end because of an infidelity or other breach of love, it ends simply because "it isn't fun any more "(p. 110). There is, of course, more to it than that, but we are not told the real reason in this story. All we know is that the incident is unpleasant to Nick, and that it is somehow necessary for Nick to end the affair.

Hemingway again uses a natural incident to place beside the human incident. The decay of Hortons Bay suggests how inevitable it is that all prospering endeavors must end, both in the human and natural realms. That Hortons Bay existed is shown only by the "broken white lime-stone of its foundations "(p. 107). We suspect that with Nick, too, there will be broken remnants of his affair.

Nick, however, is really unhappy about ending the affair. As he makes his big statement, "He was afraid to look at Marjorie "(p. 110). As soon as Marjorie decides to leave, Nick's tone changes immediately and he offers to "push the boat" for her (p. 111). Part of his reaction can be traced to his sympathy for Marjorie, but he is disturbed, too. When she leaves, he "lay there for a long time "(p. 111). When
Bill arrives, Nick says, "Oh, go away, Bill! Go away for a while" (p. 111). And that is the end of something.

Several new insights about Nick also appear in this story. We see, briefly, his idea of an admirable girl, and we note his precise knowledge about the art of fishing—the beginning of the "code."

Marjorie is made in Nick's image; she is first of all a "buddy." When they row by Horton's Bay, Marjorie "was intent on the rod all the time they trolled, even when she talked. She loved to fish" (p. 108). She possesses Nick's love of the out-of-doors, and she is also a willing learner about the art of fishing: "Marjorie chased with her hands in the bucket, finally caught a perch, cut its head off and skinned it" (p. 108). She rows the boat and helps set the night lines. If anything, she is not the stereotyped American girl; she is not feminine through perfume and spiked heels but through being submissive and natural. She is a worthy if inferior companion.

Marjorie also differs greatly from Nick's mother. In our brief glimpse of Mrs. Adams, we see that she is neurotically unwilling to allow the fact of violence into her life. Nearly all her conversation is an attempt to ward off the spectre of evil. Marjorie, on the other hand, when she is told that her affair with Nick is over, accepts the decision bravely and stoically, the way Nick himself would. She makes only two comments to Nick; one is a question which shows she is hurt, and the other is a statement which shows she has the reticence under pain which marks the code of Hemingway's favorable characters:
"Isn't love any fun?....I'm going to take the boat....You can walk
back around the point "(pp. 110-111).

Nick, too, lives the code. He does not discuss the incident
with Bill (whose appearance at the end reveals that he has more to
do with the break-up than meets the eye), but merely tells him to
"go away for a while "(p. 111); and Bill goes understandingly away.
The code is also evidenced in the details about fishing. When
something contains pleasure or value, such as fishing, it should be
completely mastered; it should become an art. In this story Nick
is beginning to show this characteristic of the code: "'You don't
want to take the ventral fin out,' he said. 'It'll be all right for
bait but it's better with the ventral fin in' "(p. 108).

"The End of Something" is really the beginning of something.
The story presents more new themes than old ones: the heroine, the
code in two of its forms--how to suffer and how to master a skill--the
idea of a male world. The story is not quite complete, however, for
it raises questions which are not answered until "Three-Day Blow."

***

"The Three-Day Blow" is a continuation of "The End of Something."
It answers the questions raised by the former story, and it clarifies
Nick's attitude toward ending the affair. We are fully introduced to
Bill, the kind of friend that the later Hemingway hero has with him.
The drinking and the discussion, both new in the stories concerning
Nick, characterize this story with scenes that will be re-enacted
time and time again in later Hemingway works. The problem of Nick's
father is again brought up. But the important thing about this story is that it climaxes Nick's youth; in it he makes several of the major decisions or commitments of his life.

Nick arrives at Bill's house just as the rain stops. The two adolescents--Nick doesn't have any socks on--begin to drink and talk. They begin to talk about liquor, but they soon drop the subject; neither of them knows that much about it. The conversation switches to baseball, then to literature--getting progressively more serious--then to their fathers. At this point they become boyishly philosophical: "Everything's got its compensations...It all evens up" (p. 120).

Finally the major concern of the story is revealed. Nick is upset about breaking up with Marjorie. The real reason for their break-up is social, not personal. As Bill says, "you can't mix oil and water" (p. 123). Nick's spirits are picked up when he realizes he can always "go into town Saturday night" (p. 125). Like a three-day blow, the storm of separation is not necessarily permanent.

For the first time in Hemingway we see a questioning of social mores. Nick is not one of "Marjorie's own sort" (p. 123), and her mother is "terrible" (p. 124). Several times Nick says that he "couldn't help it" (p. 123). But he is also bothered by his action: "It was my fault" (p. 123). In following social conventions, Nick vaguely feels he has violated his own sense of honor. The rational dictates of society are at some variance from the irrational dictates of the heart. Neither society's authority nor Bill's advice can console Nick: "She was gone and he had sent her away. That was all that
mattered "(p. 123). Nick feels both a sense of loss and a sense of guilt.

The guilt, the loss, the conversation—all are projected against a background of drinking. The drinking—Nick's first experience with alcohol as far as we know—helps reveal certain other attitudes. Bill is characterized briefly but importantly, and the basically serious natures of Nick and Bill are revealed through their conversation—however immature and comical the conversation may be. And a significant relationship exists between these two.

Bill is first of all manly; his "big hand" fits "all the way around" a whiskey bottle "(p. 117). Like Nick, he is interested in and knows about baseball and the outdoors: "She'll blow like that for three days," Bill said "(p. 115). He, too, knows the code.

But their relationship involves more than mutual interests. Bill acts more mature, almost fatherly. When Bill discovers Nick is wearing no socks, he immediately gives Nick a pair of his own: "It's getting too late to go around without socks," he said "(p. 116). When Bill says that opening bottles makes drunkards, Nick is "impressed "(p. 120). Bill also gives Nick fatherly if adolescent advice about his affair with Marjorie:


Or again,

"You came out of it damned well," Bill said. "Now she can marry somebody of her own sort and settle down and be happy. You can't mix oil and water and you can't mix that sort of
thing any more than if I'd marry Ida that works for Strattons "(p. 123).

Although Bill's advice is of little help to Nick (his use of cliches--"you can't mix oil and water"--indicates his real understanding), he still occupies a position of authority for Nick. A small detail is Nick putting his feet "on the screen in front of the fire "(p. 116). "You'll dent in the screen," Bill tells him; and Nick "swung his feet over to the side of the fireplace "(p. 116).

Bill is the temporary father image. The usefulness of his advice is not as important as Nick's acceptance of it. Bill advocates the primacy of the male; it is a man's world: "Once a man's married he's absolutely bitched." When we remember that Bill appears at the conclusion of "The End of Something" and we remember that Nick is really against the break-up, we realize that Bill has quite a bit to do with the affair. Bill is completely male, and Nick follows his lead.

While Nick's attitude toward his actual father has never been outwardly other than that of the dutiful son, in this story we see the barest suggestion of criticism. When Bill and Nick discuss their fathers, Nick says that his father has "never taken a drink in his life...as though announcing a scientific fact."6 Nick expresses no pride here; indeed, he makes no judgment. But he goes on to say--"sadly"--that his father has "missed a lot "(p. 120). While the tone is in no way disparaging, it certainly expresses some bewilderment.

6My italics.
The elder Adams is contrasted to Bill's father who does drink and who "gets a little wild sometimes" (p. 120). Bill's father has an outlet for his disappointments while Nick's father apparently does not.

One constant note of this story is the note of adolescence. The pseudo-sophistication while drinking and the philosophizing is humorous from an adult point of view. But the discussion of fathers, the love of the outdoors, the implied criticism of society is serious; it is a comment on the value of organized civilization. The fact that Bill and especially Nick are not adults makes their criticism all the more objective and valid.

That this story suggests Nick's protest against both his family and society is significant, for it throws him into a male-centered world--now peopled by himself and Bill, eventually by himself alone. In fact, Nick is almost alone now. While he pays lip service to Bill's advice, he is silently wrapped in his own thoughts. He is rapidly approaching the awareness of his own isolation.

It has taken two stories to handle the implications of Nick's ending the affair with Marjorie. Really, it is a pivotal point in Nick's life. On the one hand he could have become "normal" and let himself be absorbed by society: "His original plan had been to go down home and get a job. Then he had planned to stay in Charlevoix all winter so he could be near Marge" (p. 123). His decision not to accept normalcy costs him and even affects the rest of his life, but he does retain his freedom. And part of his freedom is the masculine life in the out-of-doors. Even when blowing wild, nature is the
important reality, the real consolation: "Outside now the Marge business was no longer so tragic. It was not even very important. The wind blew everything like that away" (p. 123).
CHAPTER TWO: ON THE ROAD

"The Killers," "The Battler," and "The Light of the World" concern a relatively brief period of Nick's life when he tours America by rail. We are not sure whether he is escaping the upsetting environment of home or searching for what his home lacks. He finds, however, that America is really a macabre enlargement of his home.

Nick experiences a personal development through the experiences represented by these three stories. I have placed "The Killers" first. It seems that Nick has left home and temporarily settled in the town of Summit. Unsettled by this experience, he leaves town and wanders over the country by rail. From this wandering emerge "The Battler" and "The Light of the World." Psychologically, Nick seems slightly more naive and inexperienced in "The Killers" than in "The Battler"; in the latter story Nick is more apprehensive, as if he has already learned some lesson since leaving home. In "The Killers" he is almost unwilling to believe that such an incident as occurs can take place; he is briefly caught up in the movie-like unreality; after he is untied he is "trying to swagger it off" (p. 286). He more readily believes what takes place in the following stories. In "The Battler," an even more unreal experience than "The Killers," he is never so foolish as to disbelieve. In "The Light of the World"
he appears definitely harder than in the other stories. He has begun to assume that tight-lipped pose which serves as his protection.

* * *

"The Killers" marks Nick's first significant experience in the larger American scene. The story concerns two gangsters who drop into a cafe where Nick is eating; they are waiting for Ole Andreson, a man they are going to kill. When Ole doesn't show up, they leave. Nick runs to warn Ole, but Ole is resigned to his fate. The thought of Ole waiting to be killed is too much for Nick, and he decides to leave town.

It has been suggested that this story represents the cliche of the movie thriller come true.¹ This is certainly part of the theme. The title seems a bit overdramatic unless we consider the story in this light. The killers are typical Hollywood hoods themselves. Each wears a "derby hat and a black overcoat buttoned across the chest...a silk muffler and gloves" (p. 280). They also obey the first law of the story-book thriller by wearing their gloves at all times so as not to leave fingerprints. Their speech is characteristically tough and cold:

"Got anything to drink?" Al asked.
"Silver beer, bevo, ginger-ale," George said.
"I mean you got anything to drink?"(p. 280).

Or again,

"Another bright boy," Al said. "Ain't he a bright boy, Max?"
"The town's full of bright boys," Max said "(p. 280).

And again,

"What are you going to kill him for, then?" George asked.
"We're killing him for a friend. Just to oblige a friend, bright boy "(p. 283).

The coldbloodedness of the killers is also set up from the start. Their original reason for entering the cafe is to kill Ole, and to kill him within the hour. Still both men order the full dinner, complete with "mashed potatoes." The thought of murder with a sawed-off shotgun at close range has no effect on their appetites. As Brooks and Warren point out, the "unreal cliches or horror have a reality."²

²Ibid.

And this is the real force of the story. The very stereotyping of the characters, incidents, and attitudes has an unreality; the unreality becomes horrible when juxtaposed against the normal. We have stereotype killers in Al and Max; they have stereotype attitudes about their profession; they perform the ritual of typing and gagging possible witnesses: it is all like a mystery story. But then we are confronted with the normal, or the descent from the stereotype to the individual. Ole Andresen does not accept his death as we would expect. Nick, George, and Sam do not react in a predictable manner. Then there is the subtle touch of Nick mistaking Mrs. Bell for Mrs. Hirsch--perhaps the most effective detail to set off the
contrast between reality and unreality. The final effect is one of an unreal horror proven true.

But this story suggests more than that the horrible can happen; it suggests that the horrible is the real. For one thing, the killers seem sure of their relationship to the world:

"Where do you think you are?" [George asks.]
"We know damn well where we are," the man called Max said.
"Do we look silly?" (p. 282).

And later George asks, "What's it all about?" When Max asks him what he thinks it's all about, George answers, "I don't know" (p. 282). Also, Max ties Nick and Sam up like "a couple of girl friends in the convent." (p. 284). The implication is that Nick and Sam are protected, that they do not yet recognize reality for what it is. When Nick runs and tells Ole of the incident, "it sounded silly when he said it" (p. 287).

Always there is this attempt by Nick to grasp the reality of what is happening. When Nick offers to get the police, Ole replies that it "wouldn't do any good...There ain't anything to do" (p. 284). The certainty of the killers, the uncertainty of George, Nick, and Sam; the interplay between the stereotype and the individual; the abnormal commanding the normal; the relative innocence completely dominated by guilt and experience—all give the vague sense that this situation, like a bad dream, has happened before, that this imminent violence

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3 In their analysis of the story, Brooks and Warren contend that Mrs. Bell represents the normalcy of life (p. 319). It is, to be sure, a normal occurrence to mistake one person for another. The author's injection of this detail in such a tensely-drawn situation is so unexpected that the reader himself is momentarily confused and briefly caught up in unreality.
lies as the real fact somewhere beneath the appearance of normal and civilized existence. At best there is a horrible confusion as to which rules life.

Sam decides to ignore the horror of the incident: "'I don't even listen to it,' he said and shut the door "(p. 288). George realizes what has happened, but he passes it off as a "hell of a thing" which a person "better not think about "(p. 289). But to Nick, more sensitive than the others, neither of these alternatives is appropriate; he is "going to get out of this town "(p. 289). Acknowledging the horror does not necessitate witnessing it. And the horror is too large to be comprehended; Nick must get at some distance from it before he can decide how to cope with it.

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"The Battler" marks the second account of Nick on the bum.
Although young and inexperienced, his ordeal in "The Killers" has left him somewhat more cautious. Independent, he is now learning the difficult responsibility of independence. Independence means an individual evaluation and reaction to experience and the world. Nick is learning to evaluate, and this story, significantly, deals with the nature of reality.

The experience is a kind of nightmare for Nick. Nick has been "busted" by a brakeman on a train and thrown off. He discovers a camp made by two other bums--Ad Francis, a white punch-drunk fighter, and "Bugs," a Negro ex-convict. While eating with them, Nick arouses Ad's anger by not letting him see his knife. When Ad is about to give Nick a beating, "Bugs" taps Ad with a blackjack, knocking him
out. "Bugs" then tells Nick about himself and Ad. Nick leaves the scene before Ad recovers consciousness, and as he walks down the track, he hears "Bugs" soothing Ad.

Nick's second encounter with the American scene is an encounter with appearance and reality on a Gothic level. Nothing is certain in this dark world beside a railroad, a "long way off from anywhere" (p. 129). It is a world of confusion and deceit, with overtones of the macabre, the insane, and the perverse. It is an ambiguous world where even the reader cannot come to grips with the real facts of the situation.

The story opens in an eerie world, with the last vestige of civilization—the light on the caboose—disappearing. There is only the narrow line of track by which Nick can keep his directions. On either side of the track lies a treacherous bog: "There was water on both sides of the track, then tamarack swamp "(p. 130). The swamp is "ghostly in the rising mist...all the same on both sides of the track "(p. 130). The atmosphere and geography are enough to fill Nick with apprehension.

Nick is relatively inexperienced. He had accepted at face value a statement from the train brakeman: "'Come here, kid,' he said, 'I got something for you.' Then wham and he lit on his hands and knees beside the track "(p. 129). Nick is learning that the world is a world of deceit; what seems is not always so.

As Nick walks down the track and crosses a bridge, the scene becomes even more eerie:

Ahead there was a bridge. Nick crossed it, his boots ringing hollow on the iron. Down below the water showed black between
the slits of ties. Nick kicked a loose spike and it dropped into the water. Beyond the bridge were hills. It was high and dark on both sides of the track. Up the track Nick saw a fire (p. 130).

So in this close, dark scene appears a seeming haven; a "light," a guide shines up the track. There is visual promise ahead.

The light, however, only carries Nick further into a world of unreality. The light turns out to be a campfire, and beside the fire is a kind of ghoul:

In the firelight Nick saw that his face was misshapen. His nose was sunken, his eyes were slits, he had queer-shaped lips. Nick did not perceive all this at once, he only saw the man's face was queerly formed and mutilated. It was like putty in color. Dead looking in the firelight...He had only one ear. It was thickened and tight against the side of his head. Where the other ear should have been there was a stump (p. 131).

The man has the features of a monster. But even more frightening than his physical features are his mental processes: "I'm not quite right....I'm crazy "(p. 132). The man, an ex-prizefighter, is proud of his ability to take a beating and of his abnormal heartbeat. Nick takes part in a strange ritual where the man's pulse is measured without the benefit of a watch. Because this is the kind of comedy no one laughs at, the action takes on insane overtones.

Into this weird scene comes a Negro named "Bugs," who, according to Ad, is also "crazy "(p. 133). "Bugs" is overly polite, addressing Ad as "Mr. Francis," and Nick as "Mr. Adams "(p. 134). Bugs cooks ham and egg sandwiches, while Ad grows suddenly silent after Nick, at the insistence of "Bugs," refuses him his knife. We have, then, an odd scene: an inexperienced youth, a punch-drunk and silent ex-fighter, and an unusually polite Negro sitting around a fire eating sandwiches.
The story then focuses on the attitude of Ad towards Nick. Ad glares across the fire at Nick. Finally Ad speaks his resentment, and as he talks his speech becomes irrational. For Nick the scene becomes nightmarish; he feels "nervous" (p. 135). And Ad has wandered from the knife incident to a different world: "You come in here and act snotty about my face and smoke my cigars and drink my liquor and then talk snotty" (p. 135). Ad moves forward to attack Nick when Bugs knocks Ad out with a blackjack.

While Ad is lying unconscious on the ground, "Bugs" tells Nick a little of Ad's background and how they came to get together. Here again there are suggestions of the gruesome and the perverse. "Bugs" says that Ad was managed by his "sister," that the papers had written "how she loved her brother and how he loved his sister, and then they got married in New York and that made a lot of unpleasantness" (p. 137). This seeming incest, however, is not real. "Bugs" explains that "they wasn't brother and sister no more than a rabbit" (p. 137). But incest is suggested, and the suggestion lingers. Twice "Bugs" mentions that Ad's wife "looks enough like him to be his own twin" (p. 137).

"Bugs" goes on to explain how he met Ad. They had been in jail together:

Right away I liked him and when I got out I looked him up. He likes to think I'm crazy and I don't mind. I like to be with him and I like seeing the country and I don't have to commit no larceny to do it. I like living like a gentleman (p. 137).

While there are suggestions of a homosexual relationship, the point is really ambiguous; and it is more in keeping with the tone of the
story that nothing becomes definite. We can see that "Bugs" is as much the mother as he is the lover of Ad: "You'll feel better, Mister Francis," the negro's voice soothed. 'Just you drink a cup of this hot coffee'" (p. 138). Their exact relationship, however, is still vague. All that is certain is that "Bugs" takes care of Ad, and that he displays his affection by occasionally tapping Ad on the head with a blackjack. It is an unreal situation with real people.

When Nick starts back up the track, he finds "a ham sandwich in his hand" (p. 138). He has been so immersed in the experience that he had forgotten the sandwich. Besides revealing the intensity of the situation, this incident is also a reminder to Nick that he is not dreaming. It is like a return from the underworld with evidence that he had really been there.

Like "Indian Camp," then, this story is philosophical and traumatic. Where Nick learns certain facts about life in the former story, in "The Battler" he learns the uncertainty about life. He learns not only that appearances are often deceiving, but that the truth they hide is often too hideous for the imagination.  

In his study, Ernest Hemingway, Philip Young makes an interesting comparison of Nick Adams and Huckleberry Finn (pp. 181-212). Using "The Battler" as an illustration in this comparison, Young points out that "Bugs" and Ad resemble Huck's Duke and Dauphin, and that Nick and Huck are both profoundly disturbed by their association with these social castoffs (pp. 206-207). An important distinction which Young makes, however, is that the comic relief in Huck's adventures has been eliminated in Nick's. What happens to Huck happens more intensely to Nick; what is innocent in one is sinister in the other (pp. 206-207). Young's point is worth noting: Hemingway is attempting to distill the horror Huck finds along the Mississippi River and compress it into several short stories spread about a modern American scene. Evil increases with time in America.
refers) is real; his broken body and his broken mind give testimony to reality. Whatever it is that has been beating on Ad is beginning to pound on Nick.

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"The Light of the World" is a study of attitudes. There is a contrast between the surface toughness and the underlying softness of Nick, his friend Tom, a bartender, five whores, a homosexual, and five lumbermen. The toughness proves merely a veneer, and the softness the "light of the world."

Nick is still on the bum, but now he has picked up a friend, Tom. They have "come in the town at one end" and "were going out the other" (p. 384). Between trains they stop in a bar and order some beer. The bartender gives them the beer, but seeing each put out only a nickel, he covers the free lunch bowls of pigs feet. When Tom uncovers one of the bowls, the bartender makes the hard-boiled gesture of reaching "a hand forward under the bar," as if going for a gun (p. 384). When Nick puts out fifty cents, the bartender uncover the bowls. Tom, nineteen years old and seemingly tough, spits the food on the floor: "Your goddam pig's feet stink" (p. 385). The bartender calls the boys "punks" and tells them to "clear the hell out of here" (p. 385). He must act tougher than his customers.

Even in this short scene, we see that Nick is still the sensitive boy, not really as tough as he feels he must act. He pacifies the bartender with the fifty cents, and he makes the original suggestion that he and Tom get out of the bar. When he does talk tough, it is more from a sense of loyalty than a basic hardness: "I said we were going
It wasn't your idea" (p. 385). Basically, that statement is more defensive than aggressive. Tom, however, is the typical wise guy. He uncovers the bowls, spits on the floor, and makes threatening remarks--with no intention of backing them up: "'We'll be back,' Tommy said" (p. 385). His insolence is a mask.

Leaving the bar they go to the train depot; in the waiting room are "five whores...six white men and four Indians" (p. 385). In the development of the story we find that one of the white men is a homosexual, and that two of the whores--a large one named Alice who "must have weighed three hundred and fifty pounds" and a smaller, "ordinary looking" peroxide (p. 386)--claim to have "layed Steve Ketchel" (p. 389). The homosexual is cruelly needled for the amusement of all, while Alice and the plain peroxide exchange some heated words over who really slept with "Steve" Ketchel. The Indians take no part in either the baiting or the quarrelling; they seem to ignore the whole proceedings. Representing a different culture, more primitive and closer to nature, their dismissal of the affair is probably a comment on the comical and ridiculous manner in which the "civilized" whites conduct themselves.

The homosexual is the most ominous figure in the group. He has a "white [face] and his hands were white and thin" (p. 385). When baited, the homosexual usually turns away "holding his lips tight together," or makes an appeal to his tormentor to "be decent" (p. 386). Unlike the others, the homosexual wears his gentility on the outside, while he is inwardly perverse. To the end he makes furtive advances toward the boys: "Which way are you boys going?" is his last statement in the story (p. 391). While he would indulge in his
tendencies, he gets on with others by using a faked decency and softness.

Alice, however, is quite different. She takes the greatest pleasure in the baiting of the homosexual: "She just kept on laughing and shaking" (p. 386). It is also Alice who gets most upset over the discussion of Steve Ketchel: "Alice was crying so she could hardly speak from shaking so" (p. 390). And for Nick she has a basic attractiveness: "She had a pretty face and a nice smooth skin and lovely voice and she was nice all right and really friendly" (p. 391). Actually, she emerges as a heroine. Her spontaneous outbursts of laughing and crying are the result of honest emotion: "I never lie and you know it" (p. 390). Unlike Tom or the homosexual, her reaction to a specific situation is not pat; it varies with the situation. Completely fat, she is completely woman. That is why she can take so much pleasure in the embarrassment of the homosexual: he is so completely unnatural.

The peroxide, who first claims the love of Steve Ketchel, is dishonest. Her claims are excessive and erroneous:

I knew him like you know nobody in the world and I loved him like you love God. He was the greatest, finest, whitest, most beautiful man that ever lived, Steve Ketchel, and his own father shot him down like a dog (p. 388).5

As she continues her praise of Ketchel and of her relationship to

5The girls are referring to Stanley Ketchel, one time middle-weight boxing champion of the world. He was shot, I believe, not by his father, but by an irate husband who resented Ketchel's attentions to his wife.
him, "everybody felt terribly. It was sad and embarrassing" (p. 389). The pose of the peroxide, her elevation of self through association with another, works. Everyone except Alice, who knows better, responds sentimentally to the peroxide's lie. When Alice begins to scorn the peroxide's claims and after they exchange several insults, the peroxide, with pride, ends the discussion: "leave me with my memories...with my true, wonderful memories" (p. 390).

The whole episode is vaguely silly and vulgar. It is worth noting, though, that Nick seldom laughs. This is the most comical situation in which we see Nick, but he does not seem to see the humor; he is basically humorless. But Nick has learned from this experience. He has seen the various masks that people wear to face the world. The barman acts tougher than he is in order to handle "punks." Tommy is the brash wise guy, hiding his youth under insolence. Perhaps the most sinister of all is the "sister," with the facade of decency. The peroxide is not so much to be despised as she is to be laughed off; her dishonesty is too obvious to be taken seriously. But she is a phoney. Alice, the gross prostitute, is the most admirable because she is honest and really wears no mask.

Nick is primarily an observer. He says little, but what he does say indicates how he feels. Towards the bartender he is somewhat sympathetic, although he shows displeasure when the bartender attempts to take advantage of his suggestion to Tom to leave. Nick's desire to leave the bar shows some annoyance at Tom's attitude. Toward the homosexual he keeps a distance, and he significantly maintains an honesty with the "sister":
"How old are you boys? [the homosexual asks] ..."
"We're seventeen and nineteen," I said.
"What's the matter with you?" Tommy turned to me.
"That's all right" (p. 387).

The implication, I think, is that Nick feels dishonesty might only encourage the homosexual; the homosexual is too cunning to be met on his own grounds of deception. Gross, coarse, massive Alice, however, does attract Nick. Her honesty is appealing.

Nick is continually learning that almost every event in life calls for some emotional response; and more, life itself must be approached with some specific attitude. There are masks by which you protect yourself. Alice is correct with her honesty, but unprotected by exposing herself. And we will see that Nick does mould his own attitudes and responses to meet the world. In fact, we already see the humorless silence which comes to be his chief protection.
CHAPTER THREE: MEN AT WAR

The next group of Nick Adams stories are about his war experiences. They include a vignette (the one preceding "A Very Short Story"), "A Way You'll Never Be," "Now I Lay Me," "In Another Country," and "Big Two-Hearted River." "Big Two-Hearted River," while it is not specifically a tale of war, is significant only in terms of war; it is psychologically closer to "A Way You'll Never Be" than it is to "Cross-Country Snow." Like "Now I Lay Me," "Big Two-Hearted River" marks a stage in Nick's convalescence. Indeed, the ordering of these stories does present a problem. Nick has been wounded (the vignette), sent prematurely back to the front for propaganda purposes ("A Way You'll Never Be"), then sent back to Milan to be rehabilitated ("Now I Lay Me" and "In Another Country"). Also, "A Way You'll Never Be" is placed in the summer; "Now I Lay Me" takes place in what seems to be a hospital shortly before the "October offensive"; and "In Another Country" happens in the "fall of the year" with Nick no longer confined to the hospital. "Big Two-Hearted River" would occur shortly after Nick's eventual return to the States.

* * *

In the vignette preceding "A Very Short Story," Nick is sitting against a wall in the sun, "hit in the spine" (p. 139). He is "sweaty dirty," and the day is "very hot" (p. 139). In spite of being wounded
and generally uncomfortable, Nick is almost elated. He jokes with Rinaldi about their making a "separate peace" and their being "not patriots" (p. 139). It is really no joke, but Nick's tone is comic: "Nick turned his head carefully away smiling sweatily. Rinaldi was a disappointing audience" (p. 139). The challenge of death has been met, and Nick has survived the test. It is a time for joy.

His ironic attitude marks his final disillusionment. He has involved himself in a cause and it has provided no answers. He has made the ultimate discovery that he must make his own wars and his own peaces. The "separate peace" puts Nick outside all the conventions of nations and societies. With no abstractions to rely on, he must rely on himself. Rather than proving an ideological struggle between nations, the war has proved but a very personal test for Nick. The immediate physical and especially the psychic effects of that test are shown in the next four stories.

* * *

"A Way You'll Never Be" is a story seen through the eyes of a man with a tenuous grip on sanity. Nick is never quite sure of his mind, where he is, or why he is there. And neither is the reader. The story is the description of a shell-shocked soldier, and the vision is fragmentary and chaotic. This story does not follow a logical pattern, but a pattern of psychological associations. The confusion in the story is the confusion in Nick's mind. The story should not be read as a narrative, but as a psychic revelation.

In the second sentence the author says that "Nicholas Adams saw what had happened by the position of the dead" (p. 402). This is the
only time in all the Nick Adams stories, with the exception of "Fathers and Sons," that he is called by his full name, Nicholas. It is as if the identity of the hero is uncertain and that mentioning the name in full helps establish the fact. It is not the author speaking so much as it is the hero thinking.

Nick passes a field and notices the dead; all around them are scattered the paraphernalia of war. It is revealing how Nick catalogues these materials:

a field kitchen, it must have come over when things were going well; many of the calf-skin-covered haversacks, stick bombs, helmets, rifles, sometimes one butt-up, the bayonet stuck in the dirt...stick bombs, helmets, rifles...(p. 402).

As Nick is listing these things in his mind, he associates the rifles with what their position suggests; but this slight break in his thought causes him to start his catalogue all over again with "stick bombs." This mental backtracking is a conscious attempt to keep his mind under strict control.

All these remnants of war are juxtaposed with emblems of peace: "mass prayer books, group postcards....and the letters, letters, letters" (pp. 402-403). Besides showing the chaos of battle, these also help point out the contrast of war and peace, of guilt and innocence: "postcards showing the machine-gun unit standing in ranked and ruddy cheerfulness as in a football picture for a college annual" (p. 402). It is a macabre reality which dominates the scene, a poignant waste. The whole scene is put in an ironic light. With all the debris of war and all the dead being buzzed with flies, there is still a sense of peace, a silence: There is "the grass and the grain" (p. 402), and for the dead the "hot weather had swollen them all alike regardless of
nationality" (p. 403). From this spot Nick passes through a town, silent and still in the aftermath of battle: "There was no one in the town at all" (p. 403). Passing through the town, Nick is still confronted with the sense of peace. The river is described as "placid"; the whole scene is "lush and over-green...and becoming historical had made no change in this, the lower river" (p. 404). As has been seen in many of the earlier stories, nature has a way of healing wounds; nature is now healing the wound of war. Nature endures and consoles.

As Nick approaches the Italian position, the unrest begins again. Coming into contact with the war again brings a note of incongruity into the scene. First Nick is delayed by a lieutenant who is thinking of shooting Nick as a spy. The lieutenant as well as Nick has been unnerved by the war: "But the face of this officer looked like the face of a man during a bombardment. There was the same tightness and the voice did not sound natural. His pistol made Nick nervous" (p. 405). Also, Nick is wearing an American uniform, which he says he is supposed to let the Italian troops see. His friend Captain Paravicine mentions that it is "odd" (p. 405). It is odd, yet it is evidently a strategy of the Italian army. The bizarre, then, is more than in Nick's shell-shocked mind; it is in the whole concept of war; even those who plan strategy are in their way shell-shocked:

I should have a musette full of chocolate. These I should distribute with a kind word and a pat on the back. But there weren't any cigarettes and postcards and no chocolate. So they said to circulate around anyway (p. 406).

This is quite an ineffective way to build morale.

We find that Nick himself "was stinking in every attack" (p. 406). In order to survive the fear of battle, he takes his morale from a
bottle. But Nick knows this about himself, and like many unpleasant thoughts, he doesn't like to think about it: "Let's not talk about how I am...It's a subject I know too much about to want to think about it any more" (p. 407). Still, his thoughts are so much with him that he "can't sleep without a light of some sort" (p. 407). The light is necessary not only to keep away the fear, but also to drive away madness. Nick is not too sure of himself: "I don't seem crazy to you, do I?...It's a hell of a nuisance once they've had you certified as nutty...No one ever has any confidence in you again" (p. 407). And "no one" includes Nick himself.

Nick then lies on a bunk. Although he does not sleep, he dreams. He remembers what it was like during bombardment, before he was wounded. As he remembers, he relives the past; what has happened to him earlier happens to him again. He begins thinking in the past tense but, as the events become more real in his mind, he thinks in the present tense; he is mentally back in battle:

Para had had him walk them two at a time outside...Knowing it was all a bloody balls—if he can't stop crying break his nose (pp. 407-408).

His mind vacillates from past to present to past, and then there is no real distinction; the mind wanders madly. In one sentence he switches tenses, changes from first to third person, uses some nonsense words, acquires a second name, and throws in some incongruous imagery:

And there was Gaby Delys, oddly enough, with feathers on; you called me baby doll a year ago tadada you said that I was rather nice to know tadada with feathers on, with feathers off, the great Gaby, and my name's Harry Pilcer, too, we used to step out of the far side of the taxis when it got steep going up the hill and he could see that hill every night when he dreamed with Sacre Coeur, blown white, like a soap bubble (p. 408).
This point where his mind breaks down is probably when he relives his wounding, because this sentence is preceded with "we always came down"; but there is one time when he didn't come down, or at least came down differently than ever before. The moment of wounding, then, is a moment of madness for Nick. After this one sentence, he seems to regain his composure. And though he does have more control, there are gaps in his logic; his mind jumps from association to association: "sometimes she was with some one else and he could not understand that, but those were the nights the river ran so much wider and stiller than it should" (p. 408).

The river, wide and still, becomes part of a very significant and frightening image to him, the river and a "low house painted yellow." But the "house meant more than anything and every night he had it" (p. 408). There is something peculiar about this house: "he had been there a thousand times and never seen it" (p. 408). It is at this house where he was wounded. During the battle he had probably not noticed the house or its color, but it has become vivid in his subconscious and recurs constantly in his mind. The sudden moment when he was wounded has become the reality of the war for Nick; all else pales before this fact: "He never dreamed about the front now any more but what frightened him so that he could not get rid of it was that long yellow house and the different width of the river" (p. 409). To this river and house Nick journeys "each night" (p. 409).

He snaps out of his reverie and finds that those in the dugout have been watching him. He begins to talk about his uniform, claims there will soon be Americans "swarming like locusts" (p. 411). Then he
lectures on grasshoppers and locusts. His lecture, while merely a leap of the imagination, is precise and grounded in knowledge. From this seemingly insane discourse he twice repeats the disconnected moral: "either you must govern or you must be governed" (p. 412). This statement, too, is grounded in knowledge. From the time Nick was wounded and made his "separate peace," he has been his own governor; he has been "reformed out of the war" (p. 410). This is Nick's refusal to join any cause and, indirectly at least, his refusal to believe in abstract words.

His friend, Paravicine, manages to calm Kick down again. They talk of helmets which Kick has seen "full of brains too many times" (p. 413). And his mind starts to go again: "He was trying to hold it in" (p. 413). This time it is shorter and less violent; this time, however, he sees the "white flash" and feels the "clublike impact" of his wounding (p. 414). When his mind first went and he thought of the house and the river, he says that "he needed" it (p. 408). Now we see why. His mind is still trying to come to grips with the wound. In the last delirium, he fully visualizes the wound as it happened, and his last delirium is briefer and less painful than the earlier ones where his mind wanders around the wound without really centering on it. To maintain his sanity, he must absorb the fact of his wounding into his conscious mind.

"A Way You'll Never Be," then, is a description of Nick hovering between sanity and madness. It is a psychological story. When Nick is able to come to terms with his wound—which is a reality—he will attain a mental balance. In metaphysical terms, we might say that
what is real is horrible, and that those who want to discover what
reality is must pay a high price for that knowledge. But such
knowledge makes Kick his own ruler, his own war-and peacemaker.

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In "Now I Lay Me" we see Kick convalescing, if not from his
physical wound, at least from his psychical wound. He is lying on a
cot trying to keep awake:

I myself did not want to sleep because I had been living for
a long time with the knowledge that if I ever shut my eyes
in the dark and let myself go, my soul would go out of my
body (p. 363).

He then goes through a sort of ritual whereby he can keep himself
awake: imaginary fishing trips, prayers, memories, and so on.
Should any of these devices fail, he can always listen to the silk­
worms feeding. Upon discovering that his orderly--the only other
person in the room--is awake, Nick engages him in conversation for
a while. When the orderly finally falls asleep, Nick again occupies
his mind to keep awake.

Primarily the story is concerned with Nick's present condition.
Because of being "blown up at night," he associates night with
death (p. 363). To sleep is to die: So Nick has devised a formula by
which he can hold off sleep--and death. He thinks of fishing, which
he does "very carefully" (p. 313). Nature is Nick's solace in a crisis,
his means of forgetting. At times he runs out of real fishing streams
and invents new ones, and the rite goes on. So dependent is Nick on
his imagination, however, that he cannot always separate the real
streams from the imaginary ones: "Some of those streams I still
remember and think that I have fished in them, and they are confused
with streams I really know" (p. 364). Even while awake, he finds it hard to tell the real from the unreal, fact from dream. This kind of mental confusion shows that Nick has not yet completely recovered his sanity. While he is not so bad as he was in "A Way You'll Never Be," he is still not good. The state of his mind is also revealed when he starts to talk about praying, another one of his devices. He tells us that he prays for everyone he has ever known, but before he can complete his statement on how he does this, his mind digresses for a moment on those things which are earliest in his memory: "the house where I was born and my mother and father's wedding-cake in a tin box hanging from one of the rafters" (p. 365). His mind, as in "A Way You'll Never Be," still follows a pattern of random association. The random thought, however, is not letting the mind go. What the mind dwells on is not important as long as it keeps working on matters dissociated from his present condition. Behind the seeming carelessness of his mind is a strong will: "I listened to him snore for a long time and then I stopped listening to him snore and listened to the silk-worms eating" (p. 371). Nick has his mental faculties under a practiced control.

John, Nick's orderly, is a contrast to Nick. John has been trapped into the war, while Nick has enlisted. John is "nervous" (p. 369) while Nick is wounded. John is married with a family, while Nick is single. John has a definite future to return to, while Nick thinks he will work on a paper, "maybe" in Chicago (p. 369). John is the typically normal and practical man temporarily inconvenienced by the war. Nick is the idealist who enlisted and who has been permanently damaged by the war.
They occupy two different worlds. But there is an irony here: Nick, the younger of the two, is also the wiser of the two; he understands John but John does not understand him. Nick is happy when John does not have to face the same realities of war that Nick has faced: "I was glad he was not there, because he would have been a great worry to me" (p. 371). Nick feels John should be spared that kind of knowledge. And John's concern for Nick is unavailing because he does not understand Nick. John "was very disappointed that I had not yet married, and I know he would feel very badly if he knew that, so far, I have never married" (p. 371).

Marriage is the panacea which John (and the American legend) offers Nick: "he was very certain about marriage and knew it would fix up everything" (p. 371). If Nick got married, John says, he "wouldn't worry" (p. 370). But John misses the point. Not only has the war pushed marriage far in the background of Nick's mind, but his rememberances of his parents incline him away from that state. Nick's present psychic state is quite unlike John's, and marriage would not provide the same healing qualities for Nick. Nick's healer is nature, not woman:

I had a new thing to think about and I lay in the dark with my eyes open and thought of all the girls I had ever known and what kind of wives they would make. It was a very interesting thing to think about and for a while it killed off trout-fishing and interfered with my prayers. Finally, though, I went back to trout-fishing, because I found that I could remember all the streams and there was always something new about them, while the girls, after I had thought about them a few times, blurred and all became rather the same and I gave up thinking about them almost altogether (p. 371).

The comfort of a woman is brief, while the comfort of nature is almost without end.
While Nick is thinking back to all the people he remembers that he might pray for them, his mind catches on an incident from his early home. This incident is a conflict between his mother and father. When Nick was a boy, the family had moved into a new house. One day while his father was on a hunting trip, Nick's mother had cleaned the house and burned all the "specimens that my father had collected as a boy" (p. 365). When the father returned home and saw the smoldering remains, he became very upset: "His shotgun in its leather case and his gamebags were on the grass where he had left them when he stepped down from the buggy" (p. 366). His father tried to save some of the collection with a rake, but the "best arrow-heads went all to pieces" (p. 366).

This incident is mostly adverse criticism of Mrs. Adams. She cleaned out of the basement "everything that should not have been there" (pp. 365-366). And when Mr. Adams returned home, she "was standing there smiling, to meet him" (p. 366). There is the suggestion of cruelty in Mrs. Adams, and even more, the suggestion that the female does not understand or respect the male. Mrs. Adams made a decision and Mr. Adams can do nothing about it. This incident of female unconcern would certainly color Nick's picture of marriage.

Another point is the peculiar reaction of Nick's father. He said nothing to reproach his wife. He only made one gesture of protest: "My father looked at the fire and kicked at something" (p. 366). In the conflict between the parents of Nick Adams there is no question as to who is the victor. Mr. Adams is a beaten man, submitting to the unnatural relationship of the female ruling the male. Nick is gentle
with his father; he does not criticize harshly. But it is implicit that his father is a weak man, that he is not an ideal to be copied.

For two reasons, then, Nick cannot listen to John. He cannot marry to be eventually dominated—like his father—by a wife; and his nerves are quieted only by the workings of nature, such as the chewing of the silk-worms on the leaves. The religious rite of marriage is no substitute for the personal rites derived from experience.

* * *

"In Another Country" tells of Nick's last days of convalescing. The war is yet in progress, but Nick is no longer involved. Nick is not hospitalized, but each day he must go to a Milan hospital for treatments on his leg. There are new machines which are supposed to make a quick improvement. At the hospital Nick meets an Italian major who is undergoing treatment on his hand. The two become friendly as the major attempts to teach Nick Italian grammar. One day the major's young wife dies and the major tells Nick he should never marry.

There seems to be two major motifs in this story which are linked and dramatized by a third. First of all, we become aware of the isolation of the veterans, both from war and from the society to which they have returned:

In the fall the war was always there, but we did not go to it any more (p. 267)....we felt held together by there being something that had happened that they, the people who disliked us, did not understand (p. 269).

The second motif is the presence of the new hospital machines which are to perform such wonders for the wounded, the "machines that were to make so much difference" (p. 267). Linking these two motifs is the dramatizing motif of the death of the major's wife. The
combined tone of these motifs is as nihilistic as the war, which hovers in the background.

The war, ironically, has not brought any unity or meaning into the world; rather it has produced further isolation. Among the citizenry the veterans are not welcomed: "the men and women would crowd together on the sidewalk so that we would have had to jostle them to get by" (p. 269). There is even division among the veterans themselves. Those who had been at the front longest and who had earned the most medals are somewhat apart from Nick, who has been "given the medals because he was an American" (p. 270). But Nick is still "their friend against outsiders" (p. 270). Nick does not resent being set apart from the others, because he knows he would "never have done such things" as the others have done since he is "very much afraid to die" (p. 270). In fact, Nick himself realizes one difference which would set him apart from the others:

The three with the medals were like hunting-hawks; and I was not a hawk, although I might seem a hawk to those who had never hunted; they, the three, knew better and so we drifted apart (p. 270).

Nick is basically a sensitive man who has no real taste for the viciousness in which he has been forced to participate.

It is really knowledge which separates these veterans from themselves and from society. It is the knowledge of death and the particular effect of this knowledge on the individual: "The tall boy...had lived a very long time with death and was a little detached. We were all a little detached" (p. 269). The confronting of death, the wounds, all have their isolating effect.

It is into this mental atmosphere that machines are introduced.
These machines, which are supposed to do so much, are a bit ludicrous. While their worth has supposedly been proven on the victim of an “industrial accident,” both Nick and the major look with doubt and amusement on the machine’s ability to effect any cure on the victims of war (p. 268). And the machine in fact does prove ineffectual: “the machine was to bend the knee and make it move...and instead the machine lurched when it came to the bending part” (p. 268).

The machines, however, are attempts to cure the physical. It has been mentioned that the veterans are detached by their war experiences, and that it is the knowledge of death which prompts this detachment. No machine is capable of penetrating this area of human experience. If death can be diminished, if the psychic wound can be cured, it can be brought about only by some return to society. But society does not want the veterans; indeed, the veterans do not feel a strong desire to return to a society which does not understand. There is no real bitterness on the veteran’s part, only detachment.

One solution—advocated by John in "Now I Lay Me"—is marriage. And the major happens to be married. His marriage is different from the marriage of the character in the former story, for the major has been to war; he is an insider. The special knowledge of violence which is learned in war must be considered in all undertakings; and the major is therefore worthy to test marriage. Free to forget the war and free to find some happiness in life, the major unaccountably loses his wife:

The doctor told me that the major’s wife, who was very young and whom he had not married until he was definitely invalided out of the war, had died of pneumonia. She had been sick only a few days. No one expected her to die (p. 272).
The violence of war has disappeared, but its final sting, death, has not. Human life is an vulnerable in peace as it is in war. Whatever forces rule the universe are impersonal and do not reserve pain for violent situations.

Marriage offers a possible transcendence over the isolation imposed by war; it offers a comfort which machines do not even pretend to offer. But marriage is an invitation to suffering. The major, who was once one of Italy's finest fencers, who has had this skill destroyed by the war, who has reconciled himself to the loss of his hand, the physical loss, is "utterly unable to resign" himself to the loss of his wife (p. 272). He gives Nick some advice on how to avoid this kind of pain:

"He cannot marry. He cannot marry," he said angrily. "If he is to lose everything, he should not place himself in a position to lose. He should find things he cannot lose (p. 271).

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"Big Two-Hearted River" is included in the war stories of Nick Adams although it takes place in the peaceful Michigan woods, without the war hovering threateningly in the background. Considering the two parts as really one story, which they are, "Big Two-Hearted River" is the longest story concerning Nick Adams; and yet the plot is perhaps the most incidental. Nick arrives on a train at the ruins of an old Michigan town, hikes into the river, makes camp, and the following day he goes fishing. Roughly, that is the whole plot. There is no direct mention of war, no explicit statement that Nick is recovering from the war or any other disturbing experience. The bulk of the story is a catalogue of details and woodsmen's lore: how the forest looks, how
the river looks, how to set up a tent, how to cook over an outdoor
grill, how to catch grasshoppers, how to catch fish. Nature has been
mentioned as the great consoler for Nick Adams, and this story is the
epitome of that theme.

As the story opens, Nick is standing in "burned-over country"
where the town of Seney had once been; it is probably some time since
he has last been in this country: "he had expected to find the scattered
houses of the town" (p. 209). The town, an emblem of his youth, is not
there; the fire of war has symbolically wiped out his previous
associations with youth and innocence. Nick is discovering exactly
how profound a change the war and his wound have made on him. In spite
of this change, however, the "river was there" (p. 209). Nature does
not change completely; it is impersonal and he can still find a kind of
innocence there. Nature endures and offers its arms to the man who
endures.

As Nick starts across the countryside towards the river, his
senses take in the setting. With the images very detailed, very
sensuous, the scene becomes not only realistically described, but the
realism becomes intermingled with romantic anticipation. One of the
great beauties of this story is that it incorporates both objective
realism and romantic subjectivism in a rich synthesis:

Then it was sweet fern, growing ankle high, to walk through,
and clumps of jack pines; a long undulating country with
frequent rises and descents, sandy underfoot and the country
alive again (p. 212).

This passage starts with a realistic detail—"sweet fern, growing
ankle high"—and ends on a romantic impression—"the country alive
again." Or again, we see Nick come near the river at sunset when
the trout are feeding:

While Nick walked through the little stretch of meadow alongside the stream, trout had jumped high out of water. Now as he looked down the river, the insects must be settling on the surface, for the trout were feeding steadily all down the stream. As far down the long stretch as he could see, the trout were rising, making circles all down the surface of the water, as though it were starting to rain (p. 214).

By an extended centering of attention on the natural routine of fish and insect and water, the image takes on overtones of the romantic. It is one, specific, split-second image being extended beyond the limits imposed by real time and space. The observer tends to become the dreamer—the dreamer, for example, of "Now I Lay Me."

Stylistically, passages such as these are masterpieces; and thematically, they reveal the heightened sensitivity of Nick's mind and senses, his nervousness and anticipation: the man who had felt his soul "go out of me and go off and then come back" is that much more aware of how it feels to be alive.

Nick's awareness, though, is really so intense as to be frenzied. When he begins to make his camp, he goes through each routine mechanically and methodically; each act is an act of precision; each act has an unusual importance for Nick. It is this very intenseness which suggests that the Nick of this story is not too far removed from the Nick of "A Way You'll Never Be." When Nick is finally finished and he climbs into his tent, he is as keyed-up as if some very important task were finally completed and it involves a psychological letdown:

Nick was happy as he crawled inside the tent. He had not been unhappy all day. This was different though. Now things were done. There had been this to do. Now it was done. It had been a hard trip. He was very tired. That was done (p. 215).
While Nick has been busy, he has not had time to think. Now, however, his work is done; it is "different." There is something frightening about being left with nothing to occupy his hands.

So Nick goes and cooks himself supper. And while he is eating in the dusk, he again has a sense of fear which quickly disappears when he directs his attention to his tent: "Across the river in the swamp, in the almost dark, he saw a mist rising. He looked at the tent once more. All right" (p. 216). The fear Nick associates with the swamp becomes clearer later on, and the ghostly "mist" possibly reminds him of the nightmare of "The Battler." When Nick looks at the tent, he says "all right," a conscious readjustment in his mind that "nothing could touch him" (p. 215). He is still keeping his mind under strict control.

Near the end of the first part of this story, Nick lets his mind wander. He thinks back to a pre-war fishing trip with a friend named Hopkins; it "was a long time ago on the Black River" (p. 217). His reverie is conducted in short simple sentences:

It should be straight Hopkins all the way. Hop deserved that. He was a very serious coffee drinker. He was the most serious man Nick had ever known. Not heavy, serious. That was a long time ago. Hopkins spoke without moving his lips. He had played pool (p. 217).

The short, jerky thought, the random associations suggest a mind that has not recovered from the war. Nick is still partially caught up in his shell-shock. Also, his youth is not as close to him anymore; it appears in brief and fragmented images. This reminiscing is not usually good for Nick; he does not like to think. But this time it is all right: "His mind was starting to work. He knew he could choke it
because he was tired enough" (p. 218). Thinking, however, is something that Nick must control.

When Nick wakes in the morning, he is "excited" (p. 221). Even a joyful excitement must be consciously controlled: "He was really too hurried to eat breakfast, but he knew he must" (p. 221). Nick knows himself well enough that he has a set of defences to employ at the first symptom of his shell-shock.

Then Nick catches grasshoppers, eats breakfast, and prepares himself for fishing in the same methodical manner. He starts fishing, catches and releases one small trout. In all these activities Nick shows great skill; in fact, he is "professionally happy" (p. 223). And no detail is rushed or overlooked. When he puts a grasshopper on the hook, Nick spits on him for luck. Malcolm Cowley has stated that the fishing trip represents "a spell to banish evil spirits," and the spitting on the hopper gives the piece a touch of superstition.

After a short while, Nick hooks a large trout which he eventually loses. In the struggle with the fish, Nick lets his excitement run too high, and he lapses into a state of semi-shock:

Nick's hand was shaky. He reeled in slowly. The thrill had been too much. He felt, vaguely, a little sick, as though it would be better to sit down (p. 226).

He sits down and smokes a cigarette. It takes a relatively long time for Nick to overcome his excitement: "slowly the feeling of disappointment left him. It went away slowly" (p. 227). Even fishing is not completely relaxing for Nick; he must guard himself in this

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innocent pleasure.

After catching several fish, Nick has worked himself downstream near the swamp. He stops fishing here. He has a fear of the swamp:

In the swamp the banks were bare, the big cedars came together overhead, the sun did not come through, except in patches; in the fast deep water, in the half light, the fishing would be tragic. In the swamp fishing was a tragic adventure. Nick did not want to go down the stream any further today (p. 231).

We find that the river is "narrowed" and becomes "smooth" where it enters the swamp, and we remember that Nick was wounded where a river had a "different width" and became "stiller." Nick, then, associates the swamp with the river he was wounded by. There is overwhelming motion--"fast deep water"; there is a kind of unreal combination of shadow and light--"half light"; and there is the fear of profound grief--"the fishing would be tragic." This haunting and tragic experience is the one from which Nick is escaping; it is the vision he is keeping submerged; it is a reality he must gradually come to grips with.

"Big Two-Hearted River" is more than a fishing trip, even more than an escape. For the river has two hearts: one by which he can forget, and one by which he is forced to remember. It is first a retreat into nature, a place to reorganize his spiritual forces, a place to be healed. And then, when nature has worked her powers, Nick will be better prepared to face his life again: "There were plenty of days when he could fish the swamp."
"Cross-Country Snow," "An Alpine Idyll," and "Fathers and Sons" cover a period of nearly twenty years in Nick's life. "Cross-Country Snow" and "An Alpine Idyll" occur about the same time, while the meditative "Fathers and Sons" is obviously much later. Because this latter story has a note of affirmation, I have used this note as the ordering principle for these stories. "An Alpine Idyll," then, follows the more negative "Cross-Country Snow." These three stories mark the end of the Hick Adams series.

* * *

In "Cross-Country Snow" Nick and his friend George are skiing in Switzerland. They skim down a hill, where we find that Nick still has some difficulty with his leg from the war wound, and they end their run at an inn to drink some wine. At the inn they notice that the waitress is pregnant, which reminds Nick that he too is going to become a father. Sobered up by the knowledge of responsibility, Nick and George muse briefly on the possibility of freedom and skiing. Then they head home.

If there is one predominant tone in this story, it is the sense of Nick's being trapped in the boring, uneventful existence of marriage and fatherhood. Nick talks of skiing with exuberance, while his discussion of fatherhood is marked by resignation. The story
opens on a note of irresponsibility, the joy of nature and male companionship, but it ends on the stronger note of responsibility and the imminent female world.

In the male world we see the operation of the code. Both Nick and George are artistic in their approach to skiing: "You've got to keep to your left. It's a good fast drop with a Christy at the bottom on account of a fence" (p. 184). And both are reserved in their praise of the sport; their silence is their praise: "It's too swell to talk about" (p. 185). The speeding over white snow is an intense kind of abandon. At the end, when they wish they could make some definite plans about another skiing trip, there is the old romantic wish to escape responsibility into a man's world. The whole story, a kind of idyll, is a contrast to a world never really seen: the world of responsibility and family life.

Nick is married and soon to be a father. When he sees the pregnant waitress, he remembers he is married; but it is not until the second time she approaches the table that he recognizes her condition: "I wonder why I didn't see that when she first came in, he thought" (p. 185). In the idyllic male skiing life, the knowledge of wife and child are far away; and this knowledge is an intrusion. In spite of Nick's refusal to show regret at having a child, it seems obvious that Nick is really unhappy about the prospect of fatherhood and family:

"Is Helen going to have a baby?" George said, coming down to the table from the wall.
"Yes."
"When?"
"Late next summer."
"Are you glad?"
"Yes. Now."
"Will you go back to the States?"
"I guess so."
"Do you want to?"
"No."
"Does Helen?"
"No."

George sat silent. He looked at the empty bottle and the empty glasses.
"It's hell, isn't it?" he said.
"No. Not exactly," Nick said.
"Why not?"
"I don't know," said Nick (p. 187).

Nick's reticence, his qualified affirmation of his new role as father ("Yes. Now... No. Not exactly.") suggest a resignation. It seems fairly clear that Nick does not want to be tied down to a family, that he prefers a more adventuresome life. But he is willing to accept his role, however grudgingly.

Nick's life has been conditioned by his experiences. He has learned to live with violence and excitement, and now he cannot live without violence or its equivalent. For Nick, life is all bound up with the facts of pain, violence, and especially death. He has learned to live with these facts, and when there is no war there is the hunting, fishing, or skiing--his equivalent for the ultimate life experience. He has worked out an approach to all he does, characterized by ritual and knowledge. And for Nick this is a renewal. To remove Nick too far from the danger of death would be partially to destroy him. He has come to find that death is the one fact he must face, and he is compelled to face it time and time again, if not literally at least metaphorically. But marriage removes Nick from his course of meaning; it imposes certain restriction on him. A woman provides Nick with a temporary pleasure, but a child constitutes a
society. And it has been Nick's experience that to become a functioning member of society is to become false; to become too social is to remove oneself from reality.

* * *

The negative tone of "Cross-Country Snow" is curbed somewhat in "An Alpine Idyll." In this latter story, Nick and a new friend, John, have just finished a skiing expedition. On their way to an inn, they notice a burial taking place. Upon arriving at the inn, they discover that a peasant's wife, who had been dead for over four months, was being buried. The peasant had placed his dead wife in a woodshed during the winter months. Frozen stiff, her mouth provided a peg on which the peasant could hang his lantern when he gathered wood at night.

The macabre incident of the peasant in an otherwise peaceful setting is used to point out the danger of doing anything too long, of being too long cut of contact with a civilized world. The peasant, who lives in an isolated mountain farm, had been with his dead wife too long: "She died last December...he couldn't bring her over to be buried until the snow was gone" (p. 347). During the winter the peasant lost his perspective; what is unnatural became natural: "When I started to use the big wood she was stiff and I put her up against the wall. Her mouth was open and when I came into the shed at night to cut up the big wood, I hung the lantern from it" (p. 348). Emphasizing the madness of the situation is the peasant's affection for his wife: "Ja, I loved her...I loved her fine" (p. 348). By being alone too long in the high mountains with the corpse of his wife, the peasant had lost contact with reality.
Back among people, however, the peasant gains his sense of proportion and realizes the grotesquery of his act. Sitting at a table in the inn, he seems almost in a state of shock:

The girl came in and stood by their table. The peasant did not seem to see her....
The peasant did not pay any attention....
The girl brought the drinks and the peasant drank the schnapps. He looked out the window (p. 345).

It is not the act alone which stuns the peasant; he is also plagued by guilt. The priest tells him that it "was very wrong" (p. 346). And the peasant leaves one inn for another because he does not like to face the innkeeper: "'He didn't want to drink with me, after he knew about his wife, said the innkeeper" (p. 349).

The innkeeper, who has continual intercourse with people, is "disgusted" with the peasant: "Those peasants are beasts" (p. 346). The sexton, whose occupation carries its own macabre overtones, is "amused" (p. 346). Nick, however, is curiously attentive. When John suggests that they eat, Nick continues asking questions about the incident. It takes an impatient remark to bring Nick back to his meal: "'Say," said John. 'How about eating?'" (p. 349).

Nick is spellbound by the incident because he has also been too long in the white snow, hot sun, and high mountains: "We were both tired of the sun. You could not get away from the sun....I was glad to be down away from snow....We had stayed too long" (pp. 343-344).

The sun and snow suggest an intensity in which a man should not stay too long; it, too, could lead to a temporary madness. From the beginning there is the comparison of Nick and the peasant. On his way to the inn, Nick sees the burial and feels that the "gravefilling
looked unreal. I could not imagine any one being dead" (p. 343). And if the burial is unreal, skiing so late in the year is "unnatural" (p. 344).

This story, then, tends to negate "Cross-Country Snow." Nick has had his skiing, but he has found that it is good for only a limited while:

I was glad there were other things beside skiing, and I was glad to be down, away from the unnatural high mountain spring, into this May morning in the valley (p. 344).

And there is an affirmative quality in Nick's enjoying the "May morning in the valley." He can now see certain delights in being among people once more. There are the pleasures of "many letters" and beer: "I'd forgotten what beer tasted like" (p. 344). Also, there is the natural pleasure in finding a girl's smile: "A girl brought it this time. She smiled as she opened the bottles" (p. 344). Letters, beer, girls are some of the "other things," and there is also a natural spring: Nick's love for nature. The glare of sun and snow is not nature to Nick; his nature has color and life:

I looked out of the open window at the white road. The trees beside the road were dusty. Beyond was a green field and a stream. There were trees along the stream and a mill with a water wheel....There were four crows walking in the green field. One crow sat in a tree watching (p. 345).

This is the kind of peaceful scene which consoles Nick in "Big Two-Hearted River."

This story, then, marks a transition from "Cross-Country Snow" to "Fathers and Sons." Like "The Battler," this story has its gothic incident, but the effect of this later incident is maturing rather than wounding. Nick is gradually readjusting himself to the world in which he lives. It is still, to be sure, a somewhat isolated and
special life he works out for himself. But it is beginning to lose
the nihilism and fear which his earlier life has inspired.

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"Fathers and Sons" is the last of the Nick Adams stories.
Appropriately enough, Nick now has his own son, and another cycle
begins. In fact, as the title suggests, this is a reflective story
which deals with the ebb and tide of generations. There is no real
action in the story. Nick is driving with his son and starts to
remember his own father. Sons are affected in various ways by their
fathers, both for the better and the worse. Nick sees what his father
did for him, and he sees what his father failed to do. We can assume
that Nick's own son will profit from this reflection.

In some ways this reflection is symbolic, reminding us of the
tale of Adam and Eve.¹ For a time there was only Nick and his father--
as there was once only Adam and God. Together Nick and his father
enjoy a kind of Edenistic existence, hunting and fishing. Even as
Nick looks back on his father, he remembers their good things as
Adam may have remembered Paradise:

His father was with him, suddenly, in deserted orchards and
in new-plowed fields, in thickets, on small hills, or when
going through dead grass, whenever splitting wood or
hauling water, by grist mills, cider mills and dams or always
with open fires... After he was fifteen he had shared nothing
with him (p. 496).

¹It is interesting to note Nick's surname. It is not certain
whether Hemingway wishes the reader to associate Nick with the first
man, but it is at least an interesting coincidence. In the next
chapter I will argue that Nick has characteristics quite common
to our earliest fathers.
As the last sentence shows, something happened in their relationship which separated the two, as Adam was separated from God.

And Nick remembers how his all-powerful father once made him wear a pair of old underwear which Nick didn't like the smell of. Pretending to lose the underwear, Nick is whipped for lying. Nick resented this, and he even though of rebelling completely:

Afterwards he had sat inside the woodshed with the door open, his shotgun loaded and cocked, looking across at his father sitting on the screen porch reading the paper, and thought, "I can blow him to hell. I can kill him" (p. 496).

The extremity of Nick's thought is juvenile, of course, but the sentiment is not. In every man there may be buried the antagonism against his father, or the God-image.

The parallel between this story and the story of Adam does not end here however. Dr. Adams was the father of Nick's youth (as we have seen in other stories, his only real parent). But as Nick approaches manhood--fifteen years old--he loses his father. Nick finds some other companion--the Indian girl Trudy, a kind of Eve. As Trudy enters Nick's life, Nick leaves his father's. This is not to say that Trudy assumes as great an importance in Nick's life as his father, but that the pleasures of sex overcome the rule of authority.

There is really a conflict here which must be resolved. Nick's father "was unsound on sex," and Nick discovers that "each man learns all there is for him to know about it without advice" (p. 490). Nick's father does give advice, and it is unsound advice, which Nick must reject:

His father had summed up the whole matter by stating that masturbation produced blindness, insanity, and death while a man who went with prostitutes would contract hideous
venereal diseases and that the thing to do was to keep your hands off people (p. 491).

At a certain point in his life, then, Nick must decide that his father is no longer an educative aid. This denial of authority in favor of experience is perhaps an archetypal thrust.

There is also a mystery about the father. Nick does not reveal the secret because there are "still too many people alive for him to write it" (p. 491). Part of the secret is undoubtedly his father's suicide: "The handsome job the undertaker had done on his father's face had not blurred in his mind" (p. 491). The father's suicide resulted--partially, at least--from being caught in a "trap" (p. 489). His father is not wholly to blame for the suicide because his father was "sentimental," and "all sentimental people are betrayed so many times" (p. 490). His sentimentality gives us another insight into his character. Nick says that his father was both "cruel and abused" (p. 489). His emotions, evidently, were laid bare for all to observe, making him more vulnerable. When the father made a mistake, it was a grand mistake. So Nick did learn to hide his emotions. Except for "fishing and shooting," the father taught Nick in a negative way; Nick learned what not to be. His father has proved to be an ironic example.

But recognizing the problems of his father does not help Nick resolve the problems of fatherhood. Nick, too, discovers there are areas of experience which cannot be taught. When his boy asks Nick what the Indians were like, Nick evades the question:

"It's hard to say," Nick Adams said. Could you say she did first what no one has ever done better and mention plump brown legs, flat belly, hard little breasts, well holding arms, quick searching tongue, the flat eyes, the good taste of mouth, then uncomfortably, tightly, sweetly, moistly, lovely, tightly,
achingly, fully, finally, unendingly, never-endingly, never-to-endingly, suddenly ended, the great bird flown like an owl in the twilight, only at daylight in the woods and hemlock needles stuck against your belly (p. 497).

This memory returns vividly, and it is Nick's. What his son will have he must experience himself. On this score Nick cannot advise his son.

This episode in Nick's earlier life is also a comment on the role of women in his life. Trudy has done what "no one has ever done better." This would suggest that the role of women is one of providing pleasure and little more. Nick has been married and, we assume, he has fallen in what he would call "love." But such love cannot transcend the purely instinctual and physical act with Trudy. Evidently Nick harbors no attitude toward women which would impinge on his judgment of this one elemental act. This is not to say that sex is the only role of women, but that it is the basic test of one. Trudy emerges as a symbol—partial at least—of the ideal woman for Nick: submissive, sensual, undemanding, natural, and willing.

But this is how it is with fathers and sons. There are some areas where the father may teach his son; there are others where the son must learn for himself. Without his knowing it, the father may teach his son negatively through example. And all this is a male world. The woman is made to serve her man; she provides pleasure for his bed, and she brings forth his children. That is how it is with Nick, his father, and his son; and that is how it is or should be with all.

The story begins and ends on the theme of time, as if to suggest the universality of this story's statement. At the start we see that what is now present will pass away: "Nicholas Adams drove on through the town along the empty, brick-paved street, stopped by traffic
lights that flashed on and off on this traffic-less Sunday, and would be gone next year" (p. 488). At the end of the story, Nick's boy brings up the subject of death and burial places for the generations of Adamses; and we see not only that what is now present will pass away, but that what has passed away is in a sense still present. Physically this fact is evidenced by the tomb; it is also present in the spiritual inheritance with which the story deals. And always there is change. Nick is both like and unlike his father; Nick's son will be both like and unlike him. The first Adam was cursed by God and forced to earn his bread with the sweat on his brow. Nick Adams is also under a curse and is forced to live at the cost of pain in a world of violence. But this is how it goes for all.
It is possible that in a hundred years Hemingway will be remembered as a stylist; his literary and philosophical interest may be purely historical. And yet his style, of which so much has been said and to which too much has been ascribed, cannot account for his reputation. I think there is something else which is the center of Hemingway's power, which makes him significant in the twentieth century. Whatever this quality is, it cannot be adequately described in terms of theme or style, but it produces and encompasses both. And it may be best discovered in art of the Nick Adams stories.

In his essay, "Psychology and Literature," C. G. Jung makes a distinction between what he calls "psychological" and "visionary" artists. I think Hemingway may belong in the latter group. Jung describes visionary art like this:

The experience that furnishes the material for artistic expression is no longer familiar. It is a strange something that derives its existence from the hinterland of man's mind—that suggests the abyss of time separating us from pre-human ages, or evokes a super-human world of contrasting light and darkness. It is a primordial experience which surpasses man's understanding, and to which he is therefore in danger of succumbing. The value and the force of the experience are given by its enormity. It arises from timeless depths; it is foreign and cold, manysided, demonic, and grotesque....But the primordial experiences rend from top to bottom the curtain upon which is painted the picture of an ordered world, and allow a glimpse into the unfathomed abyss of what has not yet become. Is it a vision of other worlds, or of the obfuscation of the spirit, or of the unborn generations of the future: We cannot say that it is any or none of these.¹

¹"Psychology and Literature," reprinted in Criticism, pp. 117-118.
Would not "Indian Camp" or "The Battler," for example, fit this description?

Jung continues:

The archetypal image of the wise man, the saviour or redeemer, lies buried and dormant in man's unconscious since the dawn of culture; it is awakened whenever the times are out of joint and a human society is committed to a serious error. When people go astray they feel the need of a guide or teacher or even of the physician. These primordial images are numerous, but do not appear in the dreams of individuals or in works of art until they are called into being by the waywardness of the general outlook. When conscious life is characterized by one-sidedness and by a false attitude, then they are activated--one might say, "instinctively"--and come to light in the dreams of individuals and the visions of artists and seers, thus restoring the psychic equilibrium of the epoch...

We see that the artist has drawn upon the healing and redeeming forces of the collective psyche that underlies consciousness with its isolation and its painful errors; that he has penetrated to that matrix of life in which all men are embedded, which imparts a common rhythm to all human existence, and allow the individual to communicate his feeling and his striving to mankind as a whole.²

Nick Adams may be the archetypal character which our age demands: not a saviour or a physician, but more a teacher who takes us back to our collective primordial beginnings and explains the violence in our time.

World War I, as other wars before it, produced its literature. Soldiers Pay, All Quiet on the Western Front, A Farewell to Arms are a few of the novels, like other war novels such as Crane's Red Badge of Courage, merely describe the irrational slaughter, but they do not attempt to make it rational; what we needed was some reason of irrationality. The collective unconscious needed an archetypal

²Ibid., pp. 120-121.
explanation. Some figure had to go through the motions of explaining to a modern, civilized audience the insane recurrence of war in our time. Nick Adams is this figure. A primitive, he provides modern civilization a link to its forgotten past, to its archetypal foundations:

In reality we can never legitimately cut loose from our archetypal foundations unless we are prepared to pay the price of a neurosis, any more than we can rid ourselves of our body and its organs without committing suicide. If we cannot deny the archetypes or otherwise neutralize them, we are confronted, at every new stage in the differentiation of consciousness to which civilization attains, with the task of finding a new interpretation appropriate to this stage, in order to connect the life of the past that still exists in us with the life of the present, which threatens to slip away from it. If this link-up does not take place, a kind of rootless consciousness comes into being no longer orientated to the past, a consciousness which succumbs helplessly to all manner of suggestions and, is, in fact, susceptible to psychic epidemics.3

War, then, is a social neurosis of epidemic proportions; it is the result of too much civilization without reference to a past. Civilization is in fact a group protection against forces which are part of our collective past. It is not a product of our conscious, but of our unconscious; it is not rational at its source, but irrational.

Nick Adams goes to the source; his life is one of discovery and ritual: the life of pre-mythological man. By reliving the life of the pre-mythological man, Nick Adams explains to us our need of a mythology; indeed, he explains that the fabric of civilization is but a manifestation of our need for some magical rite. Our social organization is so developed, however, that we tend to forget that it partially springs from a basic need of ceremony. In part, at least, social and group activities are merely ceremonies for escaping the wrath of unknown

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3C. G. Jung, Psyche and Symbol, p. 120.
divinities. When the world does erupt in war, then, it is a sign of the smoldering primitive fear which lies deep in our unconscious.

In her *Mythology*, Edith Hamilton makes an important remark:

Nothing is clearer than the fact that primitive man, whether in New Guinea today or eons ago in the prehistoric wilderness, is not and never has been a creature who peoples his world with bright fancies and lovely visions. Horrors lurked in the primeval forest, not nymphs and naiads. Terror lived there, with its close attendant, Magic, and its most common defence, Human Sacrifice. Mankind's chief hope of escaping the wrath of whatever divinities were then abroad lay in some magical rite, senseless but powerful, or in some offering made at the cost of pain and grief.¹

This statement may help us to define that part of the unconscious which is personified in Nick Adams. For Nick is pre-civilized or pre-mythological. When he spits on his bait in "Big Two-Hearted River," for example, he is performing a magical but senseless rite; when he impales the grasshopper on the hook, he is making a sacrifice. He has no mythology on which to rely (the American legend is destroyed finally by the war, though it was crumbling long before that); he creates his own mythology. And a mythology is necessary for living and explaining the unknown, whether it be public as in organized myth or private as in an artistic myth. Rite is produced where instinct mingles with imagination, where the unconscious molds the conscious. And it is from rite that mythology, religion, and civilization spring.

Nick Adams goes behind the veneer of society, then, to confront life on its most elemental terms. This procedure is a reversal of the made-up American legend. The American legend may be personified in part by Horatio Alger, a complete opposite to Nick Adams: where Horatio

is modern and progressive, Nick is primitive and arrested. Jung considers the difference vitally important:

Accordingly, primitive man, being closer to his instincts, like the animal, is characterized by fear of novelty and adherence to tradition. To our way of thinking he is painfully backward, whereas we exalt progress. But our progressiveness, though it may result in a great many delightful wish-fulfillments, piles up an equally gigantic Promethean debt which has to be paid off from time to time in the form of hideous catastrophes. For ages man has dreamed of flying, and all we have for it is saturation bombing.

Progress, paradoxically, is destructive. It promises and sometimes rewards with "delightful wish-fulfillments," but it can be a violation for which retribution must be made. It is assuming powers for man which belong to the gods. Punishment is meted out in war, but peace can be established only on the recognition of these gods. And Nick Adams establishes for us a relationship with the unknown divinities, merely by recognizing their existence.

The strange gods who govern have formulated stringent rules for living. In "Indian Camp" Nick discovers that life is, after all, a

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5 In Ernest Hemingway (pp. 136-143), Philip Young writes an interesting argument, based on Freud, that Hemingway--and by extension his fictional heroes--was traumatically arrested by his war wound. Following the "repetition-compulsion" principle, Hemingway returns time and again to his wound in an endeavor to master the trauma, to finally transcend the moment of near-death. It is from this arrested development, Young argues, that the primitivism of Hemingway springs: the ritual, superstition, experiences of violence, and so on. Young's argument is convincing. I think, however, that Young's argument is not necessarily opposed to mine. Young is attempting to explain Hemingway, while I am attempting to explain Hemingway's appeal; Young delves into the mind of the author, while I delve into the mind of the reader. If Hemingway--and Nick Adams--is in a state of traumatic neurosis, it may be that he is intensifying a psychic condition enough that we recognize a feebler but similar state within ourselves. We should note, too, that the wound of Nick Adams occurs half-way through his fictional life: it is the climactic, but not the sole, forming influence.

6 Psyche and Symbol, p. 120.
matter of birth and death and pain. What this tells us about the gods is of course inexplicable, but it is such an overwhelming fact that it must be coped with. The whole series of Nick Adams stories deals with this dual theme. In each story Nick is reminded of the pain or problem of living, and in each he attempts some rite, some solution to ease the pain. In some stories, such as "The Killers," it is the fact which is emphasized; in others, such as "Now I Lay Me," it is the solution or rite which is emphasized. Basically, then, these stories are philosophic—though certainly not in any formal sense. But always there is the implied questioning: What are the laws of the universe? How should I live in accordance with them?

One factor which makes Nick especially qualified to ask these questions is that he does not proceed from an environment where these answers are supplied for him. His mother is almost non-existent, and when we do meet her in "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife," for example, she is the escapist who lives in a "darkened room." The father is also ineffectual philosophically. He does teach Nick the arts of "fishing and shooting" ("Fathers and Sons"), but he bungles other lessons. His inability to teach, perhaps, is what leads him to confront Nick with the brutal facts and then let Nick draw his own conclusions. In "Indian Camp" and again in "Ten Indians" there is this suggested touch of brutality in Dr. Adams. Or the matter of sex, which Dr. Adams was "unsound" about, illustrates that the doctor is unable to aid Nick in those matters with which the adult most cope. Nick has been taught certain physical arts which do have their psychological rewards, but he is spiritually an orphan. This smallest social group—the family—has not greatly formed Nick Adams, at least
positively. We do not look at Nick Adams as a product of any social environment; in this sense he is an anachronism.

The modern world, when it exists at all, is always in the background. In "Indian Camp," a modern operation must be performed with a primitive jack-knife and gut leader. In "The Killers" society is inept. In "Big Two-Hearted River" a social community has been swept away by the all-powerful forces of nature. In "Now I Lay Me" the thought of marriage is not sufficient to meet the demands of Nick's wounded psyche. In "Cross-Country Snow" a married Nick Adams looks on his family responsibilities as sterilizing. Nick, however, is not anti-social; he is asocial. A civilized world just does not supply the real requirements for living a true life.

These requirements have been determined by Nick's own experience. The lack of formative influence by his family and society strengthens Nick's archetypal nature, for Nick must be larger than the forces which have molded him. That is, his significance should first be attributed to himself; he must be thematically self-sufficient. If he is to re-establish a chain from the modern world to a past condition, he must be the pioneer who forges each link. He does this by determining from experience his own relationship to the universe. In "Indian Camp" he sees what life in general involves, the forces to which humans are subjected. In "The Battler" he sees how people can become twisted by living; in fact, in this remarkable story he sees that it requires a sentinelled spirit to prevent anyone from becoming twisted: horrors do lurk in the primeval forest, or alongside any lonely railroad track. As the youth travels over America, he finds that the past is yet very much
with us if we merely look around. It is in any small town such as Summit, which is ruled by the law of the jungle when jungle justice decides to assert itself. The past can be found in a small railway depot where being seduced by "Steve" Ketchel, a kind of Olympian god, is credited as one of the rarest mortal feats for a woman. These stories are an odd kind of American fairy tale. The hero does not leave home to destroy evil; he finds evil at home and then leaves to escape it. When he finds that the dragon is also abroad, instead of destroying it he makes a "separate peace" with it.

The "separate peace" is perhaps one of Kick's striking archetypal characteristics because it implies concession. The universe cannot be warred with; it must be held at bay with certain offerings: the beginning of ritual. Nick finds himself at the mercy of forces he cannot control:

His consciousness [the primitives] is menaced by an almighty unconscious; hence his fear of magical influences which may cross his path at any moment; and for this reason, too, he is surrounded by unknown forces and must adjust himself to them as best he can.7

Nick's fear is epitomized during his war experiences, when he makes his "separate peace." It is in the war that he sees chaos, madness, cruelty, and violence at its worst. In many ways this is no more than many fictional heroes have found; but there is this one important difference: Nick's previous experiences have shown that war is only a magnification of what is occurring all the time, that the alleged causes of war are really only catalysts which combine thousands of smaller wars, that the dragons have never really become extinct.

7Ibid., p. 116.
But war is still the ultimate life experience. It denies the reality of progress and the validity of social ethics. It asks the vital questions which the individual must answer. It presents death and horror on such a grand scale that the individual must shape his life according to those realities. For Nick, those realities are almost maddening. He is wounded and is able to make his peace, but it takes him a long time to adjust himself to his wound, because the wound is both physical and psychical. In "A Way You'll Never Be" his mind holds a tenous grip on sanity. He is unable as yet to absorb the fact of his near-death, and it is a fact to which his mind returns time and time again. So imminent and so real does his death seem that he cannot sleep; death is the spectre which comes in the dark. But a ritual helps to ward off this spectre. In "Now I Lay Me" he has already contrived a set of mental ceremonies which keep death away; he recalls all his past life or prays for all his past acquaintances--senseless but powerful medicine.

War, too, changes the veteran's life. Like John in "Now I Lay Me," the veteran may hope to return to his previous life, but as the major in "In Another Country" discovers, nothing is that certain. What is true in war is true in peace. The divinities are impersonal, and it is a mistake to rely on their benevolence. The American romantic dream of marriage is not the panacea; the only solace is to do and continue doing what has proven comforting, and always to appease the gods. In "Big Two-Hearted River" Nick returns to the natural element from which he has emerged. Here, through his own rites, he finds solace. More than any other story, perhaps, this one shows the conscious mind in control of the
unconscious. The conscious mind is directing inner fears into outward expression through rite. The emphasis is on not-thinking; it is on doing for the sake of doing. Here is the man who has no developed myths to believe and who must develop his own.

In the last three stories about Nick Adams, the archetype seems to be fading, but it is really emphasizing its function in marriage. The suggestion of Nick's archetypal qualities comes through most strongly when we see him discovering some fact about the universe, performing some private ceremony, or living with nature. Even though Nick is married and more a part of the social scheme than previously, there is still nature as his comforter and still the sense of his primordial individualism. Most importantly, his is still a male world.

In the primitive society the male must look to providing the necessities of life and protecting the family; the woman must face childbirth and provide pleasure for the male. The role of the woman is subordinate to that of the man. In the Nick Adams stories women play at best a secondary role. In only one story—"The End of Something"—does a woman play a prominent part; and her part is to be told that she is no longer a part of Nick's life. In "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife," "The Light of the World," "Now I Lay Me," and "Fathers and Sons," women appear briefly, but in each of these stories they are shown as unprepared to cope with the real problems of life or as mere sources of pleasure for the male. In "Ten Indians," "The Three Day Blow," "In Another Country," and "Cross-Country Snow," women are mentioned indirectly, and in each of these stories they are shown as vessels of pleasure if taken lightly, vessels of pain of taken seriously. Clearly
the woman is not on her legendary American pedestal; Nick does not elevate her nor does she prove especially worthy of elevation. It is not accidental, I think, that the woman who should play the most important part in Nick's life--his wife--never directly appears. She is just not that important.

In Hemingway's style, too, much of his originality can be traced to the kind of primitive mind which operates on his material. A great deal has been said about his style which I will not repeat. His imagery, at times more vivid than that of any modern poet, should be examined. This unusual power can be related to the archetype. With the primitive man, as with a child, everything is new; the senses are alive to each impression. And this is the sense we get in Hemingway. He sees not as a painter, but as a child; and there is a difference.

It may be best to illustrate what I mean by comparing Hemingway with a far more sophisticated and modern stylist such as Henry James. While James is not especially noted for his imagery, he is a master of the language: one of the better artists produced by a civilized society. On the opening page of *Daisy Miller*, he makes the following description of a lakeside resort:

> At the little town of Vevay, in Switzerland, there is a particularly comfortable hotel. There are, indeed, many hotels; for the entertainment of tourists is the business of the place, which, as many travellers will remember, is seated upon the edge of a remarkably blue lake--a lake that it behooves every tourist to visit. The shore of the lake presents an unbroken array of establishments of this order, of every category, from the "grand hotel" of the newest fashion, with a chalk-white front, a hundred balconies, and a dozen flags flying from its roof, to the little Swiss pension of an elder day, with its name inscribed in German-

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8 Perhaps the most complete discussion of Hemingway's style is Harry Levin's "Observations on the Style of Ernest Hemingway," *Kenyon Review*, XIII (Autumn, 1951), 581-609.
looking lettering upon a pink or yellow wall, and an awkward summer-house in the angle of the garden.

We can compare this description with one of Hemingway's from "Big Two-Hearted River":

Two hundred yards down the hillside the fire line stopped. Then it was sweet fern, growing ankle high, to walk through, and clumps of jack pines; a long undulating country with frequent rises and descents, sandy underfoot and the country alive again (p. 212).

First of all, we note that James, like a painter, is detached from the scene. In the second example, however, the artist is part of the scene: the ferns grow "ankle high"; the ground is "sandy underfoot." The viewer cannot remove himself physically from what he views. In Hemingway there is also more immediacy in the image. When James mentions the "remarkably blue lake," he adds the aside: "a lake that it behooves every tourist to visit." With Hemingway there is no time for asides or comment; impression follows impression: "sweet fern, growing ankle high, to walk through, and clumps of jack pines."

Hemingway also attempts to define his images, to make them clearer and sharper. The "fern" is defined by the "ankle"; the "jack pines" are defined by the "clumps"; and the "long undulating country" is reinforced by noting the "frequent rises and descents." James, on the other hand, does not make these specific connections so consciously and consistently. He says there is a hotel "with a chalk-white front, a hundred balconies, and a dozen flags flying from its roof." This image is looser, more blurred, than Hemingway's. Hemingway would be more prone to say that there is a hotel "with a hundred balconies on a chalk-white front beneath a dozen flags flying from its roof." The primitive must make connections which the sophisticated assumes. For the primitive, life
is discovery; there are no pre-conceptions. Hence the knitting of the
images, the formation of relationships in Hemingway.

In this sense style is functional; it is not imposed on the work;
it helps explain the vision of the author. Again, Jung has something
relevant to say:

Being essentially the instrument for his work, he is subordinate
to it, and we have no reason for expecting him to interpret it
for us. He has done the best that in him lies in giving it form,
and he must leave the interpretation to others and to the future.
A great work of art is like a dream; for all its apparent
obviousness it does not explain itself and is never unequivocal.
A dream never says: "You ought," or: "This is the truth." It
presents an image in much the same way as nature allows a plant
to grow, and we must draw our own conclusions.9

It would be hard to describe Hemingway's style better than to say it is
a style from which we must "draw our conclusions."

Hemingway's style and themes are the result of a primitive vision
which peers into dark and forgotten worlds; he is unique in this
century. What happened three-thousand years ago has happened again.
That primitive fearing man within each of us has been awakened by the
poetic prose of Hemingway.

9 "Psychology and Literature," Criticism, p. 120.
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