Filtered Through Fiction:
The Evolution of Perspective in Hemingway's *In Our Time*

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Bachelor of Arts, The College of William & Mary, 2020

A Thesis Presented to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Virginia in Candidacy for the

Degree of Master of Arts

Department of English

The University of Virginia
May 2023

Thesis Advisor: Professor Stephen Cushman

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In his 1925 short story collection, *In Our Time*, Ernest Hemingway evokes the lessons in emotional responsibility he learned coming of age before, during, and after the Great War by variegating his use of narrative voice and imagery to filter his own hidden struggles with self-consciousness through those of his characters. While biographers such as Carlos Baker, Michael Reynolds, and Kenneth Lynn have each offered compelling portraits of Hemingway the man, I contend that Ken Burns and Lynn Novick's recent *Hemingway* documentary (2021) offers a compelling new portrait of Hemingway *the artist* for our time. By treating Hemingway's fiction as a lens through which to understand the story of his life, Burns and Novick have warranted new attention to the ties between Hemingway's personal and artistic development, at the start of his career in 1920s Paris. Together with the popular attention that Burns and Novick's documentary has attracted to Hemingway, J. Gerald Kennedy's recent scholarly edition of *In Our Time* (2022) invites a critical re-assessment of the testimony that Hemingway's first major short story collection supplies to his complexities as both an emergent author and a first-time father. As a closer look at Hemingway's first mature short stories suggests, *In Our Time* (1925) charts the evolution of its author's attitudes toward marriage and fatherhood parallel to that of his writing style. With an eye to the scholarly climate surrounding four representative stories from *In Our Time*, I will show how Hemingway's subtle shifts in narrative focus and nuanced attention to imagery correlate his characters' struggle to accept the emotional responsibilities of adulthood with the literary odyssey he charts throughout *In Our Time* to find his voice as a first-time writer of prose fiction.

Taking "Indian Camp" as a case in point, I will begin by demonstrating how Hemingway's balance of narrative perspective, imagery, and dialogue foregrounds the broader meditation upon coming of age and fatherhood that he develops in *In Our Time*. Through his

subtle oscillation between Nick Adams's and his father's perspectives, Hemingway indicates the gap between childhood and adulthood that his experiences as a new father prompted him to re-examine in his fiction. Where his use of imagery to convey emotion reveals his early experimentation with T.S. Eliot's theory of an "objective correlative,"[i] Hemingway's use of dialogue to expose the ineffability of emotion carries through the failed relationships framing Nick's youth to the strained conjugal bonds bracketing the wanderings of American expatriates in the latter half of the collection.

Between such extremes of emotional immaturity Hemingway's juxtaposition of free indirect discourse and interior monologue in "Soldier's Home" brings the insufficiency of language to convey his characters' feelings into sharper focus. Nowhere in *In Our Time* are the bittersweet ironies that reaching adulthood entails more evident than in the narrative equivocations Hemingway stages to reveal the arrested development Harold Krebs endures after his delayed return from the war. At the turning point of the collection, "Soldier's Home" offers a portrait of emotional disengagement that prefigures the need for inner renewal Hemingway's characters struggle to fulfill in the series of expatriate narratives that follow.

Next, I will show how Hemingway's growing integration of his and his protagonist's narrative voice in "Cat in the Rain" produces a counterpoint to the critique of social norms he unfolds in "Soldier's Home." Unlike his intervening satire of marriage and sexual initiation in "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot," Hemingway's synthesis of imagery, narration, and dialogue in "Cat in the Rain" suggests his more serious contemplation of the relation between marriage and parenthood through the eyes of the unnamed American wife. By re-assessing the proverbial marriage trap from the feminine point of view, Hemingway confronts his struggle to reconcile his aspirations of producing fiction with the responsibilities that accompany producing offspring. Ahead of the

begrudging surrender to such responsibilities catalogued in “Out of Season” and “Cross-Country Snow,” “Cat in the Rain” showcases Hemingway’s use of his narration as a filter for the American wife’s perspective, to reconsider the breakdown in communication Krebs experiences, back in “Soldier’s Home,” through the lens of a failed marriage. By transposing Krebs’s self-consciousness into that of the unnamed American wife and his emotional passivity into that of her husband, George, Hemingway checks his characters’ growing awareness of their need for spiritual rebirth with their reluctance to accept that such a need can only be fulfilled from within.

Only later, in “Big Two-Hearted River,” does Hemingway’s externalization of his protagonist’s internal states provide a frame that brings the correlation between his acceptance of fatherhood and his cathartic experience writing *In Our Time* into full focus. With its emphasis on emotional healing and spiritual restoration, “Big Two-Hearted River” weaves the symbolic and thematic threads of Hemingway’s first major collection together in a vindication of his reliance on understatement and omission. Just as Nick Adams achieves a figurative rebirth upon his fishing trip, so does Hemingway himself complete an initiation into his craft that at once flows from and transcends his narrative experiments in the previous thirteen stories. Confiding how Nick “felt he had left everything behind, the need for thinking, the need to write, other needs” (112), he renders the *explicit* identification with Nick that his original ending would have evoked *implicit* and thus produces a more writerly text of not only the story itself, but of *In Our Time* at large. Together with his unparalleled use of imagery to convey emotional states, Hemingway’s masterful use of free indirect discourse to re-mediate Krebs’s and the American wife’s struggles with self-consciousness in “Big Two-Hearted River” signals his achievement of a mature writing style parallel to Nick’s redemption of his turbulent entry into manhood, both in the war and after.

A Study in Perspective: "Indian Camp"

At the opening of *In Our Time* Hemingway relies on imagery and dialogue to preface his characters' mental reflections and thereby correlate Nick Adams's refusal to accept the finality of death in "Indian Camp" with the series of failed initiations that the characters of the subsequent thirteen stories will face. Though subtle, Hemingway's threefold technique of conveying perspective juxtaposes the trauma of witnessing childbirth against that of discovering a suicide to contrast the innocence of childhood with the disillusionment of adulthood. By blurring the line between Nick's perspective and that of his third-person narrator from the start, Hemingway implies that the tests of success fatherhood entails are in some cases better judged through the eyes of a child, and in others not.

Although he refrains from adopting Nick's point of view directly, Hemingway suggests through his third-person narrator's reliance on observation that he, like Nick, is learning as he goes. After all, it is no coincidence that he opens the story relaying how "Nick and his father got in the stern of the boat and the Indians shoved it off and one of them got in to row" (11), for in doing so he prioritizes Nick's presence in the story, as a witness to the impromptu surgery his father is about to perform. When he observes in the very next sentence that "*Uncle* George sat in the stern of the camp rowboat" (11, emphasis added), his involvement with Nick's point of view is further confirmed by the juxtaposition of his impersonal reference to "his father" in the previous sentence against Nick's point of reference to "Uncle George." No sooner have "[t]he two boats started off in the dark," in a setting as symbolic of the womb as it is of the tomb, than Hemingway offers even stronger hints at the affinities between his narration and Nick's point of view, claiming, "Nick heard the oarlocks of the other boat quite a way ahead of them in the mist" (11). Without revealing Nick's mental perceptions of the scene he describes, he allows his

narration to flow in and out of the boy's sensory perceptions, compelling his reader to infer the childish impatience Nick harbors en route to the titular Indian camp from his observation that "[t]he Indian who was rowing them was working very hard, but the other boat moved further ahead in the mist all the time" (11). Before any words have been spoken in the story, the fluidity between Nick's perspective and that of the third-person narrator underscores Hemingway's reliance on imagery to establish the emotional atmosphere his characters inhabit.

When father and son arrive at the Indians' shanty a few lines later, Hemingway blends Nick's perspective with his third-person narrator's exposition to transpose the cultural dispossessions evoked by George and the Indians' shoreside cigar-smoking into the gender and familial displacements effected by both the Indian husband's wounding and Doctor Adams's arrival. While Nick clearly sees the young Indian woman in her bunk, he has no way of knowing that "[s]he had been trying to have her baby for two days. All the old women in the camp had been helping her. The men had moved off up the road to sit in the dark and smoke out of range of the noise she made" (11). With his addition of such context the third-person narrator colors Nick's perspective with his omniscience, introducing details essential to a complete understanding of the gender dynamics in play. For instance, his description of the Indian men's retreat out of earshot from the Indian woman's screams not only depicts them in counterpoint to the old women, but in doing so also suggests that their movement "out of range" is as instinctual as if they had been faced with enemy fire on the battlefield. Only after the Indian woman's scream signals his re-immersion in Nick's point of view does the narrator note, "She lay in the lower bunk, very big under a quilt" (11–12)—a covering that, paired with her anguish, forecasts the violence Nick stands to witness as his father's understudy. Without even having finished the

paragraph, Hemingway builds upon the context his exposition supplies to imply Nick's growing anxiety inside the shanty.

Amidst the paragraph's closing five lines, it is once again the narrator's context that clarifies the limits of the child protagonist's perspective. As Nick's gaze moves upward to the man in the bunk above, the third-person narrator interjects again with another crucial piece of context, explaining, "He had cut his foot very badly with an ax three days before" (12), to clarify that, unlike his presumed wife in the bunk below, he is suffering in silence, no more able to endure her screams than he is to join his fellow men in their retreat. According to Thomas Strychacz, there is more to the Indian husband's plight than meets even the third-person narrator's eye: "Smoking [a pipe] seems an attempt on the part of the [Indian] father to align himself with the men up the road, but his posture (he lies in the other bunk with a cut that prefigures his wife's) physically aligns him with his wife. The [Indian] father's presence is thus doubly problematic: helpless to escape, he symbolically occupies a female role while prevented by gender from trying to help" (62). In light of Strychacz's analysis, Nick's observations suggest that the man's wounded leg serves as an objective correlative for the limitations marriage imposes upon male solidarity. Because Nick himself lacks the backstory of the man's wound necessary to draw such a connection between the man's injury and its social consequences, Hemingway instead uses his perspective to introduce additional objective correlatives such as the bunk and the quilt that he will repeatedly associate with the violence of birth and death about to unfold.

Along with the noxious smell Nick encounters upon entering the shanty, the death-like repose of the Indian woman triggers Doctor Adams's conversion of his surgical preparation into a teachable moment for his son. Despite the discomfort and anxiety underlying Nick's insistence

that he already knows what childbirth entails, the doctor is quick to remind his "interne" (13) that what he thinks he knows is merely the beginning of what he *will* know about the complexities of the doctor's trade by the end of the night. At first glance, Doctor Adams's explanations of the birth process and seeming indifference to the Indian woman's screams appear calculated to reassure Nick; however, as soon as he starts washing his hands, he unwittingly reveals his anxiety about the gaps in his own knowledge, continuing, "You see, Nick, 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" (12). With his resort to such conditional statements, the doctor only underscores the irony behind his and Nick's mutual oversight of the wounded man's suicide. Because father and son alike barely noticed when "[t]he husband in the upper bunk rolled over against the wall" a few lines earlier (12), neither of them sees Hemingway's juxtaposition of birth and death coming.

Where the doctor's explanations imply his agitation about facing so many variables, Nick's avoidance of watching his father's surgical performance captures his less informed fear of the unknown beneath the blanket. Having already noted, from Nick's perspective, "It all took a long time" (12), Hemingway relapses into objective, third-person observation, before confirming the boy's disgust with a fleeting glimpse into his state of mind: "Nick did not watch. His curiosity had been gone for a long time" (13). Up to this point in the story, Hemingway has offered Nick's point of view exclusively in terms of sensation; it is only after he has shown Nick's aversion to the scene that unfolds that he takes the time to affirm it through a brief, but pivotal, digression into free indirect discourse.

It is here, at the final turning point "Indian Camp," that Hemingway executes a series of shifts in perspective that undercut the triumph of Doctor Adams's surgical performance with the

tragedy of the Indian husband's suicide. After referring to Doctor Adams in his capacity as "Nick's father" for the entire story thus far, Hemingway digresses by re-identifying him as "the doctor" ahead of his assurance that "[h]e was feeling exalted and talkative as football players are in the dressing room after a game" (13). With his use of such a sports analogy Hemingway likewise recasts Doctor Adams's success in the role of the makeshift Indian midwives as a credit to his masculinity, prompting Uncle George to mock-mythologize him as a "great man" for having completed the cesarian delivery with only a jack-knife and some fishing line (13). By performing such a feat, Doctor Adams unwittingly usurps the Indian husband's paternal authority and, thus, adds insult to his already injured masculinity. Even as he admires the stoic self-control he ascribes to the silence of the "proud father" lying above (13), Doctor Adams is as blinded by his exuberance from anticipating what lies behind the blanket covering the dead man's head as Nick was by his childish self-assurance from understanding the horrors of childbirth hidden behind the Indian woman's quilt.

Following his resumption of Nick's perspective to amplify the equal and opposite horror that his father discovers in the bunk above, Hemingway closes "Indian Camp" with a conversation that prefigures his continued association of coming of age with reconciliations to death and fatherhood through the remainder of *In Our Time*. As Nick and his father struggle over what to make of the traumatic scenes they have witnessed, their rapport produces an inverted echo of Doctor Adams's earlier explanations:

> "Do ladies always have such a hard time having babies?" Nick asked.
>
> "No, that was very, very exceptional."
>
> "Why did he kill himself, Daddy?"
>
> "I don't know, Nick. He couldn't stand things, I guess."

"Do many men kill themselves, Daddy?"

"Not very many, Nick."

"Do many women?"

"Hardly ever."

"Don't they ever?"

"Oh, yes. They do sometimes." (14)

Like any child confronted with such visceral reminders of life's fragility and ultimate ephemerality, Nick opens the post-operative interview he unwittingly conducts looking to his father for a sense of constancy that he is powerless to impart. Suddenly uncertain of what the "right" answers to such timeless questions are, Doctor Adams avoids facing his re-initiation into fatherhood by offering more verbal deflections than straight answers. Only when Nick asks every child's favorite question, "why," does his father's response begin to hint at the role reversal Hemingway has staged. Where his earlier transparency about the variables affecting childbirth testified to his medical expertise, Doctor Adams's candor on the question of suicide exposes his vulnerability, as a father himself, to such a nihilistic temptation. The hypothetical excuse he floats for the self-slain Indian father clearly suggests he is even less satisfied with his answer than Nick appears to be. Even more revealing of his morbid self-dissatisfaction is his response to his son's question about the experience of dying: "I think it's pretty easy, Nick. It all depends" (14). With such a claim, Doctor Adams allows Hemingway to end the story juxtaposing the discomforting assurance that death, like birth, is wholly subject to chance against the vitality evoked by the sunrise and the jumping bass Nick witnesses back on the lake.

At the end of the story, Hemingway's combination of such imagery with a parting glimpse into his protagonist's perspective brings the emotive distance between Nick's innermost

reflections and his father's silence into even clearer focus. Confiding how, "In the early morning on the lake sitting in the stern of the boat with his father rowing, [Nick] felt quite sure that he would never die" (14), Hemingway closes the gap between his narration and his protagonist altogether to contrast the longer, more complicated view of death his father possesses from experience with the childlike faith in immortality that Nick intuits from the symbolic safety of the boat. While his father's position in the fore of the boat signifies his acceptance that life and death are beyond the scope of his vision, Nick's position in the back suggests his implicit belief that, within the confines of the bark, he is somehow cut off from the cycle of birth and death that he has watched unfold on land. By distinguishing Nick's refusal to accept the irreversible consequences of birth and death from his father's tacit realization of his powerlessness to answer fundamental questions about human nature and its defects, Hemingway suggests that he will chart the course between a child's naivety and an adult's existential anxieties through the remainder of the collection.

Just as his parting assurance conveys Nick's epiphany in a way that imagery and dialogue cannot, so does Hemingway's silence upon Doctor Adams's reflections speak volumes about the dilemma he faces in attempting to answer his son's questions. As a father himself, Hemingway uses Doctor Adams as a fictional surrogate, to embody the existential anxieties from which the Indian husband has literally and figuratively turned away, though with a crucial difference. Where the Indian husband's suicide converts the wall he faces into an objective correlative for his entrapment in a feminine sphere of action, Doctor Adams's inability to offer Nick satisfactory answers suggests that the wall he faces is one of communication. Despite the wisdom supposedly conferred by age and experience, the doctor is left to wonder, in the end, whether his understanding of death is truly any more informed than his son's, for "it all depends" less upon

experience than upon one's ability to "stand things" and, thus, reconcile himself to the cycle of violence that is, in Hemingway's view, synonymous with the cycle of life. With his emphasis upon the ambiguity of the doctor's answers, Hemingway closes "Indian Camp" anticipating the insufficiency of language alone to express his characters feelings through the remainder of *In Our Time*.

Repetition and Resistance: "Soldier's Home"

Although his experiment with various modes of narrative voice threatens to overshadow his use of symbolism in "Soldier's Home," it is through his introduction of two key images in the story's opening paragraphs that Hemingway anticipates the psychological dilemma Harold Krebs faces amidst the narration's ensuing revelation of his innermost fears. Before Hemingway mentions Krebs's lies and their sickening effect upon him, he uses two pictures to signify the fraudulence of the soldier's alibi for his belated return home. The first picture "shows him among his [college] fraternity brothers, all of them wearing exactly the same height and collar" (55), offering a glimpse at how well Krebs fit into the social patterns of bachelorhood prior to his enlistment in the army. By contrast, the other picture "shows him on the Rhine with two German girls and another corporal" (55), presumptively during the war, but, as the narrator's ensuing observations suggest, more likely thereafter. Given the contrast the two photos establish it is clear from the beginning that Krebs is no longer who he appears to be and, thus, is as subject to the reader's suspicion as he is to that of his community. In another light, the pictures also forecast Krebs's inability to reconcile his enduring admiration for patterns with his ambivalence toward the girls in his community who have come of age during his time at war. What is most remarkable about the opening two paragraphs, though, is the third-person narrator's subtle

commentary on the story each picture tells. In the first paragraph, the narrator merely hints at Krebs's delayed return home without passing judgment upon him; but in the second paragraph, his commentary becomes more subjective when he confides, "Krebs and the corporal look too big for their uniforms. The German girls are not beautiful," before confirming, "The Rhine does not show in the picture" (55). With their skeptical tone, such observations hardly inspire confidence in Krebs's war stories; yet Hemingway uses the last line to hint that, as with the absence of the Rhine from the second picture, there is more to the war's affect upon Krebs than meets the eye.

When he colors his initial foray into free indirect discourse, in the fourth paragraph, with the third-person narrator's omniscience, Hemingway offers an opening glimpse at the repressed need for communion manifested by the returned soldier's lies about his wartime experiences. Between his assertion in one line that "[a]t first Krebs. . .did not want to talk about the war at all," and his admission in the next line that "[l]ater he felt the need to talk but no one wanted to hear about it" (55), the narrator draws a subtle distinction between Krebs's needs and desires to foreground the link between his protagonist's ambivalence and his wartime trauma. A mere two lines later, the narration itself begins to simulate Krebs's inner conflict with its seamless pivot from his perspective back to a seemingly objective summary of his plight: "Krebs found that to be listened to at all he had to lie, and after he had done this twice he, too, had a reaction against the war and against talking about it. A distaste for everything that had happened to him in the war set in because of the lies he had told" (55). Rather than expound upon the causes of Krebs's need to talk about the war, such a summary calls attention to the returned soldier's repression of his wartime trauma by diverting attention to the effects of his lies. As Ruben De Baerdemaeker argues, "[W]hat [Krebs's] story really shows is that language and talk are necessary in order to

preserve an event as a factor in one's self, in one's *narrative identity*" (59). Thus, as he confirms the progression of Krebs's "distaste" into "nausea" at his fraudulence (56), Hemingway offers a view of his protagonist's interiority that suggests Krebs's inability to face the truth about himself has left him in a state of arrested development, wherein his lies are all he has left to live by.

In addition to exposing Krebs's attempts to displace his self-disgust onto his summertime routines, Hemingway's intervening silence upon his protagonist's emotional states allows his use of diction and imagery to lend new perspective to Krebs's conflicted emotional withdrawal. Having already interrupted his description of Krebs's routine with the subjective reflection that he "loved" playing billiards (56), Hemingway offers comparatively sparse insights into Krebs's emotional health in the paragraph that follows, instead sketching an overview of his family dynamics. It is only after he has recalled how "noncommittal" (56) the returned soldier's father was that the third-person narrator again digresses to focalize Krebs's strained relationship with his father, and its implications to his ennui, around the family car. As he explains, "Before Krebs went away to war he had never been allowed to drive the family motor car" (56), the narrator not only reflects Krebs's passivity with his use of the passive voice, but also suggests Krebs has begun to re-conceive of his father's distrust in light of his wartime experiences. Although his narration is still ostensibly in the third-person voice, Hemingway's specification that Krebs's father "always wanted the car to be at his command" (56), and "always" left it parked in front of his office, shifts into vocabulary suggestive of both Krebs's military experience and his realization that he was not "always" as damaged as he is after the war. Read in context of Krebs's experience, the paragraph's closing assurance that, "Now, after the war, it was still the same car" (56) is hardly reassuring. Instead, Hemingway's reliance on understatement indicates

that, while the car is "still the same" after the war (56), Krebs fears, much like Nick Adams in "Big Two-Hearted River," that he never will be.

Building upon the tone of bittersweet irony the car's introduction establishes, Hemingway's third-person narration relapses into free indirect discourse to underscore the resistance to change that has forestalled Krebs's progress on the road to manhood. With his assertion that "[n]othing was changed in the town except that the young girls had grown up" (56), the narrator implies, by contrast, that *everything* has changed for Krebs, from the way he sees women to the way he sees himself. As the dissonance produced by the narrator's reintroduction of his perspective in the next line suggests, Krebs is unable to adapt to the inner changes his wartime experiences have wrought and grow up in his own right: "But they lived in such a complicated world of already defined alliances and shifting feuds that Krebs did not feel the energy or the courage to break into it" (56). By combining ironic understatement with rhetoric evoking the political climate of the Great War, Hemingway implies there is more to the anaphoric list of reasons he offers why "[Krebs] liked to look at them" (56) than mere voyeurism. Here, as in other instances of free indirect discourse scattered throughout *In Our Time*, "Two voices seem clearly at work, and it is the *relation* between them—their engagement with one another--that creates meaning" (Gunn, 9) by constantly readjusting the lens through which Hemingway offers Krebs's perspective.[ii] Having shared the narrator's observations that "[m]ost of them had their hair cut short" and "[t]hey all wore sweaters and shirt waists with round Dutch collars," Krebs recognizes, "It was a pattern" (56), without exercising the introspection necessary to realize that the pattern *they* form is, in essence, an inversion of that *he* formed with his fraternity brothers in the opening paragraph. Instead, Hemingway leaves it for his reader to infer, from the series of subtle hints he has woven into his protagonist's

observations, that Krebs's obsession with the young women is rooted less in his physical attraction to them, than it is in the implicit yearning to restore order to his life that the patterns of dress and behavior he perceives evoke.

In the paragraphs that follow, Hemingway begins to shift his treatment Krebs's consciousness from third-person narration toward an interior monologue, wherein the shellshocked veteran's constant equivocations underscore his inability to reconcile his needs with his desires. Explaining that Krebs "did not want to get into the intrigue and politics" he considered necessary to court the young women he observes, Hemingway anticipates the series of self-deceptions he will stage on his protagonist's behalf with his clarification that "[h]e did not want to tell any more lies. It wasn't worth it" (57). Given his admission a few lines earlier that "[t]here was something else" (57) behind Krebs's desire for female companionship beyond mere hedonism, it is no surprise that the narrator is as powerless as the protagonist to say *what* "wasn't worth it;" all he knows is that "[Krebs] did not want any consequences. He did not want any consequences ever again" (57). With his addition of "ever again" in the second sentence, Hemingway juxtaposes Krebs's trepidation against Nick Adams's delusion that he can win Marjorie back at the end of "The Three-Day Blow" and the Gonorrhea-stricken soldier's shortsighted attempt to replace love with making love in "A Very Short Story," just prior to "Soldier's Home." In doing so, he implies that Krebs's wartime initiation into adult relationships has left even deeper psychological scars than his experience of combat has. Even so, the life "without consequences" Krebs *does* want suggests that he, like Nick, would rather repress the trauma produced by his heartache than acknowledge the unfulfilled needs that have triggered his assumption of indifference as a defense mechanism. The further Krebs carries his supposed

emotional withdrawal, the more Hemingway exposes the consequences borne from his misapplication of the lessons he learned "in the army" to the domestic sphere (57).

As Krebs's interior monologue begins to take shape, Hemingway simulates the self-delusions that have led to his protagonist's alienation by substituting the first-person voice for his various inflections of the third. Countering the narrator's insistence that "[h]e did not really need a girl," Krebs muses, "It was all right to pose as though you had to have a girl," only to remind the reader and himself alike that "[i]t wasn't true. You did not need a girl" a mere two lines later (57). To sound the depths of Krebs's ambivalence, Hemingway establishes what Wendolyn Tetlow has described as a "yes-no" rhythm in Krebs's narration that reflects the impact of wartime trauma upon his protagonist's emotional development (73). Fully immersed in Krebs's thoughts, he builds tension through repetition and negation, using the returned soldier's mockery of his peers for betraying their bachelorhood to their libido to suggest he is equally trapped by his obsession with women as they are. Because his reflections have led him too close to the truth about his feelings, Krebs's interior monologue reassumes its earlier parataxis as he attempts to reassure himself, "That was all a lie. It was all a lie both ways. You did not need a girl unless you thought about them" (57). Given the inability to *stop* thinking about them that his train of thought evinces, it is clear that Krebs needs a girl more than he is willing to admit. When the narrator reiterates, "He had learned that in the army" in the very next line (57), he juxtaposes Krebs's failure to stifle his budding need for interaction with the young women against his implicit fear that acknowledging his attraction to them will force him to reassess his psychological survival techniques. Following the narrator's interruption, Krebs's explanation that "sooner or later you always got [a girl]" prefaces another a series of equivocations that correlate the anticipation and anxiety he experiences thinking about women with his implicit

sexual initiation at war, when the narrator confirms yet again, “He had learned that in the army” (57). By recapitulating his protagonist’s failed attempts to draw a coherent worldview from his wartime experiences, Hemingway ends the paragraph having set the stage to reveal how Krebs’s miseducation about adult relationships in the brothels of Europe has left him in state of ambivalence approaching insanity.

Amidst his continued oscillation between third- and first-person narration, Hemingway chokes his protagonist’s interior monologue with equivocations to suggest that Krebs’s inability to make peace with his feelings toward women derives from his corresponding inability to make peace with himself. Despite the glimmer of hope offered by his admission that Krebs “would have liked a girl if she had come to him and not wanted to talk,” the third-person narrator is as quick as Krebs himself to equivocate, “But here at home it was all too complicated. He knew he could never get through it all again. It was not worth the trouble” (57). With such lines Hemingway further underscores the similarities between the emotional shell-shock Krebs seems to have endured and the remorse that threatens to overwhelm Nick after his breakup with Marjorie back in “The End of Something” and “The Three-Day Blow.” Where Nick owes his misery to his youth and inexperience, though, Krebs owes his ambivalence to his dawning association of “home” with the complications he seeks to avoid. Unwilling to assume the emotional responsibilities of adulthood, Krebs reflects how, with European prostitutes, “There was not all this talking. You couldn’t talk much and you did not need to talk. It was simple and you were friends” (57). At this juncture, Hemingway reassumes the third-person voice to afford Krebs’s brewing mental conflict the narrative space it needs to unfold upon the page. Concluding, “the world [the young women] were in was not the world he was in” (57), the narrator suggests Krebs can only admire the “pattern” of their maturation from afar, since he has

already determined, "he would not go through all the talking. He did not want [a girl] badly enough" (57). By the end of his interior monologue, Krebs's voice becomes so subsumed by Hemingway's on the page that his fear of discussing his feelings is manifest in the narration itself. It is only through the mediation of the third-person narrator's voice that Krebs unwittingly admits he has become his own worst enemy in his ongoing struggle to repress his feelings.

In the intervening paragraph before the story rolls into its concluding series of familial confrontations, Hemingway obscures his introduction of another key image suggestive of Krebs's emotional retreat behind the motif of reading he will transpose into "Cat in the Rain" and "Big Two-Hearted River." Even more than his growing fascination with history books, Krebs's special regard for the maps included therein signals his need to impose order on his wartime experiences, while also searching for a subconscious escape route from the commitments incumbent upon young adulthood (Stewart, 65). Blinded not by his reading but by the pattern of avoidance in which it traps him, Krebs is woefully unprepared for the double ambush Hemingway orchestrates in the scenes following his interior monologue.

To further externalize the emotional withdrawal his juxtaposition of free indirect discourse and interior monologue has internalized, Hemingway relies on dialogue and imagery to convey Krebs's discomfort, and its implications to his pattern of behavior, during his ensuing discussions with his mother and younger sister. Having already converted beds into objective correlatives for male weakness in "Indian Camp" and "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife," he introduces the image of Krebs's bedside confrontation with his mother to cement his ineffectuality before any words have been spoken. When Krebs accuses his mother of bullying his father into allowing him use of the family car, he not only elicits a recognition of the social expectations attached to such freedom, but also betrays the "noncommittal" (56) approach to

family life he shares with his father. Later, at the breakfast table, Hemingway reveals Krebs's discomfort with the affection he feels for his younger sister, Helen, explaining "Krebs looked at her. He liked her. She was his best sister," before Krebs confirms his own discomfort by changing the subject, "Have you got the paper?" (58). Juxtaposed against his brief mental reflections, Krebs's question suggests his tacit realization that Helen is on the verge of adolescence and will soon become as talkative as any of the other young women he fears to approach.

When he begins reading the paper, Krebs further underscores his awareness of his sister's dawning young womanhood by following the same pattern of avoidance manifest in his fascination with history books. No sooner has he "folded *The* [*Kansas City*] *Star* open and propped it against the water pitcher with his cereal dish to steady it, so he could read while he ate" than his mother's reminder, "Your father can't read his *Star* if it's been mussed" (58), suggests the similarities between his father's habits of emotional disengagement and his own. Although Krebs's *posture* of reading differs from his father's, it is clear that father and son alike use the morning paper as an emotional shield, to avoid confrontation. Thus, where Hemingway's use of the third-person voice as a filter for Krebs's mental cacophony evokes his own struggle to find his voice as a new writer of prose fiction, his use of dialogue to blur the line between Krebs's and his father's patterns of behavior channels his feeling of ill-preparedness as a first-time father when he wrote "Soldier's Home" in early 1924, in the months just after his first son, John's birth.[iii] Because he is a manifestation of Hemingway's introspection, and not introspective in his own right, Krebs shows through his defensive response that he is blind to such similarities. Paired with his inability to see himself slipping into his father's shoes, Krebs's inevitable

rejection of his sister's attention suggests he has denied his need for love and commitment on the most basic level.

In the same scene, Hemingway uses Krebs's dialogue with his sister to demonstrate the domino effect that his chronic ambivalence toward women has produced within his family life. Under the pressure of his sister's gaze, Krebs is all but defenseless, no more able to reject her invitation to watch her play ball than to accept it. While his fraternal affection for Helen compels him to humor her competitive streak, his curiosity quickly recedes after she mentions she has told "the other girls" he is her "beau" (59). As Helen interrogates him hoping he will validate her boast, Krebs beats an emotional retreat, revealing through his excuse, "I don't know" (59), that he lacks both the words and the moral courage to express his discomfort with such an idea. In this regard he again resembles Nick, whose frustration at having taught Marjorie everything she knows about fishing is a mere fragment of the reason why he too claims, "I don't know" when pressured to express his true feelings in "The End of Something" (24). Despite such similarities, Krebs's hesitancy does not betray an attraction to his sister analogous to Nick's ambivalence toward Marjorie. Instead, his verbal deflections imply that his loss of innocence, in love and war alike, has so corrupted his understanding of relationships that he can no longer appreciate his sister's need to love and be loved unconditionally, without consequences. Through his increasingly evasive answers to his sister's queries, Krebs demonstrates his failure to distinguish the fraternal and self-sacrificial love Helen solicits from the erotic love that his experiences with other young women have taught him to fear. Combined with her verbal needling, Helen's question, "Will you love me always?" (59), evokes the same dangers of commitment, in Krebs's view, that approaching any of the young women in his town would entail. To avoid such

overexposure, he ends the conversation with a tacit denial of his sister's request, confirming his emotional withdrawal ahead of his more protracted interview with his mother.

Only when Krebs endures his mother's lecture in the scene that follows does Hemingway complete his portrait of the returned soldier's failed homecoming by using free indirect discourse in concert with dialogue and imagery to convey emotion. As Robert Paul Lamb has observed, by removing her glasses Krebs's mother evokes the same shortsightedness to her son's postwar trauma as Krebs himself has shown to the psychological causes thereof: "[T]his gesture seems to imply [in part] that she either cannot, or does not want to 'see' him, even though she seems 'worried' and does not ask him questions 'in a mean way' " (100-101). With her subsequent insistence that "God has some work for everyone to do. There can be no idle hands in His Kingdom" (59), she further denigrates the unorthodox coming of age her son has experienced abroad by offering a tacit reminder that he is not only her child, but a child of God. Thus, when Krebs disagrees, "I'm not in His kingdom" (59), he suggests that his disillusionment with religion is due as much to his loss of innocence in the war as it is to his abandonment of the puritan work ethic his mother has articulated. Because Krebs himself lacks the words to express his frustration, it is left for the third-person narrator to confide, "[He] felt embarrassed and resentful as always" (60), signaling an emotional withdrawal from his mother that prefigures his mental withdrawal from Hemingway's narration in the lines ahead.

The more aloof Krebs becomes, the more Hemingway relies on imagery and dialogue, in lieu of his protagonist's mental reflections, to suggest the feelings of entrapment his mother's continued de-moralization of his dilemma produces. From her emphasis upon his responsibilities to his Heavenly Father, Krebs's mother turns to the issue of her son's indiscretions at war, claiming, "I know what temptations you must have been exposed to. I know how weak men are"

(60) in an understated effort to goad him into confessing his guilt. Adding, “I have prayed for you. I pray for you all day long, Harold” (60), she prompts the third-person narrator to imply Krebs’s resulting disgust through his line of vision as “[he] looked at the bacon fat hardening on his plate” (60). In addition to revealing Krebs’s loss of appetite, such an image suggests he is no more ready to face the consequences of having come of age than his mother is to suspend judgment upon his loafing. As if expressing terms of pardon for her son’s sexual breach of faith, Krebs’s mother proposes that employment and marriage will redeem him from his existential torpor. Even as she explains how “[t]he boys are all settling down; they’re all determined to get somewhere,” and “are on their way to being really a credit to the community” (60), the narrator undercuts her efforts, observing “Krebs said nothing” in response. Rather than continue to indulge Krebs’s feelings outright, Hemingway pairs his avoidance of eye contact with his silence to reveal the emotional vacuum separating him from his mother.

Nowhere in the story is Krebs’s detachment from his feelings more evident than in Hemingway’s re-introduction of free indirect discourse to expound upon his fictional double’s professed incapacity to love. When asked, “Don’t you love your mother, dear boy?” (60), Krebs succumbs to his building resentment, confessing, “I don’t love anybody” (60) as much to himself as to his mother. Without allowing such an admission to percolate, the third-person narrator explains, “It wasn’t any good. He couldn’t tell her, he couldn’t make her see it” (60), confirming the failure of language alone to represent the psychological scars Krebs bears from his wartime experiences. When Krebs attempts to retract his answer, he struggles for the right words. Unable to say what he really meant by such a claim, he insists, “I was just angry at something. I didn’t mean I didn’t love you” (60) in terms so ambiguous that their dishonesty could not be more apparent. Because he lacks the conviction to commit to his lie, he can only beg his mother to

believe him in the hopes of turning her inability to see him as a man to his favor. After Krebs does convince her of his remorse, though, the third-person narrator adds, "[He] felt sick and vaguely nauseated" (61) to correlate the consequences of lying with those of entering adulthood. While on one level Krebs's lie to his mother reveals his childish need for approval and validation, on another it anticipates a realization—albeit one he does not fully achieve—that the adult world is, like the world of the young women, one of "defined alliances and shifting feuds" (56), wherein lies are, for better or worse, the currency of familial and social relationships alike. Given the self-disgust Hemingway's earlier attention to his protagonist's perspective suggests he expects from lying to his mother, Krebs's dishonesty signifies his unconscious first step toward accepting the complications and responsibilities of adulthood.

When Hemingway suspends his protagonist's ensuing reflections between third- and first-person narration in the final paragraph, he suggests that Krebs does not fully appreciate the long-term consequences of his surrender to his mother's expectations. Confiding, "He had tried so to keep his life from being complicated. Still, none of it had touched him" (61), the narrator betrays Krebs's ongoing refusal to exercise emotional responsibility toward himself, as well as others. Without the conscience necessary to achieve a genuine epiphany, he feigns indifference to the change of course his life is set to take once he is back on his own, out from under his family's oversight. Having resolved to avoid further confrontation with his mother and father at all costs, he prompts the narrator to reflect, "He wanted his life to go smoothly. It had just gotten going that way. Well, that was all over now anyway" (61) in a train of thought more suggestive of repression than resignation. By the time Krebs resolves to go watch his sister play indoor baseball in the next line, the narrator has already shown that his intentions are by no means an expression of commitment. On the contrary, Krebs's halfhearted interest in watching Helen play

reveals his delusion that he can continue to substitute spectatorship for emotional involvement without facing consequences.

With his re-immersion in Krebs's perspective, Hemingway anticipates his characters' ongoing failure to accept the realities and responsibilities of adulthood in the latter half of *In Our Time*. Rather than project stoic self-assurance, Krebs's sudden assumption of apathy toward his dilemma underscores his denial of the psychological cost that his wartime experiences and resulting alienation have exacted upon him. In Hemingway's narration, as in his dialogue with his sister and mother, Krebs has simply lost the words to express his needs and desires. While his capacity for introspection is clear from Hemingway's various uses of third-person narration, and intermittent lapses into first-person narration, Krebs's inability to articulate his feelings prevents him from attaining genuine self-knowledge. As a result, he succumbs to a state of arrested development that prefigures the struggle of Hemingway's male characters to accept the emotional responsibilities of marriage and parenthood in the stories ahead.

Following his variation of narrative perspective in the previous six stories, Hemingway's nuanced attention to Krebs's perspective in "Soldier's Home" marks a turning point in the meditation on emotional maturity he unfolds across *In Our Time*. By allowing Krebs's perspective to shape his third-person narration, Hemingway offers his closest glimpse yet at the correlation between his characters' failure to communicate and their struggle to come of age before, during, and after the Great War. Because he cannot accept the centrality of conflict and confrontation to adult life, Krebs becomes as entrapped by his qualms about commitment as he is by his mother's insistence that he follow the pattern of domestication set by his fellow returning soldiers and "get somewhere" in life (60). Where Nick Adams's determination to escape the swamp and "get to somewhere" (41) back in "The Battler" suggests his hastiness to achieve self-

discovery and the manhood that comes with it, Krebs's eagerness to escape his mother's sanctimony at the end of "Soldier's Home" betrays his delusion that escaping the trappings of domesticity will allow him, in turn, to escape himself. Thus, Hemingway's juxtaposition of free indirect discourse and interior monologue facilitates Krebs's self-deceptions in a way that not only re-assesses Nick's apparent fearlessness, but in doing so also ties Krebs's implicit loss of identity to his explicit loss of domestic virtues. Rendered unfit for conventional American society by his wartime experiences, Krebs retreats from the home front having resolved to carry his emotional baggage through adulthood without facing the consequences that his honesty, both with his family and himself, would entail.

Act Like a Man, Think Like a Woman Too: "Cat in the Rain"

Three stories later, Hemingway's continued experimentation with free indirect discourse transposes Krebs's repression of his feelings and resulting failure to communicate into the unnamed American wife's similar struggle to distinguish between her needs and desires in "Cat in the Rain." Because she becomes too immersed in her mental reflections to step outside herself and recognize the need for spiritual rebirth manifested by Hemingway's narration, the American wife finds, like Krebs before her, that she is at a loss for words to express her true desires. Rather than accept her need to look inward for validation, the American wife instead looks outward for a means of ameliorating her companionate marriage, first with her pursuit of the titular cat and later with her yearning for the trappings of domesticity absent from her and her husband, George's, expatriate lifestyle. It is only thanks to Hemingway's integration of his third-person narration with her perspective in the intervening scenes that the reader has a clearer idea of the American wife's dilemma than her self-deceptions will allow her reach for herself. By

juxtaposing his use of imagery and dialogue to convey emotion against his glimpses into the American wife's innermost feelings, Hemingway showcases the evolution of his writing style parallel to that of his attitude toward the emotional responsibilities of marriage and parenthood.

Once he has finished setting the emotional landscape of the story with his description of the views from her and her husband's second-story hotel room, Hemingway opens the story in earnest by qualifying his third-person observation that "[i]t was raining" (75) with the American wife's perspective of the scene he describes. Anticipating his narration's growing familiarity with her feelings in the paragraphs ahead, he notes, "The American wife stood at the window looking out. Outside right under their window a cat was crouched under one of the dripping green tables. The cat was trying to make herself so compact that she would not be dripped on" (75). With his substitution of "*their* window" for "*the* window" in the second sentence and his indulgence of her instinct to gender the cat female in the third (75, emphasis added), he opens the second paragraph offering subtle glimpses into the American wife's perspective that prefigure the more explicit insights he will afford into her feelings following her arrival at the hotel-keeper's office downstairs. Contrary to the pattern such a narrative slip would normally establish, it is not through mental reflection, but dialogue that Hemingway announces the American wife's intention to rescue the cat. When she does so, she instinctively renames it "that kitty" (75), implying both its significance as a surrogate child and her identification with its discomfort trapped under the table. While on one level her sympathy for "the poor kitty" (75) suggests her corresponding entrapment in her room and the companionate marriage it signifies, on another level it reveals her inability to overcome the whimsies of childhood and arrive at a mature understanding of the needs undergirding her desire for such a pet.

In the same scene, the American wife's inability to capture her husband, George's full attention supplies an implicit counterpoint to Hemingway's explicit adoption of free indirect discourse amidst her subsequent encounters with the hotel-keeper. As David Lodge observes, "It is worth noticing that [her husband] is reading on the bed—a place for sleeping and making love; and the perversity of this behavior is symbolized by the fact that he is lying on the bed the wrong way round" (18). Just as his posture indicates his physical and emotional withdrawal from his wife, so does George's warning, "Don't get wet" (75), suggest that his annoyance with her disregard of the weather is a euphemism for his fear of intimacy and its long-term consequences. Thus, his response to his wife's insistence that *she* retrieve the cat not only reveals his irritation with her talking and the eagerness he shares with Krebs to retreat back into his reading, but also channels Hemingway's fear of his impending fatherhood in early 1923, before writing "Cat in the Rain" in early 1924. With its similarity to the admonition a father might offer his child, George's expectation that his wife stay dry indicates his repression of her womanhood in the same way his admiration of her boyish haircut does after her return upstairs, at the end of the story. Reframed by her husband's parting words, the American wife's pursuit of the cat signifies an attempt to reclaim her femininity by substituting the sensual pleasures a cat can afford for those in which her husband lacks the interest to partake altogether.

When the American wife arrives downstairs, though, Hemingway's initial glimpse at her emotional state suggests that the true source of the American wife's pleasure and potential renewal is neither her husband in the bed upstairs nor the cat under the table outside, but the hotel-keeper back in his office. At first, the narration appears deceptively dry as the hotel-keeper offers the American wife a customary bow on her way out (75); but a closer look reveals the contrast such a gesture affords to George's inactivity. Where George cannot be bothered to look

at his wife, let alone get out of bed to satisfy her longing for the cat, the hotel-keeper shows through his bow that he respects the American wife and is eager to please her. Given that "[h]is desk was at the far end of the office" (75), his bow also suggests his readiness to accommodate her needs in ways that her husband will not. Explaining, "He was an old man and very tall" (75), Hemingway aligns the third-persons narrator's gaze with observations suggestive of the American wife's attraction to the hotel-keeper and, thus, triggers his narration's sudden slip into free indirect discourse in the next line. Following the narrator's admission that "[s]he liked the hotel-keeper" (75), the American wife's awkward declaration of the obvious, "*Il piove* [It's raining]" (75), not only demonstrates the failure of language to express her feelings, but relies instead on the sensual imagery of the rain to evoke her girlish crush on a man old enough to be her father. At the threshold of the hotel-keeper's office, the American wife proves no better equipped to express her secret pleasure in her host's courtesies than she does to save the cat from the rain in the next scene.

Instead, it is Hemingway who reveals the American wife's admiration of the hotel-keeper with his first extended lapse into free indirect discourse. Reiterating, "The wife liked him" (75), the narrator proceeds to catalogue *what* she liked about him, without ever explaining the reasons *why*. In lines that clearly echo the use of anaphora to simulate Krebs's shell shock and resulting obsession with patterns back in "Soldier's Home," he explains, "She liked the deadly serious way he received any complaints. She liked his dignity. She liked the way he wanted to serve her" (75--76). By proceeding, uninterrupted, from one insight to the next, the narrator obscures the American wife's progression from judging based on her observations to filtering those observations through her intuition. While her admiration of his stoic reaction to her and his other guests' problems remains unbiased, her appreciation of his "dignity" and supposition that "he

wanted to serve her" verge upon an erotic fantasy that reveals the desire for validation inhibiting her personal growth. When he adds, "She liked the way he felt about being a hotel-keeper" in the next line (76), the narrator continues to reveal more about the American wife by virtue of her feelings than he does the object thereof. With no way of truly knowing how the hotel-keeper "felt" about his profession, the American wife again draws from her imagination to complete the narrator's character sketch of a man who appears to embody the confidence in himself and the various roles he plays that she and her husband, by contrast, appear to lack as the story progresses. Finally, the narrator concludes, "She liked his old, heavy face and big hands" (76), both of which features combine with her perspective of his demeanor to reveal a man whom she sees with all the fondness of a child for her father. Thus, as a closer look at the nuances of Hemingway's third-person narration suggests, the American wife's dissatisfaction with her marriage and implicit loss of identity have more to do with her fancy for the hotel-keeper than she is able to realize, much less to explain.

Although he retains her perspective through her journey outdoors and subsequent return upstairs, Hemingway relies more upon his synthesis of the American wife's observations and ensuing dialogue with the maid than he does his narrative interjections to continue unraveling her identity crisis. Together with her assumption that the hotel-keeper sent the maid with an umbrella, the American wife's arrival at the table she spied from her room, "washed bright green in the rain," conveys a tone of optimism and renewal that proves short-lived when she realizes in the same line that "the cat was gone" (76). Following such an anticlimactic discovery, the narrator's confirmation that "[s]he was suddenly disappointed" (76) hardly seems necessary; its only function is to intrigue the reader, by virtue of its ambiguity, *why* she was so disappointed. Rather than answer such a question directly, the narrator reframes it amidst the American wife's

dialogue with maid. As John Hagopian has observed, Hemingway's pivot from description back to dialogue reveals an abrupt change in the American wife: "At the moment she discovers that the cat is gone, she is no longer described as 'the American wife,' but as 'the American girl'; it is almost as if she were demoted in femininity by failing to find a creature to care for" (221). Thus, when the maid enquires whether she has lost something it is the American *girl* who answers, "There was a cat" (76), suggesting she has lost not only the object of her affection, but her womanhood and potential for motherhood with it. After the maid expresses doubt that there ever was a cat in the rain, the American *girl's* insistence, "Oh I wanted it so much. I wanted a kitty" (76), suggests that her vision of the cat was more likely a product of her subconscious longing for maternity than it was her perception of reality. By the end of the scene, it is the American wife's inability to say why she wanted the kitty more than the narrator's refusal to do so that brings the source of her ambivalence into clearer focus in the second half of the story.

As if to confirm the American girl's sudden confusion by her feelings, Hemingway interrupts his narration with another lapse into free indirect discourse that offers the richest insights yet into his protagonist's dilemma. Having further underscored her emotional immaturity by renaming the hotel-keeper "the padrone"—a title that, as Stewart observes, solidifies his status as a father figure (72)—the narrator capitalizes upon the older man's second bow to probe even deeper into the American girl's feelings on her way back upstairs. No sooner has the padrone given his customary gesture than the narrator observes, "Something felt very small and tight inside the girl. The padrone made her feel very small and at the same time really important. She had a momentary feeling of supreme importance" (76), indicating he has no better words than the American girl herself does to explain the wave of sensations that threatens to overtake her. On a psychological level, the progression of description from the ambiguity of "something"

in the first sentence, to the passive voice used in the second, and the euphemistic "momentary feeling of supreme importance" relayed in the third, suggests that the narrator has no greater knowledge of the American girl than she does of herself. On a thematic level, though, Hagopian observes that the diction of the three sentences "might appropriately be used to describe a woman who is pregnant. The conscious thought of pregnancy never enters [the American girl's] mind, but the feelings associated with it sweep through her" (221), suggesting that, if she is not already pregnant, as Lodge argues (16), then she presumptively wishes to be. In effect, the American wife's yearning for a "kitty" to care for derives more from her eagerness to displace her need for affection onto an animal that, unlike her husband, will respond to her touch than it does from the seeming emergence of her maternal instincts. Because she lacks the insight to recognize the need for domestic affection underlying her involuntary reaction to the padrone, the American wife returns to her husband no more enlightened to the true causes of her unhappiness than when she left to retrieve the cat.

At the final turning point of the story, Hemingway abandons his use of third-person narration as a filter for the American wife's feelings and instead allows her gestures and corresponding dialogue to bespeak her conflation of the domestic affection she needs with the trappings of domesticity she desires. Noting, "She sat down on the bed" (76) shortly after announcing the disappearance of the cat, the narrator implies the American wife's need for intimacy is inseparable from her need for communion, without offering any further glimpses into her emotional state. When she muses in the lines that follow, "I don't know why I wanted it so much. I wanted that poor kitty. It isn't any fun to be a poor kitty out in the rain" (76), the American wife unwittingly offers a clearer overview of her dilemma than Hemingway's glimpses into her perspective have afforded. By confessing that she does not know whence her obsession

with the cat has sprung, she echoes the ambivalence of Nick Adams and Harold Krebs in a different key, for where Hemingway's male protagonists have proven confused *by* their feelings, she proves confused *about* her feelings. Implicit in her sympathy for the cat's plight is another confession that her and George's marriage, like Nick and Marjorie's young love in "The End of Something," "isn't fun anymore" (25) and has, in essence, left her feeling as trapped as the cat she spied under the table. As she rises to face herself in the hand glass lying on the dressing table, the American wife makes one final ploy for her husband's attention that juxtaposes the childish desire for validation and approval that, like Krebs before her, she has long since outgrown against the need to see herself with the same dignity and grace the padrone does.

In the verbal exchange that follows, Hemingway's narration retreats from the American wife's perspective into her husband, George's, compelling the reader to infer the misunderstandings at the center of their marriage. Without the narrator's sensitivity to his wife's emotional states, George confuses his wife's tacit plea for validation—"Don't you think it would be a good idea if I grew my hair out?" (77)—with a request for permission. His response, "I like it the way it is" (77), says even more about his childish resistance to change and its stifling affect upon his marriage than his observation that her hair is "clipped close like a boy's" (77) does about his unconscious preference for a male companion (Chatman, 220). Notably, it is only after his wife calls attention to her boyish appearance, claiming, "I get so tired of looking like a boy" (77), that "George shifted his position in the bed" (77). Whether he does so in discomfort with her comparison, or to consider it from a different angle remains unclear, but his insistence, "You look pretty darn nice" (77), invalidates his *wife's* discomfort with her appearance by failing to address it altogether.

Having showcased George's cluelessness to his wife's needs, Hemingway makes a subtle pivot back into the American wife's perspective to show, through the litany of desires she recites, that her understanding of her needs is only slightly deeper than her husband's. Unable to communicate with her husband either on the bed or off, the American wife retreats to the same position she occupied at the beginning of the story, looking out the window, where her observation that "[i]t was getting dark" (77) reflects her darkening mood toward her marriage. As if to reassure herself that the needs and desires underlying her sympathy for the cat she saw are real, even if the cat itself was not, she announces, "I want to pull my hair back tight and smooth and make a big knot that I can feel. I want to have a kitty to sit in my lap and purr when I stroke her" (77). Here again, the nuances of the language betray her longing for domesticity not as an end unto itself, but as a *means* to the end of awakening her dormant sensuality; for, in both the case of her hair and the cat purring, she clearly longs to "feel" something equivalent to the euphoria she experienced in the padrone's presence. Resuming, "And I want to eat at a table with my own silver and I want candles. And I want it to be spring and I want to brush my hair out in front of a mirror and I want a kitty and I want some new clothes" (77), she becomes so overwhelmed by her desires that she fails to recognize the need for rebirth Tetlow ascribes, in part, to her longing for springtime and "the new identity that will come with 'new clothes'" (80--81). In the end, her candor is as wasted on herself as it is on George, whose caustic response, "Oh, shut up and get something to read" (77), hints that her marriage, like her hair, will in all likelihood stay "the way it is" (77).

As the story comes to a close, Hemingway continues to obscure the line between the American wife and her husband's perspectives to maximize the irony of the anticlimactic ending he has in store. Once George has issued his verbal shutdown, the narrator appears to enter his

perspective with his recapitulation that "[h]is wife was looking out of the window," before his subsequent observation, "It was quite dark and still raining in the palm trees" (77), confirms he is, in fact, still immersed in the American wife's point of view *at* the window. Insisting, "If I can't have long hair or any fun, I can have a cat" (77), the American wife implies that "having" a cat will substitute for "having" a baby, only for the narrator to interject, "George wasn't listening" (77), implying that the adoption of a cat, like the production of offspring, will no more save her marriage than it will resolve the identity crisis she faces therein. While it is "his wife" who notices that "the light had come on in the square" (77), suggesting expectancy, it is George who answers when "[s]omeone knocked at the door" (77), signaling the fulfillment thereof. At this juncture, the American wife's perspective recedes altogether, as George "looked up from his book" (77), noticing the maid as "[s]he held a big tortoise-shell cat pressed tight against her and swung down against her body" (77). Without realizing the correlation Hemingway draws between such an image, evoking motherhood, and his wife's unexpected emotional outburst, George remains oblivious to the subliminal meaning of the maid's delivery. Given the likelihood that the "big" tortoise-shell cat is male and, therefore, sterile (Zhang, 128), the maid's delivery likewise satirizes George's *emotional* sterility and corresponding disinterest in producing offspring. Above all, it is the maid's announcement that the padrone sent her in the last line that juxtaposes George's inability to meet his wife's needs against her ongoing struggle to articulate those needs with the emotional maturity of a woman, rather than a girl.

By ending "Cat in the Rain" with such a sudden shift back into George's perspective, Hemingway supplies a counterpoint to the American wife's extreme self-consciousness that prefigures the struggle of his male characters to accept the sobering realities of fatherhood in the next two stories. Where his wife is too preoccupied with not having a cat to realize that she may

already be having a baby, George is, like Krebs before him, too lost in his reading to recognize Hemingway's subliminal signs that his retreat into the world of fiction will prove short-lived, should a child indeed be on the way. Because his reading habits have blindsided him to the possible, if not likely, encroachment of parental responsibilities upon his life, George evokes Hemingway's latent anxiety that producing offspring would interfere with his production of fiction and jeopardize his literary career before it had even begun. As if attempting to compensate for George's lethargy and resulting cluelessness, Hemingway focalizes the marital conflict in "Out of Season" around an illegal fishing trip to introduce the inherent conflict between procreation and recreation that Nick Adams will articulate more fully at the end of his skiing trip in "Cross-Country Snow." In context of the unplanned pregnancy implied by the story's title, "Out of Season," the unnamed American husband's ultimate abandonment of the illegal fishing trip to rejoin his disgruntled wife suggests his—and, by extension, Hemingway's—corresponding movement away from George's repression of his impending parental responsibilities toward acceptance thereof. Only when he shifts focus to the adult Nick Adams's similar struggles facing the approach of fatherhood in "Cross-Country Snow" does Hemingway appear to pivot, through his protagonist, from accepting the reality of his impending parenthood to recognizing the impact his new responsibilities will have upon his ability to engage with the world on his own terms. Constrained as much by his looming paternity as by the wartime wound to his leg he received back in Chapter VI (49, 90), Nick evokes the same similarities to the self-slain husband of "Indian Camp" and George in "Cat in the Rain" that Hemingway likely saw in himself while composing the stories collected in *In Our Time*.

While his sparing attention to George's perspective foreshadows Nick's progress from apathy to resignation in "Cross-Country Snow," Hemingway's use of third-person narration to

convey the American wife's innermost feelings sets an even more subtle precedent for the experiment in self-discovery Nick completes in "Big Two-Hearted River." As the narration's assumption of free indirect discourse during both of her encounters with the padrone suggests, the American wife is too distracted by the rush of her feelings to realize that her dissatisfaction with her marriage is rooted in her dissatisfaction with herself. Because she looks outward, to her husband and the padrone, for the validation of her desires, she becomes an involuntary spectator to her own life, equally unable to deliver herself from her unhappy marriage as she proves to deliver the cat from the rain. Thus, it is her refusal to look inward for the seeds of lasting change that, even more than George's indifference, prevents her from reclaiming a dynamic, life-affirming view of herself, not only as a woman, but as a wife and prospective mother. What is remarkable about the American wife's implicit search for inner renewal is that, despite her husband's shutdown of her spoken speech, Hemingway's use of her unspoken, *interior* speech earlier in the story reassesses the shortsightedness of Krebs's mental reflections in anticipation of the more mature understanding of himself and his place in the world Nick achieves at the end of the collection. In an ironic twist, it is through his careful attention to the American wife's perspective throughout "Cat in the Rain" that Hemingway likewise arrives closer to the new height of artistic achievement he attains in "Big Two-Hearted River" than his fictional double George could dream of, as he lies reading in bed. Having revealed the American wife's dilemma as much through his narration as through his imagery, Hemingway closes "Cat in the Rain" on a note that prefigures the correlation his technique in the finale of *In Our Time* will draw between the literary rite of passage he has completed authoring the collection and the spiritual rebirth Nick Adams experiences camping and fishing in the Michigan woods.

The Sense of an Ending: "Big Two-Hearted River"

With his continued use of imagery to frame the evolution of his insights into his protagonist's perspective, Hemingway transposes the loss of identity his characters suffer in stories like "Soldier's Home" and "Cat in the Rain" into Nick's recovery thereof in "Big Two-Hearted River." From the beginning, the narrator filters his attention to Nick's battered psychological state through his view of the landscape, blurring the line between perceiver and perceived such that his protagonist's mental states become part and parcel of the scenery he observes. Just as his observations reflect his traumatic wartime experience, so do Nick's actions making camp and fishing the river evoke a reconciliation of his civilized habits with the natural setting that, in turn, reflects Hemingway's adaptation of his story's form to its content. By exercising an awareness of his needs and the limitations that come with them, Nick completes a homecoming that registers on a transcendental scale and, as a result, prefigures the ecstatic experience he has fishing the river in the latter half of the story.

As the mediator of Nick's spiritual rebirth, Hemingway opens "Big Two-Hearted River" allowing his narrative diction to illustrate the overlap between his protagonist's observation of the landscape and its significance to his emotional states. Rather than blend an objective description of the setting into his characters' perspective thereof, as he does in "The End of Something" and "Cat in the Rain," he filters his exposition through Nick's perspective to bring the "burned-over country" (111) and the inner trauma it represents into focus. Having converted the ravaged town of Seney into an objective correlative for Nick's psychological wounds in the opening paragraph, Hemingway further underscores his protagonist's mental fragility by diverting his gaze from the desolate landscape to the trout he has arrived to catch downriver. Noting, "As he watched them they changed their positions by quick angles, only to hold steady

in the fast water again" (111), the narrator evokes Nick's implicit realization that the true success of his trip will rest not upon how many fish he catches, but upon how well he is able to hold *himself* steady against the rush of thoughts just beneath the surface of his consciousness. When he explains a few lines later, "It was long time since Nick had looked into the stream and seen trout. They were very satisfactory" (111), he opens a window to Nick's emotional state without adding any further insight into his meditations as he likewise stands watching them "a long time" (111). Where in "Indian Camp" Nick's reflection that his father's delivery of the Indian woman's child took "a long time" signals his childish impatience (12), in "Big Two-Hearted River" his reminiscence that it "*was* a long time" (111, emphasis added) since he had gone fishing hints at a degree of contemplation beyond the reach of Hemingway's words to express.

A few lines later Hemingway's use of imagery to convey feeling likewise reflects the disparities between Nick's naivety in "Indian Camp" and the more dismal worldview he appears to share with his father in "Big Two-Hearted River." Unlike the bass he spies mid-air after his father's delivery of the Indian woman's child and the Indian husband's suicide, the trout Nick spies before starting his hike appears to have "lost his shadow" (111) as he dives back into the water, signifying the grim reality of death Nick's wartime experiences have forced him to accept, despite his confidence as a child that "he would never die" (14). After he has returned "to his post under the bridge where he tightened up facing into the current" (111), the trout appears as dead to Nick's eyes as a fallen comrade on the battlefield; but instead of saying so outright, the narrator relies on Nick's instinct to gender the trout male and his substitution of "post" for "position" to suggest he has displaced the fear of death he learned in combat onto the fish. When he confides in the next two lines, "Nick's heart tightened as the trout moved. He felt all the old feeling" (112), the narrator not only confirms Nick's identification with the fish, but also implies

the "old feeling" he experiences belongs as much, if not more, to his wartime trauma as it does to his first experience with death in "Indian Camp." Despite its brevity, this suggestive glimpse at Nick's psychic tensions is but one in a series of what Michelle Balaev has described as "moments of meditation on what it means to exist in a world where language is not enough to capture the truth of experience" (113). At this early turning point of the story, Hemingway uses free indirect discourse to establish the inner struggles Nick will face as he slowly begins to disburden himself of the past and realize the needs that, like Krebs before him, he has lost the words to articulate.

In fact, Hemingway's continued use of free indirect discourse as Nick treks through the desolate countryside only further correlates the physical strain he experiences carrying his pack with the mental anguish he attempts to repress en route to the river. Fully immersed in his protagonist's perspective, Hemingway introduces the image of a pack Nick knows is "much too heavy" (112), but carries anyway, to symbolize the weight of the past he carries wherever he goes. With its tacit allusion to the spinal injury he experienced back in Chapter VI (49), such an image also suggests Nick uses the physical pain his wartime wound adds to his endeavors as a coping mechanism for the corresponding mental unease his inactivity threatens to awaken in the lines ahead. Thus, it is not in spite, but *because* of the uphill climb he makes that the narrator abets his repression, confiding, "Nick felt happy. He felt he had left everything behind, the need for thinking, the need to write, other needs. It was all back of him" (112). What is clearly not behind him, though, is his *other* need, to face his wartime trauma, suggested by his ensuing reflection that "[the town of] Seney was burned, the country was burned over and changed, but it did not matter. It could not all be burned. He knew that" (112). Without explaining why Nick feels the need to reassure himself, the narrator implies that he does not, in fact, *know* the true

extent of the damage to the landscape any better than he *knows* that of the damage to his psyche. While his observation that the country has "changed" implies his recognition that he has likewise changed since the war, Nick's conclusion that "it did not matter" suggests he has yet to realize that the inner change awaiting him on the river is equally important as that signified by the landscape behind him. By the end of the paragraph, Hemingway's evolving insights into his protagonist's perspective reveal Nick's growing inability to dissociate his mental reflections from his surroundings.

When his protagonist stops to rest in the woods, Hemingway uses his identification with the charred grasshoppers he spies to reveal the levels of cognition that his third-person narration can access. From Nick's observation that "[t]hese were just ordinary hoppers, but all sooty and black in color" (113), the narrator pivots to reaffirm his earlier assertion that the returning soldier had left "the need to think" behind (112) by explaining, "Nick had wondered about them as he walked, without really thinking about them" (113). Though subtle, the distinction between "wondering" and "thinking" in these lines is crucial, for it suggests Nick is as removed from his thoughts as the narrator and, thus, elides the narrative distance between Hemingway and his protagonist even more than "the need to write" they clearly share (112). Even when Nick does experience a flash of insight, its significance to his wartime trauma is filtered through his fascination with the grasshoppers as "he realized that they had all turned black from living in the burned-over land. He realized that the fire must have come the year before, but the grasshoppers were all black now. He wondered how long they would stay that way" (113). With such a conclusion the narrator evokes Nick's tacit fear that, just as the grasshoppers may take a long time to recover from the inferno they have survived, so might he take an equally long, if not longer, time to recover from the hell of war. Later in the same scene, Nick's encouragement to

the "hopper" nibbling on his sock to "[f]ly away somewhere" (113) suggests his awareness that he cannot escape his trauma as easily as the insects he observes. It is only the narrator's earlier assurance, "He knew where he was from the position of the river" (113), that hints Nick is nearing a more centered understanding of himself the closer he approaches the river, even if he is too caught in a reverie to realize it in the moment. What he *does* realize amidst Hemingway's third-person narration, is that, like the grasshoppers, he is invariably a product of his environment.

Only when Nick makes camp further upriver does Hemingway's exclusive reliance on imagery bring the spiritual implications of his protagonist's relationship with his environment into clearer focus through another pivotal allusion back to "Indian Camp." Combined with his use of the axe and the other civilized implements he has brought with him, Nick's reliance on the natural resources at hand to make camp suggests that his efforts to improve his environment are, by extension, efforts to re-create himself, for it is only by building a habitat after his own design that he can likewise begin to reassemble the fragments of his shattered psyche. Unlike the self-slain husband in "Indian Camp," whose clumsiness with an axe compelled him to lie idly by as his wife gave birth in the bunk below, Nick unwittingly employs the axe he has brought as a tool in the orchestration of his own *re*-birth from what Strychacz has described as his "womblike" tent: "For Nick, who sleeps 'curled up' in the womblike tent, then emerges through the tent flaps to 'look at the morning,' the camp signifies a psychic and spiritual rebirth—a self-delivery that recalls and transforms the bloody cesarean of 'Indian Camp' " (83). By transposing his father's delivery of the Indian woman's child into the routine procedures he learned, like Krebs before him, as a soldier, Nick becomes the engine of his own deliverance in more ways than one. As Hemingway's imagery suggests, making camp not only allows Nick to correct the shortsighted

harmony with nature he intuited at the end of “Indian Camp,” but also to achieve the spiritual rebirth Krebs resists in “Soldier’s Home” and the American wife covets in “Cat in the Rain.”

Where his imagery evokes Nick’s simultaneous cultivation of his environment and himself, Hemingway’s subsequent relapse into free indirect discourse reveals that Nick’s efforts have enabled him to achieve the stoic self-assurance without which Krebs and others remain lost after the war. Triggered by the scent of canvas, Nick is not able to say what makes his tent seem so “mysterious and homelike” (115); and, because he has left thinking behind, he ignores the need to do so, compelling the narrator to explain, “Nick was happy as he crawled inside the tent. He had not been unhappy all day” (115). It is here that Nick’s perspective interrupts, “This was different though” (115), indicating that there is more to the affect his return to nature has had upon him than he is able to fully capture in words. As Nick muses to himself, “Now things were done. There had been this to do. Now it was done” (115), his reflections convey the tranquility and reassurance his labors have afforded him in the natural world, and likewise underscore the role his intentionality has played in bringing him to such a euphoric state of mind. When the narrator observes, “He had made his camp. He was settled. Nothing could touch him” a few lines later (115), he not only recapitulates Nick’s sentiments, but in doing so confirms that re-creating his environment has enabled Nick to begin re-creating himself. Even so, the narrator’s subsequent string of reflections—"It was a good place to camp. He was there in the good place. He was in his home where he had made it” (115)—suggest that Nick cannot take *all* the credit, since none of his efforts could have managed to transform his camp into “*the* good place” were it not “*a* good place to begin with (115, emphasis added). In context of his earlier observation that the country was “alive again” (113) en route to his future campsite, Nick’s implicit realization that he has “made” his camp a spiritual sanctuary confirms that the landscape at large serves as a

canvas to the palette supplied by his efforts and the repressed self-consciousness underlying them. Because of the magnified glimpse the narrator provides at his wandering thoughts, Nick appears in a far more pensive light than he is able to see himself after he has finished making camp.

Through Nick's subsequent recollection of his friend and former fishing companion, Hopkins, Hemingway suggests that his protagonist's "need to write" is, like his "need to think," just beneath the surface of his consciousness. Stirred to reminiscence by the coffee he starts brewing at the end of his sacramental feast, Nick unwittingly lapses into a character sketch of Hopkins, mediated by Hemingway's third-person narration. Amidst his reflections on Hopkins's ingenuity and charisma, Nick becomes so burdened by the reality that he and his other fishing buddies "never saw Hopkins again" after he struck oil that he can only conclude, "That was a long time ago on the river" (117). Only after noticing the irony of the coffee's bitter taste does Nick begin to realize that he has begun narrating a story of his own. Between his realizations that the bitter taste "made a good ending to the story" and that "[h]is mind was starting to work" (117), Nick stops short of breaching into a full-blown interior monologue and, in turn, confirms Hemingway's realization that his identification with his protagonist has become too obvious from his narration. Following Nick's ensuing deferral to his need for sleep, Hemingway closes Part I of the story indicating his protagonist shares his need to re-create himself through experience before attempting to do so through fiction.

Although his growing involvement with his protagonist's perspective is evident from the start of Part II, Hemingway capitalizes upon Nick's approach to the river, after finishing a series of ritualized preparations, to offer his most suggestive glimpses yet at the fisherman's suspension between anticipation and anxiety. As Nick sets out, the narrator observes, "[He] felt awkward

and professionally happy with all his equipment hanging from him" (123) in a synthesis of free indirect discourse and imagery that correlates his fishing "equipment" with the equally heavy equipment he carried in the war, indicating that his return to the river has more to do with displacing his wartime experiences than he is willing to admit. Thus, it is no surprise that, when he steps into the river soon thereafter, "It was a shock" (123), for the physical reaction his immersion in the freezing water produces not only recalls the leg injuries he may have suffered back in Chapter VI (49), but in doing so also evokes the psychological shock of combat and its enduring affect upon him. Unlike the shock of the water, that of the first trout striking his line triggers his seamless pivot from anxiety back to anticipation as he holds "the now living rod" (123) parallel to the current, signifying the connection it affords him to the vitality of nature in spite of the death-like chill the waters impart. When Nick stoops, "dipping his right hand into the current" (124) to unhook his catch a few lines later, Hemingway reintroduces another image from "Indian Camp" to contrast the intimations of immortality Nick experienced as a boy, trailing his hand through the comparatively warm water of the lake (14), with the painful awareness of mortality he can no longer avoid as a man, almost half-submerged in the frigid water of the river. Building upon the more explicit lapse into Nick's interior speech he supplied several paragraphs earlier (122), the narrator simulates his protagonist's reaction to the trout's delayed flight after he has let it go—"He's all right, Nick *thought*. He was only tired" (124, emphasis added)—to suggest he has become as immersed in Nick's consciousness as Nick himself is immersed in the river. With his movement into deeper waters before his next strike (124), Nick evokes the narrator's parallel movement deeper into his consciousness as the story progresses.

Rather than belabor Nick's intervening reflections upon the superiority of fishing by himself, Hemingway uses free indirect discourse to launch his protagonist from a state of ecstasy into the beginnings of an interior monologue. In a description loaded with metaphysical significance, the narrator relays how, "with the core of the reel showing, his heart feeling stopped with the excitement" (125), Nick failed to save his line from breaking during his attempt to retrieve his second strike, indicating he has experienced a momentary separation from himself akin to death. Coupled with the narrator's assurances that "[h]e had never seen so big a trout" and that "[t]here was a heaviness, a power not to be held" radiating from him as he jumped (125), the image of Nick's hand shaking juxtaposes the despair of death signified by the broken line against the hope of transcendence embodied by the otherworldly fish's resilience. With his implicit recognition that "[t]he thrill had been too much" and "[h]e felt, vaguely, a little sick" (125), Nick drifts, like Krebs before him, into a state of contemplation approaching an interior monologue, wherein Hemingway's third-person narration becomes partly submerged in the stream of his protagonist's consciousness. At this subtle turning point in the narrative, Nick's rhapsody of reflections culminate in the narrator's brief replacement of the third- with the first-person voice to elide the narrative barrier between Hemingway and his protagonist without indicating that they are identical. That Nick has barely finished marveling, "By God, [the trout] was a big one. By God, he was the biggest one I ever heard of" (125), when the narrator clarifies, a few lines later, "He did not want to rush his sensations any" (125), suggests Hemingway is likewise in no rush to make Nick a co-arbiter of his own introspection. Just as Nick recoils from confronting the fear of death signified by the trout's seeming strength to pull him underwater, so does Hemingway, in turn, refrain from allowing him too much authority over the story he inhabits too soon. By ending the scene as he does, with Nick eager to regain his composure,

Hemingway suggests the enterprise of fishing, like that of writing, is one that requires deliberate action, unhindered by reverie, if it is to impart the inner restoration his protagonist seeks.

Following the extended relapse into first-person narration that Nick's reflections undergo in the paragraphs ahead, Hemingway converts his protagonist's struggle to catch the trout he spied, and the *inner* struggles such an effort signifies, into a preamble for his continued slippage toward an interior monologue at the threshold of the swamp. Having described Nick and the fish as "fighting" each other (127), the narrator suggests through his diction that their physical tug of war visualizes the mental war Nick is waging with himself, and, by extension, that catching the fish will enable Nick to symbolically recapture the part of himself that, like Krebs before him, he lost in the war. Midway through their contest, he specifies, "Nick fought [the trout] against the current" (127--28) to further evoke his protagonist's psychic struggle, against both himself and his place in the normative flow of time the current represents, with his imagery. It is only by testing the limits of his endurance against the unrelenting force of nature, manifest in the current and the trout alike, that he "brings together the two controls he has been exercising, his control over his environment and his control over himself," as Terrell Tebbetts suggests (6). Thus, when he finally does capture the coveted trout, Nick attains a victory over nature that doubles as a victory over himself, confirming his ascent to a higher state of consciousness as he proceeds to contemplate fishing the swamp.

It is only after his protagonist has attained this plane of higher consciousness that Hemingway transposes the physical tug of war Nick won against the trout into the *narrative* tug of war he sparks amidst his rejection of fishing the swamp. Filtered through Hemingway's narration, Nick's conclusion, "It would not be possible to walk through a swamp like that" (128), unspools into a series of reflections whereby his brief resumption of the first-person voice

becomes as entangled in the third-person narrator's arbitrary clarification, "Nick thought" (128), as he fears becoming in the branches of the swamp. In an effort to further reassert his authority over Nick's innermost thoughts, the narrator confides, "He wished he had brought something to read. He felt like reading. He did not feel like going into the swamp" (128), only to undermine his attempt by filtering Nick's feelings through his range of vision perched on the log he has found. As Nick's gaze drifts beyond the fallen cedar separating the river from the swamp, his inclination to substitute the escape reading offers him, as it did Krebs and George before him, from the need to think—and, in his case if not in theirs, the need to write—cascades back into his implicit conflict with the narrator for the final word upon avoiding the swamp. Where it is the third-person narrator who reaffirms, "Nick did not want to go in there now" and *begins* to detail the reasons why (128), it is Nick himself who attempts to conclude, "[I]n the fast deep water, in the half light, the fishing would be tragic. In the swamp fishing was a tragic adventure" (128). Despite the seeming clarity of Nick's reflections, though, the narrator cuts his train of thought short, insisting, "Nick did not want it. He did not want to go down the stream any further today" (128). Without offering any further insights as to *why* "the fishing would be tragic" beyond the inconveniences Nick ascribes to the tangled branches and the deeper water, the third-person narrator implies that the "tragic" fishing Nick fears is a mere fragment of the tragedy that would occur should he drown in such a place. Because Nick himself never acknowledges his lingering fear of death, but instead appears to repress it, the narrator is left to suggest that his deferral to fish the swamp is rooted in his unconscious recognition that doing so would constitute an act of self-disregard suggestive of suicide. Through his re-adoption of the third-person narrator's voice, Hemingway not only interrupts but in doing so also redirects Nick's thinking to prevent him

from likewise drowning in the interior monologue toward which the mere thought of fishing the swamp leads him.

In the story's final scene, Hemingway juxtaposes Nick's gutting of his catch against both the Indian husband's suicide and Doctor Adams's cesarean delivery of the Indian woman's child in "Indian Camp" to evoke the spiritual deliverance his protagonist has achieved in a way that his narration alone cannot. As Tebbetts has observed, Nick's routine execution of the fish displaces the temptation toward suicide underlying his equally conscious delays en route to the river (11), suggesting, like his repeated resort to smoking throughout the story, that he has come dangerously close to sharing the self-slain Indian husband's fate. When the narrator notes, through Nick's eyes, the fish "were both males; long gray-white strips of milt, smooth and clean" (129), he suggests that Nick has likewise displaced the psychic impotence to which his wartime wounds had reduced him, where the Indian husband surrendered to the ineffectuality his wounded leg imposed by taking his own life. Likewise, where Doctor Adams's knife becomes a makeshift instrument in his direction of the birthing process, Nick's becomes a tool by which he unwittingly displaces his deliverance from a state of spiritual death to one of *re*-birth onto the two trout he has caught. Noting, "He *washed* the trout in the stream. When he held them back up in the water they looked like *live* fish" (129, emphasis added), the narrator combines imagery and vocabulary suggestive of baptism—and, by extension, redemption-- to suggest that, because he has become the vessel of his own salvation, Nick is inclined to project his spiritual enlightenment onto everything within his range of vision. As a result, Nick's parting view of the river through the trees inspires the narrator to reflect, "There were plenty of days coming when he could fish the swamp" (129), in a line that translates the anticipation and anxiety Nick experiences throughout the story into the patience and courage to re-confront death on his own

terms, and, by extension, his own time. In his pithy closing line, Hemingway elides the narrative distance between himself and Nick to correlate the transcendental self-reliance his protagonist gains by re-mastering the art of fishing with the catharsis he himself had achieved by developing the repertoire of narrative voices and imagistic techniques he would continue to master through the remainder of his literary career.

By the end of "Big Two-Hearted River," Hemingway's use of imagery as a catalyst for his protagonist's mental reflections correlates the vindication of his writing style manifest in *In Our Time* with the symbolic redemption of his and his fellow expatriates' earlier naivety that Nick ultimately attains. When he enters the river, Nick symbolically arrives at the stream of his own consciousness, wherein he undergoes a baptism into a higher state of self-awareness than any of the expatriates before him, in the latter half of the collection. Perfecting the technique he had begun experimenting with in "Soldier's Home" and "Cat in the Rain," Hemingway uses free indirect discourse to sharpen the implications of his imagery and bring Nick's progress toward self-restoration into increasingly deeper focus as "Big Two-Hearted River" unfolds. Together with the careful balance between his observations and his corresponding mental states that the third-person narration strikes, Nick's displacement of his inner conflict into his routines and his experience fishing the river suggests that the division from himself the story's title evokes is one that Hemingway intends him to resolve as much on his fellow expatriates' account as on his own. Just as Nick's recovery of himself on the river fulfills the implicit need for renewal in "Soldier's Home" and "Cat in the Rain," so does it redeem him from the physical and psychological battering he has taken in the war since his initial departure from home in "The Battler." By juxtaposing the thematic parallels Nick's dilemma evokes against the *stylistic* parallels the story's blend of imagery and free indirect discourse produces, Hemingway indicates

that he has discovered his voice as a writer in much the same way that Nick has *re*-discovered his courage as a fisherman—not in spite of his experiences, but because of them.

Conclusion

As the final story of *In Our Time*, "Big Two-Hearted River" brings the twofold evolution of Hemingway's craft and his attitudes toward subjects as timeless as fatherhood, miscommunication, and trauma into full focus through the lens of fiction. By reorienting the collection's focus upon Nick Adams to a greater extent than he had in "Cross-Country Snow," in "Big Two-Hearted River" Hemingway reimagines the same character whose perspective dominated the first five stories in context of the struggles with homecoming, marriage, and, above all, parenthood, that his surrogate protagonists have failed to face throughout the latter half of the collection. In the end it is through Nick's eyes that Hemingway brings the resolution of the emotional and existential crises overhanging his stories, from "Indian Camp," to "Soldier's Home," to "Cat in the Rain," and beyond, into sharper focus.

More than his work in any of the intervening twelve stories, Hemingway's tailoring of form to content in "Big Two-Hearted River" casts the meditation on birth and death with which he opens the collection in a whole new light. Where his subtle shifts in perspective indicate that the *immorality* of the Indian husband's suicide, like the *immortality* Nick later intuits, is far from settled in "Indian Camp," Hemingway's experiment with weaving his protagonist's perspective into the fabric of his imagery in "Big Two-Hearted River" suggests that, in the end, Nick becomes the arbiter of his own morality by reconciling himself to the natural world and his place in it. Although he cannot answer the existential questions his experiences in "Indian Camp"

provoked any better than his father can, Nick does not need to, for it is through his actions, not his words, that he achieves an inner peace surpassing his finite range of understanding.

Having streamlined his narration's attention to his protagonist's inner conflict, Hemingway suggests Nick has succeeded where Krebs failed, back in "Soldier's Home," to find a new way of living in the postwar world. In "Soldier's Home" Hemingway relies on free indirect discourse to correlate Krebs's inability to overcome his wartime experiences with a crisis as spiritual as it is psychological. By contrast, in "Big Two-Hearted River" he uses free indirect discourse to indicate that Nick's spiritual rebirth from his tent and corresponding baptism into a new awareness of his limitations on the river have enabled him to leave his struggle against his wartime trauma behind and complete the symbolic homecoming Krebs cannot. Rather than allude to wartime trauma only to negate it, as he does in "Soldier's Home," in "Big Two-Hearted River" Hemingway uses Nick's physical progress through the wilderness to evoke his progress reassessing the damage to his psyche along the way.

Above all, Hemingway's careful integration of his protagonist's perspective with the landscape he inhabits suggests that Nick has realized the intersection of his needs and desires in ways the American wife had only begun to back in "Cat in the Rain." While his reaction to his breakup with Marjorie in "The End of Something" and "The Three-Day Blow" confirms Nick is no stranger to ambivalence in the first half of the collection, it is the American wife's rejection of ambivalence and yearning for inner renewal that prefigure Nick's quest for mental and spiritual restoration in the finale of *In Our Time*. Like the American wife before him, Nick begins the story as unable to express the needs indicated by his line of vision and corresponding interior speech as he is unwilling to watch his life pass idly by. Throughout the story his actions and corresponding mental *reactions* offer a fuller view of the need he shares with the American

wife—to escape his ennui and begin to live deliberately again[iv]—than any of the lines he speaks aloud. Determined to leave "the need for thinking, the need to write," and his various "other needs" behind (112), Nick takes the American wife's introspection a step further with his implicit recognition that such needs are not in fact needs, but *desires* indicative of his overarching need for catharsis. As Hemingway's use of free indirect discourse to unravel the psychological needs implicit in his imagery suggests, Nick achieves a symbolic rebirth, as much on the American wife's behalf as on his own, by allowing his thoughts to flow from his actions, in lieu of his actions from his thoughts.

In more ways than one, Hemingway's conclusion of *In Our Time* with "Big Two-Hearted River" supplies a new testament to the parallels between his characters' understated emotional complexity and his own. To redeem the implicit deliberations and self-doubts he has channeled through his characters, Hemingway converts Nick into an everyman figure, whose alleviation of self-consciousness through action ensures his realization of the inner peace for which Krebs, the American wife, and others have been yearning in the latter half of the collection. Thus, it is Nick's transcendental homecoming that transposes the alienation threatening to overwhelm Hemingway's characters throughout *In Our Time* into the means of inner renewal. Without the distraction of companions, Nick's experiences on the river enable him to externalize his internal anxieties and fulfill his need for closure in a way that suggests Hemingway's experience finishing his first short story collection has likewise enabled him to filter his anxieties through fiction and gain new perspective on his emotional responsibilities to himself and others. By displacing the progress of his self-reformation onto Nick and his other characters, Hemingway offers his readers a view of himself dependent upon their attention to the evolution of his prose style throughout *In Our Time*.

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Endnotes

[i] In his essay "Hamlet And His Problems" Eliot defines an "objective correlative" as "a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked."

[ii] In his entry upon "Free Indirect Discourse" Gunn distinguishes between the "single-voice model" advocated by narrative theorists such as Ann Banfield and Dorrit Cohn and the "dual voice model" propounded by theorists such as Roy Pascal and Dominick LaCapra. For the purposes of my argument--that Hemingway uses varying degrees of free indirect discourse, together with his imagery, to filter his resistance to the emotional responsibilities of adulthood through his fiction—the dual voice model supplies an ideal frame to consider the evolution of Hemingway's technique in "Soldier's Home."

[iii] John Hadley Nicanor Hemingway, born Oct. 10, 1923

[iv] In *Walden* Thoreau maintains, "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover I had not lived."