

# **Ernest Hemingway's Lonely Men:**

Negotiations of Masculine Identities through Loneliness in

*The First Forty-Nine Stories* (1938)

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## Abstract in Norwegian

Denne masteroppgaven fokuserer på ensomme menn i et utvalg av Ernest Hemingways noveller fra samlingen *The First Forty-Nine Stories* (1938). Utgangspunktet for oppgaven er å ville forstå de bakenforliggende årsaker til ensomheten som kjennetegner mesteparten av menn i Hemingways fortellinger. Oppgaven viser at opplevelsen av mannlig ensomhet i novellene er en konsekvens av ytre forventninger til maskulinitet. Novellene leses ved bruk av maskulinitetsteori og begrep fra psykologisk teori om ensomhet, med oppmerksomheten rettet mot den samtid de er situert i, både innad i fortellingene og utad i forfatterens egen. Ved å studere disse fremstillingene på bakgrunn av den historiske konteksten de ble til i, trer det amerikanske samfunnets forventninger til sosiale aktører, og Hemingways implisitte argument angående disses konsekvenser for ensomme menn, tydeligere fram. Slik synliggjør oppgaven et viktig samfunnskritisk aspekt ved Hemingways noveller. Videre bidrar oppgaven til forståelsen av ensomhet, gjennom dens utforskning av sammenhengen mellom ensomme menn og samfunnets forventninger. Men, på et mer fundamentalt nivå etterspør novellene en forståelse av en maskulinitet som gjenspeiler de eksistensialistiske utfordringene datidens sosiale omveltninger skapte. Oppgaven er delt inn i tre kapitler; det første omhandler unge menn, det andre veteraner fra første verdenskrig, og det siste aldrende menn. Denne systematiseringen tydeliggjør forskjellene mellom generasjonene, samt tidligere erfaringers betydning for mennenes opplevelse av, og strategier for å hankses med, ensomhet.

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## Introduction

This thesis offers a perspective on a selection of Ernest Hemingway's short stories from the collection *The First Forty-Nine Stories* (1938) that combines recent findings from masculinity studies and studies on loneliness. Applying findings from these fields on the short stories allows us to see more clearly Hemingway's argument about the masculine ideals of twentieth-century America and their implications for a gendered condition of loneliness. Hemingway explores, through his short stories, a variety of men in their loneliness. He argues for the complexity of the masculine experience of this feeling, and shows how men in different situations in life, and across age groups, experience it. In the stories, the loneliness felt by the male characters is caused by the tension between the realization (and perpetual reminders) of their existential isolation, on the one hand, and the gender roles that the modern American society requires of them as men, on the other hand. All of the short stories that will be discussed in this thesis present a crisis in which the male characters are confronted with the chaotic nature of reality, and the fact of their existential isolation in this world. Some of Hemingway's men are unable to deal with this knowledge, and consequently try to live in denial of it, either by adhering to society's expectations or by recklessly escaping their responsibilities. As these solutions cannot keep them from worrying about their existential dread, however, they all become lonely. Those who do try to deal with their existential isolation live according to a code of behavior, but this way of living contradicts the masculine ideals and gender expectations in the American society, which makes them outcasts. Consequently, the choice facing Hemingway's male characters is to be outcasts, and bear to live with the awareness of their existential isolation; or to compromise their integrity in order to meet the expectations of society and live in denial of their existential dread – lonely either way. Chapter One is focused on Hemingway's young men and the stories' description of how

American men at an early age are initiated to a life in loneliness. In Chapter Two, I discuss descriptions of returning soldiers from World War I who have been forced by the brutality of the war to accept their own existential isolation, and their consequent struggle to reintegrate into their American communities. An exploration of this group of characters makes explicit the dilemma men face with regards to dealing with their loneliness. Chapter Three deals with Hemingway's aging men, and how their response to their existential dread suggests a new, more realistic approach to a masculine identity. An exploration of the theme of gendered loneliness across the selected stories offers added insight not only into the author's critique of the American society of his time, but also, more specifically, into his reflections on how the experience of loneliness itself can cause men to create a new masculine identity that is better equipped for dealing with their existential dead.

Some concepts need to be clarified before a close reading of the stories can be carried out. First, I will briefly discuss loneliness as a concept, with a specific attention to psychiatrist Irvin D. Yalom's definition of the concept existential isolation. Next, I will turn to concepts of masculinity, introducing the hegemonic masculine ideal of the early twentieth-century America as well as the relationship between masculine and militarist ideals. Finally, I will discuss their relevance to a close reading of Hemingway's short stories, and how they help reveal his implicit critique of American society.

This thesis is in dialogue with the tradition of Hemingway criticism, and engages with readings proposed by respected critics like Philip Young, Steven K. Hoffman, Earl Rovit, and others. Although the Hemingway criticism has mentioned the nervousness and anxiety-ridden nature of many of the Hemingway men, the explicit connection to gendered loneliness with its aspect of cultural critique, and the stories' ultimate embrace of loneliness is a new perspective that this thesis will address. The thesis engages with Young's Code hero, but draws its implications further, and in a new direction – toward a reading of it as Hemingway's

proposition for a new form of masculinity. In this way, the thesis contributes, not only to the extensive Hemingway criticism canon, but also to the understanding of loneliness as an experience that is conditioned by its social context. My reading reveals the consequences that the specific context of post-WWI America has for its men, as Hemingway presents them in his short stories.

## Defining Loneliness

Loneliness is a phenomenon that is difficult to identify, because its most defining characteristic is the subjective experience of feeling lonely. As the circumstances of the individual experiences differ, the concept of loneliness is often described in close relation to the situation that is assumed to be the cause, such as being alone or showing signs of being alienated or estranged from society. However, the relationship between one's situation and feelings of loneliness is sometimes counterintuitive, where situations that appear like loneliness may not necessarily be experienced as such, and vice versa. This is often the case in Hemingway's fiction, where characters who are alone, like Nick Adams in "Big Two-Hearted River," are content with their situation. Contrarily, men in the company of others (except for a close male companion), like Harold Krebs in "Soldier's Home" or Jack Brennan in "Fifty Grand" exhibit signs of restlessness, worry, or sadness. The philosopher Lars Svendsen emphasizes the subjective experience in his book *A Philosophy of Loneliness*, where he describes loneliness as "a sense of hurt or sadness, a perception of oneself as isolated or alone, and a perceived lack of closeness to others".<sup>1</sup> Loneliness is, in other words, an unwanted feeling, and thus distinct from solitude, which is both a willed and welcome isolation from others. Furthermore, Svendsen's phrasing "perception of oneself as isolated" indicates that it grows out of an individual evaluation of the quality and quantity of one's

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<sup>1</sup> Lars Fr. H. Svendsen, *A Philosophy of Loneliness* (Oslo: Univeritetsforlaget, 2015), 18.

relationship with others, where these do not meet the standard of one's personal ideals.<sup>2</sup> This aspect reveals that people can feel lonely, in spite of having companionship. Moreover, for a person to evaluate his or her relationships positively, he or she needs to feel understood by others. This entails that his or her values are to some degree reflected by a few others, if not by the society at large. According to Svendsen, feeling lonely is an indicator of social competence, as "only a person who can exhibit friendship and love can feel lonely".<sup>3</sup> This is because loneliness is a reaction against a lack of social stimulation, and this reaction indicates both a will and desire for social contact. Svendsen further argues that the feeling of hurt distinguishes loneliness from alienation. This is because while a person may not be aware of his or her own alienation, the emotional aspect of loneliness makes the awareness an inherent aspect of it.<sup>4</sup> Thus, loneliness is described as distinct from alienation, where a person who feels alienated may not feel lonely, but a person who feels lonely may also feel alienated from society or others. What is characteristic of loneliness is that people who experience it long to be a part of a larger whole, but feel that they fail to do so.

There are many reasons for feeling lonely, and any person (who does not have anti-social tendencies) will experience it from time to time. This can be a consequence of exterior as well as interior circumstances.<sup>5</sup> Svendsen categorizes loneliness into three types; transient, situational and chronic, which indicate the extensiveness and seriousness of the feeling.<sup>6</sup> Transient loneliness is a natural, fleeting feeling of loneliness that occurs with everyone in certain situations for reasons that can both be explained and not.<sup>7</sup> Situational loneliness lasts for a longer period of time, and comes as a consequence of an exterior circumstance, which can range from circumstances that one has some control over, like moving alone to a new

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<sup>2</sup> Svendsen, *A Philosophy of Loneliness*, 35.

<sup>3</sup> Svendsen, *A Philosophy of Loneliness*, 72.

<sup>4</sup> Svendsen, *A Philosophy of Loneliness*, 14.

<sup>5</sup> Svendsen, *A Philosophy of Loneliness*, 19.

<sup>6</sup> Svendsen, *A Philosophy of Loneliness*, 28.

<sup>7</sup> Svendsen, *A Philosophy of Loneliness*, 28.



place, to circumstances one has no control over, like a personal loss.<sup>8</sup> The chronic form of loneliness is a stable form, which may or may not have started with situated loneliness, but at this point has its foundation on interior factors.<sup>9</sup>

The Hemingway men that are investigated in this thesis show signs of this last type of loneliness. The interior factors that cause them to feel lonely are that they are estranged from society; that they cannot deal with their existential isolation; or a combination of the two. One indicator that reveals the loneliness of some of these men, primarily veterans and aging men, is that they are not understood by anyone in their social context because their values are different from those of society in general. These men have created a new set of values that diverge from that of the society because they have been confronted with their existential isolation, which causes them to see themselves and society in a new light. Another indicator of loneliness in the Hemingway men is their obsession with achieving a form of self-realization, which the following presentation of existential isolation shows is a lonely endeavor. As loneliness is a concept that describes a subjective experience, it can describe the feelings of people in many different situations, who react to this feeling in a multitude of different ways. In order to reveal the similar and diverging tendencies within and between social groups, this thesis is divided into three chapters that discuss young men, veterans, and aging men respectively. This division, moreover, reveals Hemingway's argument for the significance of the men's situations, generations and past experiences with regards to their relation to their existential dread. Through their difference in age, previous experiences, and situation, Hemingway reveals the persistence and extensiveness of loneliness, and implicitly criticizes the American society of the time for this seemingly inevitable feeling that men experience.

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<sup>8</sup> Svendsen, *A Philosophy of Loneliness*, 28.

<sup>9</sup> Svendsen, *A Philosophy of Loneliness*, 29.

One reason behind the chronic loneliness experienced by the male characters in Hemingway's short fiction is their latent existential dread. This thesis employs Irvin D. Yalom's terms and definitions to describe the characters' psychological response to their existential dread. As I will establish, this is necessary because the world of Hemingway's fiction is, according to William Barrett "no less than a microcosm of the existential universe as defined by Martin Heidegger and the existentialist philosophers who came before and after him."<sup>10</sup> This quote is taken from literary critic Steven K. Hoffman's chapter "'Nada' and the Clean, Well-Lighted Place." In his discussion, Hoffman uses Hemingway's expression "nada" from "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place" to establish the existential reality that permeates the world of the short stories. In relation to this, he argues that "as literary artist, Hemingway was less concerned with speculative metaphysics than with modes of practical conduct within certain *a priori* conditions."<sup>11</sup> My reading of the short stories is in accord with this understanding of Hemingway's fiction. Consequently, rather than delving into a discussion of the implications of metaphysical questions that may arise from the stories, I will employ a psychological perspective to understand the motivations behind the character's behavior. To this end, this thesis will use Yalom's psychological terms to reveal behavioral patterns in- and parallels between Hemingway's men. In his book *Existential Psychotherapy*, Yalom describes existential isolation as one of a person's "ultimate concerns."<sup>12</sup> His discussion of existential psychotherapy describes the field's main emphasis to be on the "conflict that flows from the individual's confrontation with the givens of existence."<sup>13</sup> These "givens," what he terms the "ultimate concerns," are what we encounter if "we 'bracket' the everyday world" and "reflect

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<sup>10</sup> Steven K. Hoffman, "'Nada' and the Clean, Well-Lighted Place: The Unity of Hemingway's Short Fiction" in *Modern Critical Views: Ernest Hemingway*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1985), 175.

<sup>11</sup> Hoffman, "'Nada' and the Clean, Well-Lighted Place," 175.

<sup>12</sup> Irvin D. Yalom, *Existential Psychotherapy* (USA: Yalom Family Trust, 1980), 8.

<sup>13</sup> Yalom, *Existential Psychotherapy*, 8.

deeply upon our ‘situation’ in the world, upon our existence.”<sup>14</sup> In Hemingway’s short stories, the male characters are confronted with these givens through experiencing the chaotic and brutal nature of reality in various ways. This claim is supported by Hoffman, who argues, in his discussion of this reality, that “all of the major short story characters [...] experience [nada] in one of its multiple guises.”<sup>15</sup> Moreover, he claims that the “central crisis” of the characters in their respective stories is the theme around which all of the short stories evolve. My subsequent analyses concur with this reading, and are focused on how male characters respond to these fundamental crises. In this way, I seek to both validate and develop further Hoffman’s assertion that the stories are “not about *nada per se* but the various available human responses to it.”<sup>16</sup> Yalom defines existential isolation as “the extensive exploration that leads us to the recognition that we are finite, we will die, we are free and cannot escape our freedom.”<sup>17</sup> The inevitability of death, and the impossibility to die for- or with another makes dying “at the most fundamental level [...] the most lonely human experience.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, a confrontation with death causes a person to realize his or her own fundamental isolation from others. One consequence of this recognition is the further realization of the isolated subjective experience that each individual has, which cannot fully be shared with others. A confrontation with one’s own freedom also leads to the realization of one’s existential isolation through the “awareness of the universe’s cosmic indifference.”<sup>19</sup> Therefore, Yalom argues, “deep loneliness is inherent in the act of self-creation,” because a person’s responsibility for her own life means to be alone.<sup>20</sup> Thus, he connects both a reflection upon our death and our ultimate freedom to the recognition of our existential isolation. This entails that various experiences can lead to a confrontation with one’s existential isolation. Hoffman

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<sup>14</sup> Yalom, *Existential Psychotherapy*, 8.

<sup>15</sup> Hoffman, “‘Nada’ and the Clean, Well-Lighted Place,” 174.

<sup>16</sup> Hoffman, “‘Nada’ and the Clean, Well-Lighted Place,” 174.

<sup>17</sup> Yalom, *Existential Psychotherapy*, 353.

<sup>18</sup> Yalom, *Existential Psychotherapy*, 356.

<sup>19</sup> Yalom, *Existential Psychotherapy*, 357.

<sup>20</sup> Yalom, *Existential Psychotherapy*, 357.

emphasizes this in his claim, “the death or the imminent threat of death need not be literally present to signal [a character’s] encounter with *nada*.”<sup>21</sup> Moreover, after revealing how *nada* takes form in a number of the short stories he asserts that “regardless of its specific incarnation, *nada* is always a dark presence which upsets individual equilibrium and threatens to overwhelm the self.”<sup>22</sup> As Yalom describes existential isolation as a “vale of loneliness” into which “a confrontation with death and with freedom [inevitably leads],” the male characters’ encounter with “*nada*” therefore reveals their state of loneliness.<sup>23</sup> Yalom further argues that existential isolation is one of the “ultimate concerns” that cause conflict in individuals, and that this conflict is “the tension between our awareness of our absolute isolation and our wish for contact, for protection, our wish to be a part of a larger whole.”<sup>24</sup> As my close reading of the selected stories will show, the Hemingway men deal with this realization in different ways, and the majority of his young male characters respond by trying to live in denial of this knowledge.

### Men and masculinities

The reasons behind and the experience of loneliness may be gendered – connected to the gender of the individual or the group in question, and the particular conditions and constructions of gender that are prevalent at the time. In order to better understand this, a coherent set of terms from masculinity studies is helpful. Some important features in the short stories that this perspective can unveil are the ways in which the male characters experience their own masculinity, the hegemonic masculine ideal of contemporary American society, and the loneliness of not adhering to society’s expectations. This discussion reveals the other

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<sup>21</sup> Hoffman, “’Nada’ and the Clean, Well-Lighted Place,” 176.

<sup>22</sup> Hoffman, “’Nada’ and the Clean, Well-Lighted Place,” 176.

<sup>23</sup> Yalom, *Existential Psychotherapy*, 356.

<sup>24</sup> Yalom, *Existential Psychotherapy*, 9.

interior factor that causes men in the short stories to experience a chronic form of loneliness, namely feeling like outsiders to their societies.

Judith K. Gardiner claims that the biggest accomplishment of feminist theory in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the identification of “the concept of gender as a social construction.”<sup>25</sup> Through this recognition, genders became characterized as “cultural groupings” that themselves consist of sub-groupings.<sup>26</sup> This understanding implies that attributes associated with each of the genders are culturally distinct, and may therefore vary from society to society, as well as within the gender group itself. In elaboration of this, Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett present the identification with one’s gender as a social performance where the goal is to be socially accepted:

Because individuals do not have biologically fixed identities, any sense of self can only come about through working to achieve a sense of ‘belonging’ in the social world. However, ‘belonging’ is not an automatic process, and so for most men masculine performance is central to achieving entry to, and being accepted within, any particular ‘community’ of men.<sup>27</sup>

This implies that a reluctance of performing a ‘masculine’ identity would lead to a man not being socially accepted within a community of men. This definition is a reaction against the conception that genders are static and biologically “deterministic.”<sup>28</sup> However, this explanation is lacking in that it does not address the relationship between the genders. Øyvind G. Holter argues that although gender is performance, it is also more – it is a system that generates “a *framework of meaning*, containing relations within which the sex of the person is

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<sup>25</sup> Judith K. Gardiner, “Men, Masculinities, and Feminist Theory,” in *Handbook of Studies on Men & Masculinities*, ed. Michael S. Kimmel, Jeff R. Hearn, and Raewyn W. Connell (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2005), 2.

<sup>26</sup> Gardiner, “Men, Masculinities, and Feminist Theory,” 2.

<sup>27</sup> Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett, *The Masculinities Reader* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), 20.

<sup>28</sup> Whitehead and Barrett, *The Masculinities Reader*, 11.

made socially relevant.”<sup>29</sup> One such relation is patriarchy.<sup>30</sup> In adapting to their genders through masculine (and feminine) performance, social actors not only achieve ‘belonging,’ but “an adaptation to power.”<sup>31</sup> This is because “a gender system, in this view, is a response to a more or less patriarchal structure.”<sup>32</sup> In their attempt to belong socially, individuals adhere to the expectations of society, thus indirectly adhering to the patriarchal structures as well. However, Holter emphasizes, “gender is a system of meaning that is distinguishable from patriarchy as a structure of power.”<sup>33</sup> This is because the understanding of gender should not be “reduced to stratification or the power dimension.”<sup>34</sup> Yet, both patriarchy and the difference in gender roles reveal that the genders are negotiated and understood in relation to each other. As I will discuss presently, in the period after the First World War, this relation was renegotiated with, among others, the social empowerment of women. The short stories reveal that this causes some struggle for the male characters, especially veterans who return to a changed society where women have become empowered through the war. I will return in more detail to this issue in Chapter Two.

With this basis of understanding gender, Whitehead and Barrett stress the importance of “recognizing differences between men, and thus seeing masculinities as plural, changing, and historically informed around dominant discourses or ideologies of masculinism.”<sup>35</sup> They assert, in dialogue with Gardiner and the field of gender studies in general, that the defining component in the process of developing one’s identity is the context within which one lives and grows up. Consequently, an inquiry into the discourses and ideologies of a culture during

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<sup>29</sup> Øystein G. Holter, “Social Theories for Researching Men and Masculinities: Direct Gender Hierarchies and Structural Inequality,” in *Handbook of Studies on Men & Masculinities*, ed. Michael S. Kimmel, Jeff R. Hearn, and Raewyn W. Connell (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2005), 7.

<sup>30</sup> Holter, “Social Theories for Researching Men and Masculinities,” 7.

<sup>31</sup> Holter, “Social Theories for Researching Men and Masculinities,” 7.

<sup>32</sup> Holter, “Social Theories for Researching Men and Masculinities,” 7.

<sup>33</sup> Holter, “Social Theories for Researching Men and Masculinities,” 7.

<sup>34</sup> Holter, “Social Theories for Researching Men and Masculinities,” 7.

<sup>35</sup> Whitehead and Barrett, *The Masculinities Reader*, 15.

a certain time is imperative for understanding the masculine performance of individuals that belonged to this culture.

The historical and cultural contexts that are relevant for understanding the masculine ideologies and discourses in Hemingway's short stories are both the time and place in which the stories are set, and the time and place in which they were written. The stories are set approximately between the early twentieth-century and the late nineteen-thirties – before, during, and after the First World War. In the period before the War, the stories are mainly set in Michigan. During and after the war, the stories are set in America, as well as in various countries in Europe. Hemingway wrote the stories that are in *The First Forty-Nine Stories* as an expatriate, in Paris and in Spain, from the early twenties to nineteen thirty-eight. Given that the stories were written after the war, the war experience is an important factor in all of the stories, including those that are set in the time before.

The early twentieth century was riddled with social unrest. As the editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, Michael Levenson, sums up in the introduction of the book, the “twentieth century would be the epoch of crisis, real and manufactured, physical and metaphysical, material and symbolic.”<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, he points to “the catastrophe of World War I, and, before that, the labor struggles, the emergence of feminism, the race for empire,” as causes for these crises.<sup>37</sup> Historian Paul Fussell focuses on the effect of the war, and argues that the social crisis led to the dramatic difference in the public imagination and its discourses between the period before and after the First World War. In his book *The Great War and Modern Memory* he claims that “for the modern imagination that last summer [summer of 1914] has assumed the status of a permanent symbol for anything innocently but

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<sup>36</sup> Michael Levenson, *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 4.

<sup>37</sup> Michael Levenson, *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 4.

irrecoverably lost.”<sup>38</sup> The pre-war period is therefore associated with innocence. Fussell further argues that this innocence, juxtaposed with the unprecedented brutality of the war, gave rise to “one dominating form of modern understanding.”<sup>39</sup> This understanding “is essentially ironic; and [...] originates largely in the application of mind and memory to the events of the Great War.”<sup>40</sup> There is irony to every war, because the cause and the means are in disproportionate relation to each other – the death toll does not reflect the necessity or the nobility of the cause.<sup>41</sup> Nonetheless, he argues, other wars cannot compare to the Great War, as it is “more ironic than any before or since. It was a hideous embarrassment to the prevailing Meliorist myth which had dominated the public consciousness for a century. It reversed the Idea of Progress.”<sup>42</sup> The shock of the war was augmented by the innocence and lack of cynicism of the period before, and this innocence is reflected in the language of the period. One indicator of this is the use of unembarrassed high diction. This diction, Fussell argues, reflects the comparatively “static world” of the time, “where the values appeared stable and where the meanings of abstractions seemed permanent and reliable.”<sup>43</sup> Characteristically, we can find this kind of language, with the use of words such as “glory” and “honor” in speeches held by Woodrow Wilson encouraging young men to enlist in the war, and justifying the war itself to society. The diction and style of Hemingway is directly reactionary to this kind of language. As Lionel Trilling contends, Hemingway saw this form of diction as characteristic of the time, and associated part of the terror of the war with the countless words of encouragement and glorification.<sup>44</sup> Against this style, which Hemingway perceived as false and dulling, he developed his literary style stripped of “feelings” and of

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<sup>38</sup> Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 25.

<sup>39</sup> Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 38.

<sup>40</sup> Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 38.

<sup>41</sup> Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 8.

<sup>42</sup> Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 8.

<sup>43</sup> Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 22.

<sup>44</sup> Lionel Trilling, “Hemingway and His Critics,” in *Modern Critical Views: Ernest Hemingway*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1985), 10.



“rationalism.”<sup>45</sup> Even after the war, the American society tried desperately to “return to normalcy,” as was the campaign slogan of president Warren G. Harding (1921-23), by embracing a “willful amnesia that permeated American culture in the 1920s.”<sup>46</sup> As the thesis will show, implications of Fussell’s argument regarding the ironic perspective vary between Hemingway’s short stories. One common feature, however, is the ironic tone that contrasts and exposes the falseness of either the general perspective of the society or the perspective of men who are in a state of self-delusion.

The modern perspective also created a new understanding of masculinity, which, as Michael S. Kimmel asserts, men at the time perceived as being threatened. In his book *Manhood in America*, Kimmel portrays the different masculine ideals that have been prevalent in America. The experienced threat relates to the restricting and limited conception of masculinity that they inherited from the period before the war, which the economic hardships and social changes made difficult to live up to. Some masculine ideals of the pre-WWI period were the “self-making” man, the “heroic toiler,” and the “breadwinner.”<sup>47</sup> Kimmel refers to sociologist David Riesman, who in his study *The Lonely Crowd* “discerned the shift in identities and ethics from the ‘inner directed’ nineteenth-century man [...] to the twentieth-century ‘other directed’ man.” Whereas the ‘inner directed’ man had “fixed principles by which he grounded his identity,” the ‘other-directed’ man was “animated by a need to fit in.”<sup>48</sup> In an iteration of Riesman’s argument, Kimmel asserts that the difference between the nineteenth-century man and twentieth-century man is “reflected in the terms men used to describe themselves.”<sup>49</sup> The former had understood manhood as contrastive to childhood, with “the capacity for autonomy and responsibility” as distinctive qualities from

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<sup>45</sup> Trilling, “Hemingway and His Critics,” 12.

<sup>46</sup> Steven Trout, “Where Do We Go From Here?: Ernest Hemingway’s ‘Soldier’s Home’ and American Veterans of World War I,” *the Hemingway Review* 20, no.1 (Fall 2000), 16.

<sup>47</sup> Michael S. Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 80.

<sup>48</sup> Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 81.

<sup>49</sup> Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 81

childhood. The twentieth-century men, however, replaced the term manhood with masculinity, “which referred to a set of behavioral traits and attitudes that were contrasted now with a new opposite, femininity.”<sup>50</sup> One reason behind this shift is the dichotomy that the separation of the masculine and feminine sphere created. The ideal of separate spheres was a popular cultural ideal during the pre-WWI period. It derived from, and has itself inspired, suggestive nineteenth-century biological and psychological theories on the supposed inherent differences between the sexes.<sup>51</sup> Such theories maintain that men’s inherent “active and independent” qualities make them apt for the public sphere, while the contrary qualities of women make them more equipped for being at home.<sup>52</sup> This clear, structural separation of the genders contributed to create a culturally dependent differentiation between the genders, where the masculine is defined by what is distinctly not feminine.

Another reason for the shift in the American masculine ideal came with the economic and social changes in the post-war era. These changes made the ideal of men as breadwinner unattainable, which further destabilized the belief in the “fixed principals” of manhood that the prior generation had relied on.<sup>53</sup> Kimmel asserts that “the Depression had forced many men to abandon their faith in the marketplace as certain to confirm their manhood.”<sup>54</sup> In the mid-thirties, a fourth of American men were out of work.<sup>55</sup> This was emasculating to many, as “unemployed men lost status with their wives and children and saw themselves as impotent patriarchs.”<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, “with their economic power eliminated, their status as head of the household [...] eroded and with it their sense of manhood.”<sup>57</sup> Even to those who were working, the salary was low, and consequently, the ideal of being a breadwinner was an

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<sup>50</sup> Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 81

<sup>51</sup> Michele Adams and Scott Coltrane, “Boys and Men in Families: The Domestic Production of Gender, Power, and Privilege,” in *Handbook of Studies on Men & Masculinities*, ed. Michael S. Kimmel, Jeff R. Hearn, and Raewyn W. Connell (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2005), 3

<sup>52</sup> Adams and Coltrane, “Boys and Men in Families,” 3

<sup>53</sup> Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 81

<sup>54</sup> Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 136

<sup>55</sup> Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 128

<sup>56</sup> Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 132

<sup>57</sup> Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 133

uncertain source for defining one's masculinity. Therefore, the focus of masculine ideal shifted from the exterior, public success, to the interior qualities of men. This new definition of the masculine was also a response to the fear of feminization in the "masculine sphere," where women came to occupy all parts of society. Some men therefore saw the "chief problem [...] to be women, both at work and at home, as coworker, as mother, and as symbol. [...] Work itself was seen as increasingly feminized."<sup>58</sup> However, the work in and of itself "was an increasingly unreliable proving ground, more the domain of the dull and the routine," where the machines took the place of much of the manual labor. Sherwood Anderson wrote in his tract *Perhaps Women* that "modern man is lost, 'impotent' before the machine, which dominates industrial production."<sup>59</sup> Already in the twenties, before the Depression set in, the social and technical changes demanded a new understanding of masculinity, which was founded on interior qualities rather than the exterior circumstances. As Kimmel points out, "masculinity could be observed in specific traits and attitudes, specific behaviors and perspectives."<sup>60</sup> The Hemingway men are situated in this new masculine context, where they struggle to affirm their masculinity for themselves and their communities. The nature of some of these interior qualities composing the new masculine ideal will be discussed below.

In the years leading up to the First World War, and also during the war for the American society at large, military ideals corresponded to a great degree with interior qualities that affirmed men's masculine identity. This is partly due to the cultural romanticizing of militaristic ideals that the pro-war propaganda inspired at the time. So far, I have shown how gender is a framework of meaning, and that masculine ideals are culturally and historically dependent. Although this is true, studies on masculinities have also shown that there are some prevailing, universal aspects in the masculinity concept. The intersection between militarism and masculinity, which Paul Higate and John Hopton discuss in their

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<sup>58</sup> Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 129

<sup>59</sup> Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 129

<sup>60</sup> Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 136

chapter “War, Militarism and Masculinities,” and Stephen McVeigh and Nicola Cooper discuss in the introduction to the book *Men After War*, is one such aspect. In their introduction, McVeigh and Cooper assert that “writers who have developed analyses of masculinity have suggested that there exists a prevailing masculine identity,” and that this “hegemonic masculinity [...] is characterized by precisely the same sort of qualities, traits and values that are prized by military institutions.”<sup>61</sup> Higate and Hopton second this statement in their chapter in *Handbook of Studies on Men & Masculinities*, where they discuss the relationship between militarism and masculinities. They claim that their discussion is of universal relevance because “the nexus linking war, militarism and masculinities has remained an enduring and consistent feature of societies and their cultures across time,” and that therefore, the themes discussed in the chapter “have a strong resonance with the universal feature of armed forces more widely.”<sup>62</sup> Their discussion in dialogue with McVeigh and Cooper, shed light on the specific context of the masculine ideal in the short stories by Hemingway. Higate and Hopton argue that there is a reciprocally influential relationship between militarism and masculinity, where militarism is “the celebration of military culture in national politics and popular culture.”<sup>63</sup> This entails that militaristic ideals and values color the understanding of masculinity, and vice versa. To support this claim, they particularly point to the public displays of the military in parades and military pageantry, through which its values become “institutionaliz[ed] in national culture.”<sup>64</sup> Moreover, they refer to traditional toys for boys such as toy tanks and toy guns, and youth organizations such as boy scouts, which “tend to explicitly reflect military culture.”<sup>65</sup> All of these different cultural inputs feed into the masculine ideology, and culminate in “the eroticization of stoicism, risk-taking, and

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<sup>61</sup> Stephen McVeigh and Nicola Cooper, *Men After War* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 2.

<sup>62</sup> Paul Higate and John Hopton, “War, Militarism, and Masculinities,” in *Handbook of Studies on Men & Masculinities*, ed. Michael S. Kimmel, Jeff R. Hearn, and Raewyn W. Connell (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2005), 2.

<sup>63</sup> Higate and Hopton, “War, Militarism, and Masculinities,” 13.

<sup>64</sup> Higate and Hopton, “War, Militarism, and Masculinities,” 3.

<sup>65</sup> Higate and Hopton, “War, Militarism, and Masculinities,” 3.

even lethal violence.”<sup>66</sup> Conversely, masculine ideals have influenced militarism through its utilization by politicians to “valorize the notion of strong active males collectively risking their personal safety for the greater good of the wider community.”<sup>67</sup>

Although the gendered division of the military has today become less dominating, it has historically been an enduring characteristic of the military, also in the early twentieth-century America.<sup>68</sup> With this gendered division of only male soldiers, where the masculine ideal dictate that it is a man’s obligation and responsibility to protect his nation, women and children, what Higate and Hopton term a “masculine identity” has emerged.<sup>69</sup> The values of this masculinity are therefore those of the military, namely “the interrelationship of stoicism, phallogocentricity, and the domination of weaker individuals, competitiveness, and heroic achievement.”<sup>70</sup> The ideal from the pre-WWI period of separate spheres for men and women further contributed to the popularization of this hegemonic masculine identity in the early twentieth-century.<sup>71</sup> Higate and Hopton argue, “boys and men are generally encouraged to aspire” to this hegemonic “masculine identity,” and that “by publicly demonstrating that he has at least the potential to conform to this model of masculinity, a boy or a man may have his masculinity affirmed.”<sup>72</sup> This was particularly true during World War I, when the dichotomy of “appropriate and inappropriate masculinity” made conscientious objection synonymous with being unmanly.<sup>73</sup>

The qualities that define the masculine identity (competitiveness and domination of weaker individuals especially) suggest a need for masculine agency. Ironically, the military, which is the set of institutions from which these ideals spring, is also among the most restricting institutions of individual agency in their fostering of the ideal of hierarchy. This

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<sup>66</sup> Higate and Hopton, “War, Militarism, and Masculinities,” 4.

<sup>67</sup> Higate and Hopton, “War, Militarism, and Masculinities,” 4.

<sup>68</sup> Higate and Hopton, “War, Militarism, and Masculinities,” 3.

<sup>69</sup> Higate and Hopton, “War, Militarism, and Masculinities,” 3.

<sup>70</sup> Higate and Hopton, “War, Militarism, and Masculinities,” 3.

<sup>71</sup> Adams and Coltrane, “Boys and Men in Families,” 3.

<sup>72</sup> Higate and Hopton, “War, Militarism, and Masculinities,” 3.

<sup>73</sup> McVeigh and Cooper, *Men After War*, 9.

entails that there are only a few men with power who have some degree of agency in the military institutions. Male agency is therefore an ideal that is unattainable for most men. Also, outside of the context of war, this masculine identity can easily be misplaced or be inappropriately realized. This is because of the monopoly of violence that a constitutional state possesses: the authority to use violence is exclusively wielded by the state, not individual agents. For violence to be understood as heroic, it is necessary that it be “used to uphold the authority of the nation state.”<sup>74</sup> McVeigh and Cooper explain this link between heroism and the nation state as a consequence of the soldier being understood as a “national avatar, [who is] a foundational figure and is evocative of the history, self-image and identity of the nation.”<sup>75</sup> This is a result of “military masculinities [being] embedded into discourses of nationalism.” Thus, the masculine expression of violence and domination is restricted to be used in the protection of the nation state in institutions with strict hierarchies. This dissonance between the ideal and actuality implies that men who seek to affirm their masculinity through military ideals are easily disappointed with themselves, if not disillusioned when realizing the unattainable ideals society imposes on them. As my analyses will show, the majority of the veterans and aging men in the short stories become aware of this dissonance through being confronted with their existential isolation. In this way, men who do not live in denial of, but rather acknowledge their existential isolation, become aware of the lies that society imposes on its men. Moreover, this knowledge makes them create their own masculine identity that does not comply with the expectations of society. Through numerous different characters with their individual responses to the world of “*nada*,” Hemingway argues that this realization of the unrealistic expectations in society comes only through the acceptance of one’s own existential isolation. Furthermore, as this thesis will show, a new, realistic masculine identity can only be gained through the experience of loneliness.

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<sup>74</sup> Higate and Hopton, “War, Militarism, and Masculinities,” 4.

<sup>75</sup> Higate and Hopton, “War, Militarism, and Masculinities,” 3.

In his chapter “Masculinity” in *Ernest Hemingway in Context*, Thomas Strychacz argues that “the unraveling of the culturally dominant image of the self-possessed man” was complete by the end of the First World War.<sup>76</sup> Before the war, manhood was idealized through “individual feats of military derring-do,” where men, following Theodore Roosevelt’s suit, sought to affirm their masculinity in hunting, hiking, rough sports and taking interest in military matters.<sup>77</sup> Instead, as Strychacz shows to, many critics, and also Hoffman who I referred to previously, have understood “Hemingway’s sense of postwar masculinity” as constituted by the “wounds and men’s responses to them.”<sup>78</sup> There are many examples of wounded and traumatized protagonists in the Hemingway canon; Jake Barnes from *The Sun also Rises* with his mysterious phallic wound is arguably the best-known example of this. Strychacz further argues that Hemingway’s protagonists transcend their trauma “by holding tight to a “Code” of behavior that bestows meaning on an absurd world.”<sup>79</sup> In that way, they can come to terms with their wounds. Philip Young, who coined the term “code hero” says that it describes a man who “represents a code according to which [he], if he could attain it, would be able to live properly in a world of violence, disorder, and misery to which he has been introduced and which he inhabits.”<sup>80</sup> Moreover, this prototypical Hemingway character that Young draws up “exemplifies certain principles of honor, courage, and endurance which in a lifetime of tension and pain make a man a man, as we say, and enable him to conduct himself well in the losing battle that is life. He shows, in the author’s famous phrase for it, “grace under pressure.”<sup>81</sup> In the short stories, the protagonists are overtly or covertly battling with their wounds by being confronted with their fears. The nature of what they fear varies,

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<sup>76</sup> Thomas Strychacz, “Masculinity,” in *Ernest Hemingway in Context*, ed. Debra A. Modellmog and Suzanne del Gizzo (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 278.

<sup>77</sup> Strychacz, “Masculinity,” 278.

<sup>78</sup> Strychacz, “Masculinity,” 279.

<sup>79</sup> Strychacz, “Masculinity,” 279.

<sup>80</sup> Philip Young, “Ernest Hemingway: University of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers no.1,” 10f.

<sup>81</sup> Philip Young, “Ernest Hemingway,” 10f.

but the effect is similar in that it challenges their sense of safety and confronts them with their existential loneliness.

This thesis will demonstrate how the various male characters in Hemingway's short stories struggle with loneliness either in the form of their existential dread, or in their feeling of being outcasts. The discussion in Chapter One reveals that young men live in denial about their existential dread. In Chapter Two, the veterans reveal the struggle of reintegrating into society after having accepted one's existential isolation and therefore adopted a new set of values that diverge from society's masculine ideal. The final chapter reveals that the aging men struggle with their loneliness and try to come to terms with both their existential dread and their need to belong in a community. Through these struggles and negotiations they point towards a more realistic way of performing masculinity.



# Chapter 1: Young Men

## 1.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss how the young men in Hemingway's short fiction become initiated into a life of loneliness, and how they deal with the awareness of their existential isolation in one of two ways. The short stories that will be discussed are "Indian Camp" from *In Our Time* (1925), "Hills Like White Elephants" and "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place" from *Men Without Women* (1927), and "A Day's Wait" from *Winner Take Nothing* (1933). One feature the young men have in common is that they do not face their existential dread, but instead repress it to the best of their ability. In this respect, their responses reflect Earl Rovit and Gerry Brenner's assessment that "dignity certainly does not come automatically with age in Hemingway's fiction, but it is usually denied to youth with its passions and penchant for illusions."<sup>82</sup> It is indeed passions or illusions that stand in the way of these young men behaving with dignity when confronted with their existential dread. The pattern of repression or evasion is not an unconscious response, however, but a strategy the characters employ to keep their loneliness at arm's length. To this end, Nick and Schatz return to their childhood illusions and refuse to grow up, as does the man from "Hills," by following his passions and living without thinking about the consequences. The younger waiter in "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place," on the other hand, subscribes to society's illusions by adhering to its expectations of manhood. Through these four men, Hemingway shows that loneliness is an inevitable part of life for young men in the early twentieth-century America, and that living in denial of it is not only an unsustainable solution, but also destructive for their environment. This view is demonstrated in the initiation stories "Camp" and "Day's," through their ironic

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<sup>82</sup> Earl Rovit and Garry Brenner, *Ernest Hemingway: Revised Edition* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986), 48.

endings, where the young men are initiated into loneliness. In “Hills,” the same point is made through the dissonance between the perspective of the man and that of Jig and the narration. And in “Clean,” symbolism and suggestive narration convey the same overall argument. First, I will discuss how the young men become initiated to a life of loneliness, which the short stories “Camp” and “Day’s” reveal. Next, I will discuss the two ways in which the young men in “Hills” and “Clean” try to avoid thinking about their existential dread, and the destructive effect this has on their surroundings. The seeming inevitability of loneliness opens up for a discussion of Hemingway’s proposition for a new, more realistic masculine identity. This chapter will establish the fact of loneliness for the men in Hemingway’s short stories, which is necessary to establish before a further discussion of a new masculine identity can be carried out in the following chapters.

## 1.2 Initiations to the Harsh Realities of Life

“Indian Camp” and “A Day’s Wait” show how the protagonists Nick and Schatz become initiated to manhood – not by becoming mature and secure in their new roles as men, but by their awareness of their existential isolation. Thus, Hemingway argues through the short stories that being a man at that time in America means being lonely. This argument is made by the initiation story structure and thematic, and the divergence from this form in the ironic endings. The intention of an initiation story is to show how a boy transforms into a man by maturing and becoming secure in this new role. However, the ironic endings of “Camp” and “Day’s” reveal how the protagonists are introduced to manhood without gaining any sense of security. Initially, it seems as though this is because the rites of passage they go through are too bleak, unexpected and arbitrarily cruel: Nick witnesses a caesarian birth and a man who has just committed suicide; Schatz believes for a full day that he has become fatally ill, during which he mentally prepares himself for dying. Through these shocking experiences the

protagonists' eyes are opened to the indifference of the cosmos and the inevitability of their deaths, that is their existential isolation, and the nihilistic world of Hemingway's fiction. However, the stories reveal that it is not the bleak world that is to blame, but society's denial of it, and the consequent lack of consolation that it offers against the world for the young men. As a result, young men are left to navigate the chaotic world on their own, in a society that refuses to acknowledge the harsh reality they so acutely experience. Thus, the stories reveal the primacy of existential isolation over any maturing experience, and the inevitability of being confronted with this loneliness. Moreover, they reveal that without an adequate masculine identity to subscribe to, the young men become left in the dark; forced to singlehandedly create a masculine identity with which they can face their existential dread. During their crises, Nick and Schatz both behave as adults, but retreat to their childish roles as soon as it is over. Their youth allows them to not yet grow up and conform to a masculine identity, and they are consequently not as yet lonely. However, they have been introduced to their existential loneliness, and are thus, Hemingway argues, introduced to manhood.

The protagonist of "Camp," Nick Adams, is a recurring character in the short stories, who has been read by noted Hemingway critics, among them Philip Young, as the "prototype" of Hemingway himself.<sup>83</sup> This is the first story about Nick, both in terms of publication chronology and his age. In the story, Nick is introduced to the harsh realities of life through his father taking him along on a medical call. Together with Uncle George, they leave in the middle of the night to attend to an Indian woman who has been in labor for two days. The child's father, an invalid, lies in the bed directly above his wife. When the doctor has successfully completed the caesarian, he checks on him, only to realize that the man has cut his own throat with a razor blade. Nick sees the dead man, and in the boat on their way home he thinks to himself: "he felt quite sure that he would never die."<sup>84</sup> "Day's" is a story

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<sup>83</sup> Young, "Ernest Hemingway: University of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers no.1," 7.

<sup>84</sup> Ernest Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2003), 95.

about a boy of nine years, Schatz, who becomes ill, and is checked up on by a doctor. The doctor says in a matter-of-fact tone that he has a fever of one hundred and two. Believing that the doctor meant Celsius, Schatz is convinced that he is about to die. All day he lies in bed staring at the foot of the bed while his father – the narrator of the story – goes out to hunt. When he realizes that this was all a misunderstanding, he returns to his childhood self.

The initial childish naiveté of the protagonists and shocking events that they go through suggest that “Camp” and “Day’s” are initiation stories. The Hemingway scholar Paul Smith confirms this in *A Reader’s Guide to the Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway* by referring to earlier Hemingway criticism. In his discussion of “Camp” he writes that “every major commentary on the story has, at the least, noted that it is a tale of initiation.”<sup>85</sup> However, he also emphasizes that critics have claimed that Nick’s naive concluding thoughts, “he felt quite sure that he would never die,” suggest the failure of the rite of passage.<sup>86</sup> Smith also reads “Day’s” as an initiation story: “like Nick Adams before him, Schatz endures an initiation.”<sup>87</sup> Similarly to “Camp,” the story has an ironic ending, where Schatz returns to his childish behavior. An initiation story is, as literary critic Jerry R. Yapo writes, “the passing from darkness and ignorance to enlightenment and maturity” that “requires the individual to undergo a series of excruciating ordeals as he is awakened to life’s harsh realities and tragic events.”<sup>88</sup> These ordeals are also known as rites of passage. Moreover, in his article “The Initiation Archetype in Fiction,” published in the *Hemingway Review*, Yapo asserts that these experiences are “requisites of transformation from a life of innocence or naiveté to a state of awareness or certainty.”<sup>89</sup> The excruciating ordeal that Nick experiences in “Camp” is witnessing a birth and a death that are uncommonly brutal: The mother cannot give birth to

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<sup>85</sup> Paul Smith, *A Reader’s Guide to the Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway* (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1989), 38.

<sup>86</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 95.

<sup>87</sup> Smith, *A Reader’s Guide*, 304.

<sup>88</sup> Jerry R. Yapo, “The Initiation Archetype in Fiction: A Reading of Hemingway’s ‘Indian Camp’ and Yuson’s ‘Voice in the Hills’” *Philippine Studies* 49, no.2 (Second Quarter 2001), 266.

<sup>89</sup> Yapo, “The Initiation Archetype in Fiction,” 266.

the child naturally, and therefore undergoes a caesarian, and the child's father does not die of natural causes, but commits suicide by a razor blade. Both watching a birth and seeing a dead man are traumatic experiences. The harsh reality that Nick witnesses is therefore at its most bleak and horrifying. Philip Young argues that Hemingway's main concern in "Camp" is "their [the shocking events'] effect on the boy who witnessed them."<sup>90</sup> Moreover, he maintains that the "badly scarred, nervous young man" that Nick becomes is a direct cause of the events in "Camp."<sup>91</sup> Schatz' rite of passage is very different from Nick's. It is not a series of shocking events, but an illness, and rather than witnessing, he is the victim. The doctor tells the father in front of Schatz that he has a fever of one hundred and two. Schatz, who does not know about the difference between Fahrenheit and Celsius, believes that he is dying. Smith argues that his initiation is "a far more terrifying one than his predecessor/father [Nick] faced, for here it is the certainty of his immediate death, however misconceived."<sup>92</sup> Therefore, in spite of the threat not being real, Schatz experiences the arbitrary and brutal nature of reality. What is more, he is left alone during his internal crisis, and has to deal with his fear on his own.

In his article, Yapó describes the criteria that define the initiation story genre. These are the protagonists' responses to the excruciating ordeals in three phases, "1) separation, 2) transformation, and 3) return empowerment."<sup>93</sup> In the separation phase, the protagonists react to the "contradictions within and outside [themselves]" by separating themselves on a "psychological level."<sup>94</sup> This accounts for the quiet and distanced behaviors of both Nick and Schatz during their crises. This phase transitions into the transformation phase, where the protagonists move "from boyhood to manhood."<sup>95</sup> Now they become acquainted with the

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<sup>90</sup> Young, "Ernest Hemingway," 6.

<sup>91</sup> Young, "Ernest Hemingway," 6.

<sup>92</sup> Smith, *A Reader's Guide*, 304.

<sup>93</sup> Yapó, "The Initiation Archetype in Fiction," 267.

<sup>94</sup> Yapó, "The Initiation Archetype in Fiction," 267.

<sup>95</sup> Yapó, "The Initiation Archetype in Fiction," 268.

worldview of Hemingway's fiction, "in which beauty and wonder, love and compassion, are strangely mixed with cruelty, violence, suffering, loss, alienation, and death."<sup>96</sup> Nick's temporary transformation to manhood can be seen in his assistance during the operation, when he does as is expected of him without complaining. Schatz' transformation to adulthood can be seen in his mature utterance to his father, "you don't have to stay if it's going to bother you."<sup>97</sup> In the final phase, "return empowerment," the protagonist "manifests a newfound sense of maturity and security."<sup>98</sup> However, neither Nick nor Schatz find security in their roles as men, and therefore return to their childhood selves. This is reflected in the ironic ending in "Camp" when Nick, in the story's final sentence reveals his childish naiveté. The final paragraph of "Day's" reveals that Schatz also returns to childish behavior by "cry[ing] very easily at little things that [are] of no importance."<sup>99</sup> Yet, the things that they have experienced do make them enlightened to the brutality of life.

In the criticism that Smith refers to, these ironic endings are used as evidence to support the claim that the rite of passage failed. Rather than understanding the rites as failed, however, I argue that Hemingway's stories of initiation serve to reveal that loneliness and manhood are inseparable. Although Nick and Schatz have not become more mature, they are still initiated to manhood through their glimpse into existential isolation as a fundamental condition of a man's life. Consequently, manhood in Hemingway's short fiction means having to find a way to deal with one's existential dread. Their experiences have also caused their situation to change, in that they now live in a state of denial rather than childish naiveté.

The stories use contrastive symbolism of light/darkness, inside/outside to suggest the transformation from boy to man, and back to boy that happens in the two protagonists. In "Camp," Nick's growing awareness is paralleled in the descriptions of light and darkness. The

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<sup>96</sup> Yapo, "The Initiation Archetype in Fiction," 268.

<sup>97</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 437.

<sup>98</sup> Yapo, "The Initiation Archetype in Fiction," 270.

<sup>99</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 439.

story begins in the dark, where two Indian men row Nick and his father in one boat, and Uncle George in another to the Indian reservation. The boat that Uncle George sits in is a little way ahead of Nick's, and the mist covers it so that they cannot be seen, only heard. This symbolizes the new territory for Nick, where adults who carry lanterns guide him through his mist of ignorance. Also, when they arrive from the dark logging road, a woman waits by the door of the shanty holding a lamp, signaling the enlightening experience that Nick will have inside. And sure enough, it is first when they have entered the shanty from the darkness that Nick is told that the woman is in labor, and has been for two days. As his father prepares for the operation, he talks to Nick, explaining why the laboring woman is screaming, and what his job as a doctor entails in this situation. In this way, he functions as Nick's guide in this initiating experience by preparing him for what is going to happen. Nick tries to put on a brave face by answering "I know," to his father's statement "this lady is going to have a baby."<sup>100</sup> However, his father confronts his self-deception immediately, saying "you don't know."<sup>101</sup> Through this confrontation, the doctor demands of his son to lay aside his childishness, and instead let the experience teach him what it may. From this moment on Nick behaves like an adult by holding a basin in assistance of his father, and by not complaining or whining. The story thus tricks the reader into believing that the initiating experience is the birth, and that Nick is successfully going through his rite of passage. This is the lesson that the doctor planned for the boy; for him to learn of the fragility of life. Moreover, he demonstrates for his son that hard, honest work with a stoic composure is how a man can deal with this reality. However, the unexpected death of the child's father is what actually initiates Nick to manhood. This is also indicated by the symbolism of light, where his father, who has been his guide throughout this experience, sheds light on this scene by lowering a lamp over the man in order to see. This experience not only confronts Nick with the harsh realities of

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<sup>100</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 92.

<sup>101</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 92.

life, but it does so by robbing him of all sense of control. During the surgery, he chose not to look, and although he could not determine what he heard, this gave him some sense of security. This sense was further strengthened by his father's explanations of the procedure and the necessity of the whole affair. His preparedness made the experience tough but understandable for Nick. The death, however, came out of nowhere, and he accidentally sees the even more grotesque wound of the dead father. Moreover, as the doctor too is unprepared for this moment, this reveals that his father also is subsumed by chaos, in spite of him having given Nick the impression of being in control up until that moment. This exposes his father's masculine performance, which reflects the masculine ideal of society, as inadequate for dealing with the chaotic world, and the false sense of security that it gives. This experience initiates Nick to the chaotic and brutal reality that defines Hemingway's fiction, his existential isolation and his state of loneliness. The events of the night inspire many questions in Nick, and his father answers these as honestly as he can. Again, Nick's growing awareness is paralleled with light, when, on their way home, "the sun was coming up over the hills."<sup>102</sup> The ironic turn is created in the story's concluding sentence, "he felt quite sure that he would never die."<sup>103</sup> This statement seems to negate the argument of Nick's growing awareness. However, its juxtaposition with the rising sun, where the symbolism of light has indicated Nick's growing awareness throughout the story, implies that Nick's apparent naiveté is not his lack of awareness, but rather his denial of it. This denial, moreover, is his way of dealing with the disillusionment that comes with realizing the false security of the masculine ideal. The rising sun indicates that in spite of his denial of what actually happened in the shanty, Nick has become aware of his existential isolation.

In "Day's" the narrative shift between inside and outside is used to symbolize Schatz' ironic transformation from boy, to man, and back to boy again. The description of the frozen

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<sup>102</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 95.

<sup>103</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 95.



landscape outside reflects Schatz' state of despair, which makes his awareness of his existential isolation indisputable. The narration when Schatz is a boy is focused on the inside, and consequently, the indoor, domestic sphere represents his childish innocence and experience of safety. When Schatz transitions into adulthood during his crisis, his father the narrator, goes outside, and the hostile weather mirrors Schatz' state of mind. The outside represents not only the harsh reality of adulthood, with its association to the traditionally masculine public sphere, but more importantly to Schatz' state of despair. The story starts with Schatz walking into his parents' room to close the window, and thereby shut the world out from his safe space. But, as he is already ill, the dangers of the outside have already done its damage on him. This implies that in the world of the short stories, there are no ways to escape from the arbitrary nature of reality. As all of Hemingway's short stories contain a crisis – that is, a character's confrontation with his or her existential isolation – they insist that an awareness of this world is necessary in order to protect oneself against it. This argument is especially overt in "Up In Michigan" and "The Capital of the World," where the protagonists are cruelly harmed; Liz from "Michigan" is raped and Paco from "Capital" is accidentally killed, both because of their childish naiveté. Schatz' misunderstanding of his own illness makes him aware of this chaotic world. Initially, Schatz behaves like a boy by refusing to go to bed, but after the doctor's visit – and receiving what he believes to be a death sentence, he transforms into an adult with authority, who excuses "his father from witnessing his death."<sup>104</sup> Like the death of the father in "Camp," the knowledge that he will die comes as a completely unexpected shock to Schatz. Moreover, like Nick, as he is not prepared for this, the experience introduces him to the arbitrary and chaotic world in which he lives. Unlike Nick, however, he lives in a state of existential dread for a whole day, and without his father to reassure him. His awareness of this world is therefore clearly portrayed in the story.

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<sup>104</sup> Smith, *A Reader's Guide*, 304.

Ironically, the doctor gives his father the information that would have reassured the boy outside of his earshot: “there [is] nothing to worry about if the fever [does] not go above one hundred and four degrees.”<sup>105</sup> The fact that the whole misunderstanding could have easily been avoided emphasizes the arbitrariness of Schatz’ situation and of his reality. Moreover, the contrast between Nick’s denial and Schatz’ state of despair reveals the difference that the father plays for the boys’ experience. The lack of control that Nick sees in his father when they discover the dead man reflects his own. This causes Nick to realize that rather than his sense of existential dread being a result of his failure to live up to the gender expectations, he sees that the expectations are themselves unrealistic. Schatz, on the other hand, does not have anything to compare his own reaction to, which causes him to attribute the shortcomings to his unmanliness. Consequently, he succumbs into a state of despair. Moreover, Nick’s father is an emotional support for him, as well as his source of information. When Schatz is left alone in his existential dread, neither of these needs is met. All day he lies in bed in a state of crisis, but the first-person narrator, his father, goes outside to hunt, and the story’s setting therefore shifts from inside to outside. The hunting trip is a failure, as the ground is dangerously slippery, so that the father falls and drops his gun.<sup>106</sup> Moreover, the conditions make his usual techniques for flushing the quail useless, and he must return home with less game than he had hoped for. Back in Schatz’ room, the father finds him “in exactly the position [he] had left him, white-faced,” reflecting the frozen white landscape outside.<sup>107</sup> However, as the misunderstanding is cleared up, “the hold over himself relaxed,” and he retreats back to boyhood, and allows himself to whine and cry easily. The story reveals that the state of delusion brings Schatz out of his state of despair. In this way, dealing with one’s existential dread through denial is portrayed as a strategy that is born out of necessity.

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<sup>105</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 437.

<sup>106</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 437.

<sup>107</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 438.

Schatz' experience differs from Nick's in that during the crisis, he enters a state of deep, inconsolable despair. The ironic ending in "Day's" reveals that Schatz finds comfort in his childhood self, and that this is his way of dealing with his existential dread. This is Nick's strategy also. Thus, the ironic endings indicate that the world is too bleak to handle without some ideal to live up to, and that neither of the protagonists found safety in being a man, at least not in the way the masculine ideal posits you should be one. As bravery does not help, and stoicism neither, the stories imply that what is needed is a realistic masculine ideal. Clinton S. Burhan's claim, which Yapo supports in his article, validates this reading: "recognizing the world for what it is forms only one dimension of the human problem: equally vital is the consequent dimension of imposing a human order and meaning on such a world."<sup>108</sup> In Hemingway's fiction, this order is offered in a moral code by which men may live, as I will return to subsequently.

### 1.3 Young Men Dealing with Loneliness

The short stories "Hills Like White Elephants" and "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place" reveal that living in denial about their existential dread is not a sustainable solution for Hemingway's male characters, and that it is destructive to themselves and the people they are around. The man from "Hills" and the younger waiter from "Clean" have both been confronted with the arbitrary cruelty of the world, and are therefore already initiated to a life in loneliness. This is revealed in their reaction to subtle reminders of this awareness, which create internal crises in them both. Previous experiences make the young men alert to the ever-present threat of arbitrary brutality. This alertness is a product of a previous trauma, namely their initiation, and although it cannot help them avoid getting involved in another situation of uncontrollable chaos, it does make them react disproportionately against anything that is perceived as a

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<sup>108</sup> Yapo, "The Initiation Archetype in Fiction," 269.

threat. Consequently, the crises that the men go through in these stories are not caused by brutal manifestations of the chaotic world. Rather, the men go through internal crises because of minor challenges to their delusions. These challenges take the form of unintended and unpredicted change for the man from “Hills,” and reminders of the precarious fragility of life for the younger waiter in “Clean”. The narration of the stories thus reveals that the men from “Hills” and “Clean” deal with an awareness of their existential isolation by living in denial of it. The man from “Hills” tries to live without regard for the consequences of his actions, exemplifying what it entails for a man to keep refusing to grow up. The younger waiter lives in denial by adhering to society’s expectations, and by so doing subscribes to the collective illusion of certainty that American society embraced after the war.

These are the two strategies men employ in Hemingway’s short stories in order to live in denial of their existential isolation. The fact that they are in denial can be inferred by their worried state, and the simultaneous inability to directly address their fears. The men instead fluster and try to change their situation back to fit their delusions. For the man from “Hills,” this means getting rid of any consequences that his carefree, escapist way of life may create. In the setting that the story portrays, this means convincing Jig to get an abortion. For the younger waiter the state of denial involves faking his confidence about his masculinity, an identity that he bases on the exterior factors of his youth and marriage. When he perceives that these concepts are threatened, he fears that his masculinity, identity and social belonging are by extension questioned. The characters’ reactions reveal that denial is not a constructive way to deal with reality. By reading these stories as a complementary pair we can get an understanding of how the respective strategies do not hold up in the face of internal crises. This argument is made in “Hills” through omission, symbolism, and the dissonance between the perspective of the male character and the narrative perspective of the story. In “Clean” the same argument is made through the use of symbolism and a suggestive narration.

“Hills” is the story of an unnamed man and his spouse, Jig, who sit at a train station in the Ebro valley in Spain presumably on their way to an abortion clinic in Madrid. They discuss an unspecified “it,” whose antecedent we infer from the context is her pregnancy, abortion and the fetus. Jig is reluctant to go through with the abortion, but is also anxious to return to their former relationship. The man, on the other hand, tries to convince her of how simple the procedure is, and how little the abortion should affect her and them, to the point where she exclaims: “Would you please please please please please please stop talking?”<sup>109</sup> “Clean” is set at night in a café somewhere in Spain during the Spanish Civil War. The two waiters talk as they wait for the last customer of the night, a suicidal old man, to leave. Whereas the younger waiter is impatient to go home to his wife, the older waiter is “reluctant to close up because there may be some one who needs the café.”<sup>110</sup> The younger waiter eventually closes up early, throwing the old man out, and the older waiter goes to a bodega where he has an internal monologue of the Lord’s Prayer, replacing all the significant words with the word nada. In this chapter, I will focus on the younger waiter, leaving the remaining two characters to be discussed later.

“Hills” reveals the destructive effects of the man’s denial through the discord between his and Jig’s needs, and through the dissonance between his perspective and the perspective of the narration. Jig’s needs and the perspective of the story reflect on each other, and are both presented through the symbolic significance of the setting. Because of the man’s escapist mindset, he does not acknowledge that they are at a crossroads, or that there is a decision to be made. For him, the abortion is a necessity for returning things to the way they were, and he therefore does not realize Jig’s dilemma. The narration reveals that Jig, on the other hand, experiences the time at the junction as a countdown for her to make up her mind, and the claustrophobic setting reflects this perspective. In the discussion of the man’s state of denial, I

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<sup>109</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 277.

<sup>110</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 382.

will first show how the story reveals his escapist position. Then, I will discuss how the narration's perspective reflects that of Jig, and finally, the destructive effects that follow the man's denial of his existential isolation.

The man's state of denial can primarily be seen in the escapism that he exhibits. Characteristics that reveal his escapist position are his immaturity, his fear of change, and his consequent obsession with trying to return things to the way they were. The first impression we get of him is in his remark "just because you say I wouldn't have doesn't prove anything."<sup>111</sup> In this utterance, the story establishes the man as disproportionately defiant, comparable in behavior to that of a child. The impression of his immaturity is further affirmed when we realize that he does not understand when Jig talks about the irreversible change that has already happened by her getting pregnant. She expresses this when she says "we could have everything," where the past tense of "can" carries significant meaning.<sup>112</sup> To this, the man responds, "we can have everything," and keeps insisting obsessively in spite of her repeated assertion "no we can't."<sup>113</sup> Not only does this dialogue reveal that he does not understand her, but it further affirms his childish state in his stubbornness, and inability to let her perspective alter his. Moreover, this insistence reveals his fear of change, and obsession with returning things to the way they were. His lack of understanding of Jig's situation is clearest in his ironic remark "you know how I get when I worry."<sup>114</sup> Not only is this statement indicative of his incapacity of understanding Jig, it reveals his narcissistic focus on himself and his worries. Consequently, the irony is lost on him when he expresses his worry, when it is Jig who has to go through the operation, not him. His worry about change further explains his repetition of the sentence "I don't want you to do anything that you don't want to do,"

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<sup>111</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 273.

<sup>112</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 276.

<sup>113</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 276.

<sup>114</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 275.

which he believes to be comforting. However, it is contradicted by his insistence on talking about the matter, and thus not letting her make a decision on her own.<sup>115</sup>

The narration and the setting reflect Jig's state of mind. The symbolic significance of them being at a junction is its implication that Jig battles with making a decision. In the forty minutes that they have at the station, she has to decide whether to get on the train to Madrid, which symbolizes her choice to go forward with the abortion, or to return to Barcelona, and stay pregnant. The platform is hot, and as there is "no shade and no trees," there is nowhere to hide from the heat.<sup>116</sup> This reflects the claustrophobic situation that a limited amount of time coupled with the man's obsession of talking about the abortion creates for Jig. While she is under this pressure, she looks longingly off into the distance, a beautiful landscape, and says "and we could have all this. And we could have everything and every day we make it more impossible."<sup>117</sup> For one thing, the landscape symbolizes the carefree state that they were in before she got pregnant. This reading is supported by what their heavy bags with many tags from different hotels on them indicate, namely that they have been traveling for a while, and "spent nights" together.<sup>118</sup> Now the landscape is enticing; with its cool river that would have given her some escape from the heat. But seen as it is in the distance, it has now become an unattainable ideal. She recognizes what the man is too scared to admit, that regardless of her decision concerning the abortion, consequences of the life one leads will always follow. This admission inspires her perception, as she reflects, "[the hills] look like white elephants."<sup>119</sup> They remind her of the idiomatic "financial liability" that the "burdensome or costly possession [fetus]" essentially is for their relationship.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 276.

<sup>116</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 273.

<sup>117</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 276.

<sup>118</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 277.

<sup>119</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 273.

<sup>120</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, "White elephant"

The man's fear of consequences is due to the fact that he does not want to take on the responsibilities as an adult, because being a man represents to him what Nick and Schatz experienced in their moments of manhood: chaos and arbitrary violence. However, under the pressure of his delusions, Jig becomes a self-destructive woman, who surrenders her individuality for the sake of their relationship, and for the sake of enabling his delusion. Jig's "smile," a word that is repeated three times in the last few sentences, reveals her resignation, where she realizes that she will not be heard. Consequently, she ends up obeying his will, without him realizing this effect he has on her. His state of denial is also destructive with regards to himself. Ironically, by not facing his dread, namely the chaotic world and his insignificance in comparison, he becomes an agent of chaos in his own constructed world. By this I mean that as the man lives without acknowledging the chaotic nature of reality, the order that he imposes on his world must eventually fail. Moreover, by forcing the order to remain in spite of unpredicted change, the man thereby forces the chaos in the direction of those around him. Presumably, the man will not be able to uphold this order, and his delusion will shatter, leaving him again all alone with his existential dread. Hemingway argues that being agents of order, that is, having a code of behavior, is the only way to deal with one's existential dread. However, in order to create a code that is not destructive, the acknowledgement of one's existential isolation is necessary, as I will return to in the next chapters.

The suggestive narration reveals that the younger waiter's denial causes him to act irrationally whenever he feels that his delusion is threatened. The waiter's strategy for living in denial is to adapt to the social expectations and consequently perform his gender in order to belong. His anxiousness to belong in his society reflects his need for protection against his existential dread. However, as Nick and Schatz experienced, behaving in adherence to society's expectations and its masculine ideal does not prepare a man to face his existential



isolation. Rather, the delusion that the ideal imposes on its men causes them to deny the reality of chaos, and thus to not be prepared to deal with being reminded of one's ultimate inconsequential role in the universe. In spite of this, the younger waiter deludes himself of the protection that belonging in his community can give. Feeling inadequate with respect to living up to this ideal therefore creates a reaction in him where he feels confronted by his existential isolation, that is, his aloneness against the chaotic universe. Moreover, his obsessive need for society's protection causes him to become a chaotic and destructive agent to those around him. His destructive behavior is primarily directed towards the old man, who receives verbal abuse from the waiter without having provoked anyone in any way. Thus, the short story demonstrates the damaging consequences of living in denial, and the necessity for a realistic masculine ideal that men can meet. This argument is made through the suggestive narration, which reveals that the aspects of his masculine identity that the younger waiter relies on are threatened by seemingly insignificant details around him.

The fact that the man lives in denial can be seen in his obsession with conforming to society's expectations. He strives to convince himself of his conformity through the love of his wife and his youth, aspects that he sees as confirmations of his masculinity. This obsession is not initially apparent, as his defense of these personal traits is realized in his coarseness and unsympathetic behavior. However, the suggestive narration reveals that there lies a stifling insecurity behind his behavior, which reflects his existential anxiety. This reading reveals that both the old man and the passing soldier remind him of the fragility of these aspects, and that he responds to these confrontations by exaggerating his confidence and by becoming anxious to get home to his wife. His pose of confidence is evidenced in his behavior that, rather than confidence, gives off an impression of coarseness and indifference. In this way, the narration implies that his confidence is an act, and that he consciously performs (fakes) his masculinity. The coarseness is due to his overwhelming underlying

anxiety, which undermines his confidence and causes him to be completely preoccupied with himself. His misguided form of confidence consequently reveals not only his state of denial, but also, that his adherence to the masculine ideal gives nothing more than a façade with which he can fake his behavior. His coarseness can primarily be seen in how he acts toward the old, deaf man. When the man orders another drink, the waiter tells him, “you’ll be drunk.”<sup>121</sup> He then marches over to him with the drink and says bluntly “you should have killed yourself last week.”<sup>122</sup> His lack of sympathy reflects his preoccupation with himself and his masculine performance, and his subconscious disdain for the man. Moreover, the narration implies that the reason behind his disproportionate rudeness toward the man is his feeling that his masculinity is threatened. The story reveals that the old man reminds the waiter of the inevitability of decay. The waiter unknowingly reveals this when he says “I don’t want to look at him. I wish he would go home.”<sup>123</sup> Moreover, although the waiter does not have a self-reflexive understanding of his own reliance on his youth, he knows as much to recognize that he “wouldn’t want to be that old,” and that he feels that “an old man is a nasty thing.”<sup>124</sup> These remarks reveal that the old man’s presence threatens his delusion by questioning the security that the waiter finds in his youth. Also, his coarseness is evidenced when a soldier and a girl pass the café. The older waiter comments “the guard will pick him up,” to which the younger waiter replies “what does it matter if he gets what he’s after?”<sup>125</sup> This comment does not only reflect his misguided understanding of confidence, but it suggests that his behavior is a compensation for his feeling that his other masculine aspect, his marriage, is under threat. This perceived threat comes from watching a woman walking home with the soldier, which makes the waiter worry that his own wife might do the same. As he tries to live up to the masculine ideal of the time, the ideal of the soldier as the “strong active male” who risks his

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<sup>121</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 380.

<sup>122</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 380.

<sup>123</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 381.

<sup>124</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 381.

<sup>125</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 379.

“personal safety for the greater good of the wider community,” probably causes him to feel inferior to the soldier.<sup>126</sup> This reading is validated by the setting, because as the story is set during the Spanish Civil War, the perception of masculinity was culturally tightly merged with military ideals. The narration further implies his state of worry by his sudden need to get home. A short while after seeing the soldier walk by, the younger waiter is no longer able to wait, and throws the old man out of the café, an hour before the usual closing time. His anxiousness to get home to his wife indicates both that she functions to confirm his masculinity, but also that he is nervous that she might be unfaithful. In this way, the soldier threatens his masculinity by making him consider the possibility of him being cuckolded. His nervousness about this is evidenced again when the waiters are closing up the café. The older waiter jokingly says “you have no fear of going home before your usual hour,” insinuating that he might be cuckolded, and discover this when he returns home early.<sup>127</sup> The younger man’s immediate response is indignation, which he quickly compensates for with a pose of confidence.

Throughout the story, the younger waiter feels that his masculinity is threatened. He is therefore preoccupied with fixing his situation to fit his delusion. To this end, he acts rudely toward a suicidal old man, and throws him into the darkness that he sought refuge from at the café. The fact that the waiter does not consider that his actions could lead to another attempted suicide reveals the depth of his commitment to his delusion. His denial is also destructive to the younger waiter himself, as he is constantly alert and cannot avoid worrying. Thus, the story reveals the destructive consequences of living in denial about one’s existential isolation, and the lack of consolation that the masculine ideal offers.

The discussion in this chapter reveals that the male characters in Hemingway’s short stories cannot avoid the chaotic world and its arbitrary brutality. Moreover, I have argued that

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<sup>126</sup> Higate and Hopton, “War, Militarism, and Masculinities,” 4.

<sup>127</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 382.

the awareness of the reality of this world is necessary in order to navigate and survive it. The young men in the short stories all live in denial of this world, however, as the masculine identities they assume are not adequate for dealing with it. Rather, the masculine ideal they adhere to reflects society's illusions of security, which cannot stand against the brute forces of nature. As the rites of passage failed to lead the young men to maturity and security, the masculine ideal is exposed as inadequate and ultimately destructive. In this way, Hemingway argues through the young men that there is a necessity for masculine identities that acknowledge the fact of chaos in the world.

## Chapter 2: The Veterans' Loneliness

### 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss Hemingway's portrayal of veterans from the First World War who have faced their existential isolation as soldiers, and are consequently reluctant to return

to the conformity and “willful amnesia” of their American communities.<sup>128</sup> The reluctance reflects their personal growth, their new perspective on society, and the subsequent discord between the veterans and their old homes. The short stories that I will discuss in this chapter are primarily “Soldier’s Home” and “Cross-Country Snow” from the short story collection *In Our Time* (1925), with some mention of “Big Two-Hearted River” (*IOT*). Unlike Hemingway’s young men, the veterans have lived in continuous confrontation with their existential isolation, and have therefore had no choice but to face it. Moreover, their acceptance of their existential isolation has revealed to them the falseness of the American society, and the incongruence between its masculine ideal of fighting for your country, on the one hand, and the ungrateful treatment of the returning soldiers, on the other. The returning soldiers therefore have to choose whether to reintegrate into society, in spite of their awareness of its falseness, or to live as outcasts. The ungrateful treatment of the soldiers, moreover, seems to align with changing gender norms and constellations in American post-war society, which to some extent has left behind the ideal of the soldier for a conception of masculinity that is negotiated in relation to changing female roles. I argue that the depicted loneliness of the veterans further crystalizes Hemingway’s argument that conflicting masculine ideals at the time caused men to become lonely. Harold Krebs from “Soldier’s Home” reveals the disillusionment of a returning soldier, who realizes that not only is his war-effort taken for granted, but also the change that the war created in him is not understood or appreciated by the society he returns to. Nick Adams in “Cross-Country Snow” represents a veteran who deals with his trauma, and prepares mentally for returning to the American society. The argument of the damage that the masculine ideal causes in the veterans is made through a variation of narrative styles and symbolism in “Soldier’s Home” and “Cross-Country Snow.” This discussion will show the destructive effect of conflicting masculine

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<sup>128</sup> Trout, “Where do We Go from Here?,” 16.

ideals, and reveal Hemingway's proposition for a new, more constructive ideal. After a summary of the short stories, I will give a short introduction of the social context into which the veterans return. Then, I will point out the signs that indicate that Krebs and Nick are aware of their existential isolation and do not live in denial of it. This discussion will be followed by an examination of the pressure to reintegrate that they experience from society. Next, I will discuss the characters' loneliness, which is caused by these two aspects.

“Soldier’s Home” is the story of Harold Krebs, a World War I veteran, who returns from the war to his childhood home in a town in Oklahoma. As he belonged to the second division, his return is delayed until the summer of 1919, half a year after the armistice in November. He is isolated from the society he returns to, as he feels the need to talk about his experiences, but people are tired of listening to stories about the war, and therefore will not listen to him. He spends his days reading and watching girls on the streets from his porch, being conflicted between wanting a girl and not wanting to get involved in their “already defined alliances and shifting feuds.”<sup>129</sup> At breakfast one morning his sister, Helen, asks him if he loves her, and if he will come watch her play baseball. Their mother dismisses Helen, in order to talk to Harold about his future. Throughout the conversation, she uses religious language and her emotions to manipulate Harold into obeying her. “Cross Country Snow” is the first story about Nick Adams after the war, and is set in Switzerland. The story is about Nick and his close friend George who go skiing on their last day together before George has to return to his studies, and Nick to his pregnant spouse, Helen. The war is not explicitly mentioned in the story, although it is alluded to once when Nick tells George that he cannot do the telemark skiing technique anymore because of a leg wound, which he possibly sustained in the war. Otherwise, the war is a non-event, and one among several things that Nick and George have taken a break from in the refuge of their intimate friendship and skiing

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<sup>129</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 147.

– an activity that they both love. When they come down from the mountain they go to an inn and drink wine while talking about a skiing trip they would have liked to have together, and about their responsibilities.

## 2.2 Historical Context

By focusing on the veterans, we see Hemingway's criticism of the American society clearly. His short stories reveal that the reception that the returning soldiers received is a symptom of the destructive expectations that society had of its own men. The short stories are therefore criticisms of the duality of the American society, where the public embraces a "willful ignorance" of the years in war, and the returning soldiers do not find support or understanding in their communities for their traumatic experiences.<sup>130</sup> One reason for the separation of the returning soldiers from the society they return to is the contrastive ideas about the war and the actuality of it. As Paul Fussell argues in his exploration of memory and narrative, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, the shock of the Great War was augmented by the innocence of the period before it.<sup>131</sup> This innocence involved a general belief in abstractions such as honor and glory.<sup>132</sup> The soldiers, having experienced the arbitrariness of the war, and the "nihilistic machinery he was powerless to control or protest," adopted a "modern understanding that is essentially ironic."<sup>133</sup> Consequently, the society and soldiers had, in the immediate aftermath of the war, two very different, even contradictory understandings of reality. The belief in honor and glory motivated young men, in their endeavor to prove their masculinity to themselves and their community, to enlist as soldiers, with the illusion that this would give them the opportunity to qualify as men. Also, a great number of young men who were not motivated by illusions of grandeur were still compelled to fight in the war by the motivation

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<sup>130</sup> Trout, "Where Do We Go From Here?," 13.

<sup>131</sup> Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 25.

<sup>132</sup> Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 22.

<sup>133</sup> Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 38.

of not being seen as cowards. Consequently, it was an obligation of honor, and a consequence of one's social ties to enlist. The industrialized warfare with the use of machineguns, poison gas, and indirect fire artillery, passivized the soldiers.<sup>134</sup> Thus, it not only robbed soldiers of feelings of heroism, which depends on active agency; it disempowered them through the arbitrary character of the situation, where survival depended on luck, rather than skill and courage. More devastatingly, though, it fostered a sexual anxiety by totally disillusioning young men from their belief in the masculine ideals with which they entered the war. Simultaneously, as Sandra M. Gilbert points out, this disempowering experience that the young men had in combat was contrasted with the empowerment of women on the Home front by their entering into the workforce and earning a living for themselves.<sup>135</sup> The fact that women thrived as a direct result of male suffering led to a male resentment towards women, which was further reinforced by women's ignorance of the "facts of the front," and their enthusiastic support of the war.<sup>136</sup> As a result, "the unmaning terrors of combat lead not just to a generalized sexual anxiety but also to a sexual anger directed specifically against the female."<sup>137</sup> Another consequence of this, as Alex Vernon points out, is "the symbolic association of women and wives with society and therefore as the cause of the soldier's wartime sufferings."<sup>138</sup> In the following reading of "Soldier's Home" and "Cross-Country Snow," I argue that although society is associated with the feminine, the protagonists are not necessarily antagonistic to women, except for those who pressure them to reintegrate to the American society, thus exacerbating their sense of isolation, alienation and loneliness.

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<sup>134</sup> Alex Vernon, "War, Gender, and Ernest Hemingway," *The Hemingway Review* 22, no.1 (Fall 2002), 43.

<sup>135</sup> Sandra M. Gilbert, "Soldier's Heart: Literary Men, Literary Women, and the Great War," *Signs* 8, no.3 (Spring 1983), 435.

<sup>136</sup> Vernon, "War, Gender, and Ernest Hemingway," 43.

<sup>137</sup> Gilbert, "Soldier's Heart," 424.

<sup>138</sup> Vernon, "War, Gender, and Ernest Hemingway," 49.



### 2.3 The Veterans' Awareness of Their Existential Isolation

Krebs and Nick are both aware of their existential isolation. Krebs' awareness is indicated by his nausea, and Nick's is indicated in his use of skiing to deal with his trauma. In "Soldier's," the use of sarcasm, free indirect speech, and association in the narration conveys this argument. In "Snow," this argument is made in the suggestive description of Nick's skiing. I will employ Irvin D. Yalom's discussion of existential isolation in this analysis in order to show how Krebs' nausea and Nick's skiing connect to the mentioned awareness. As Yalom shows in the chapter "Existential Isolation," the awareness of one's existential isolation leads to the recognition of one's subjective perception of the world.<sup>139</sup> This recognition functions to decloak the "layer upon layer of worldly artifacts, each imbued with personal and collective meaning, that we experience [as] a world of everydayness."<sup>140</sup> Consequently, "meanings are wrenched from objects, symbols disintegrate."<sup>141</sup> For Krebs and Nick, this means that the awareness that their war experience created has exposed the illusions of the American society, and enabled them to see themselves and society without illusions. Moreover, they see the destructiveness of the masculine ideal that American society imposes on its men.

The narrator reveals that Krebs' nausea is the instinctive way in which he reacts against the insincerity of the society and the unrealistic expectations that it has of its young men. This instinct grows out of his awareness of his existential isolation, and his consequent perspective on society without illusions. The narrator initially associates nausea with untruth, in the explanation "Krebs acquired the nausea in regard to experience that is the result of untruth or exaggeration."<sup>142</sup> Moreover, the words 'untruth' and 'exaggeration' reflect that Krebs primarily reacts to half-truths rather than blunt lies. The significance of this

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<sup>139</sup> Yalom, *Existential Psychotherapy*, 355.

<sup>140</sup> Yalom, *Existential Psychotherapy*, 358.

<sup>141</sup> Yalom, *Existential Psychotherapy*, 358.

<sup>142</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 146.

specification is that it implies a connection between his nausea and the insincerity of society. This connection is also indicated when his own lies cause him “too, to have a reaction against the war and talking about it.”<sup>143</sup> Again, the narrator specifies that as the lies he tells are “attributing to himself things other men had seen, done or heard of,” they are therefore a form of ‘exaggeration.’<sup>144</sup> Moreover, as the word “too” reveals, the narration alludes to a connection between Krebs’ reaction and that of the people in society. Thus, the narration implies that the reason behind no one wanting to listen to Krebs’ stories is not their unsympathetic state, but that they too react against the half-truths in society regarding the war, and therefore cannot listen to any more war stories. However, the narrator observes in sympathy with the neglect that Krebs experiences, that “his town had heard too many atrocity stories to be thrilled by actualities.”<sup>145</sup> The narration’s sarcastic tone thus explains that people in society are too committed to its illusions to understand their own reactions, and consequently are unwilling or unable to recognize that their nausea is a subconscious reaction to being told half-truths. The narration of “Soldier’s” further associates Krebs’ reaction against half-truths with his ambivalence toward dating the girls in his town. Through free indirect speech, the narrator conveys Krebs’ thoughts, where he thinks to himself “he did not want to have to do any courting. He did not want to tell any more lies.”<sup>146</sup> The juxtaposition of these two sentences indicate that his reluctance is explained through his nausea, the symptom of his existential isolation. Moreover, as Vernon suggested, his reluctance to get involved with the women in society is indicative of his reluctance to reintegrate into society after the war and to play along with the assigned gender roles. This parallel is drawn in the story by the only other characters being women and Krebs only seeing women on the street. Thus, the story associates society with the feminine, and in this way, Krebs’ anxiety toward

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<sup>143</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 145.

<sup>144</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 146.

<sup>145</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 145.

<sup>146</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 147.

approaching women can be read as his anxiety to reintegrate in society. His dilemma is that he also feels a need for closeness with others and a wish to belong. His mother's behavior evidences the parallel between women and society's main tendency of forcing reintegration on its returned soldiers. In an interaction with his mother, the narrator relays: "Krebs felt sick and vaguely nauseated."<sup>147</sup> Her behavior toward Krebs consequently reflects his relationship with society. She uses religious language and exaggerated emotions to infantilize Krebs in order to manipulate him into doing what she wants. The link to society here is the conformity that it demands of its participants in order for them to have a sense of belonging. As a feminine counterpart to the mother, however, his sister Helen's behavior contradicts the reading of Krebs being nauseated by society as a whole. She reveals another, subtle tendency in society, one that does not pressure its returned soldiers to reintegrate. This symbolic meaning that Helen carries through her behavior will be discussed later in this chapter.

Nick's awareness of his existential isolation is revealed through the suggestive narration that describes his skiing. This analysis makes explicit Nick's use of the activity as a means to deal with his traumas from the war. Through his years in the war he became aware of his existential isolation, which allows him to see himself and his upbringing in a new light. As a consequence, he realizes the destructiveness of the American society's masculine ideal. Moreover, he understands that his response of living in denial about his existential dread, like he did after his initiation in "Camp," is not the way to deal with it. The narration in "Snow" reveals that he has learned to deal with his traumatic experiences. Also, his delay of returning to the States indicates that he is not yet ready to deal with the social expectations in his country. In the majority of the studies written on the short story, sex and skiing have been read as symbols for young, irresponsible enjoyment that must inevitably end.<sup>148</sup> From this perspective, Helen's pregnancy is seen as Nick's confrontation with the realities of life, where

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<sup>147</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 152.

<sup>148</sup> Olivia Carr Edenfield, "Doomed Biologically: Sex and Entrapment in Ernest Hemingway's 'Cross-Country Snow,'" *the Hemingway Review* 19, no.1 (Fall 1999), 141.

sex without consequences and staying in Europe skiing could not last indefinitely. However, Nick's choice to stay in Europe does not necessarily reflect his reluctance to face reality. The Nick Adams story "Big Two-Hearted River," which is placed chronologically after "Cross-Country Snow," is another story where critics have focused on Nick's escapism. An example of this is Sarah Mary O'Brien's article "I, Also, am in Michigan" in *The Hemingway Review*, where she argues that his isolation "seems a form of escapism – a pastoral retreat from reality."<sup>149</sup> However, whereas his isolation from society in "Cross-Country Snow" is seen as a sign of his irresponsibility, it is linked with his attempts at dealing with his trauma in "Big Two-Hearted River". As the war is not mentioned in either of the stories, I question the stark difference in the understanding of Nick's behavior in the two stories.

In his study of the war and gender relation in Hemingway's short stories, Alex Vernon cites Hemingway's introduction to *Men at War*, where he writes that "learning to suspend your imagination and live completely in the very second of the present minute with no before and no after is the greatest gift a soldier can acquire."<sup>150</sup> Nick manages this in the beginning of "Cross-Country Snow" when skiing: "The rush and the sudden swoop as he dropped down a steep undulation in the mountain side plucked Nick's mind out and left him only the wonderful flying, dropping sensation in his body."<sup>151</sup> Skiing, like fishing in "Big Two-Hearted River," is therefore an activity that allows Nick to focus on the present, and although temporary, gives him a break from the realities that he faced in the war. Or rather, it gives Nick the opportunity to suspend his mind, which since the war has taken over his ability to be completely present in the now. Suzette A. Henke describes the properties of shell shock, which is now termed PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder), as "flashbacks, nightmares and other reexperiences, emotional numbing, depression, guilt [and] hypervigilance," among

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<sup>149</sup> Sarah Mary O'Brien, "I, Also, am in Michigan: Pastoralism of Mind in Hemingway's 'Big Two-Hearted River'," *The Hemingway Review* 28, no.2 (Spring 2009), 66.

<sup>150</sup> Vernon, "War, Gender, and Ernest Hemingway," 35.

<sup>151</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Short Stories*, 183.

others.<sup>152</sup> These are psychological responses to being traumatized, where the brain perpetually assumes danger because of experiences in the past. Understood in this light, Nick's PTSD causes his mind to take over. His response to this state is to seek activities that demand all of his attention, which allows him to suspend his mind, and be present in the moment. Consequently, his skiing is not indicative of his escape from his responsibilities. Unlike the man from "Hills," Nick faces his existential dread, and is able to deal both with his traumas and with change.

In her article "Doomed Biologically," Olivia Carr Edenfield uses the phrasing from the story "the snow seemed to drop out from under him as he went down, down, faster and faster in a rush [...]," to argue that it "simultaneously describe[s] skiing and the act of making love."<sup>153</sup> While I agree with this reading, I question Edenfeld's use of this parallel to understand this as indicative of Nick's disregard for the consequences of his actions. Rather, I see Nick's responsible use of skiing in dealing with his trauma as indicative of his trustworthiness in his relationship with his spouse. Thus, in seeing sex and skiing as parallel tropes, we see that Nick not only deals with his trauma from the war, but also assumes responsibility together with his spouse for his unborn child. By revealing that Nick deals with his traumas and accepts his new role as a father, the suggestive narration thus implies that Nick is aware of his existential isolation.

## 2.4 Pressure of Reintegration from the Society

Both Krebs and Nick are under pressure from the American society to reintegrate after the war. The stories end without giving a clear indication of whether the protagonists give in to the pressure, or whether they decide to live in a manner that is in accordance with the new

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<sup>152</sup> Suzette A. Henke, "Modernism and Trauma" in *The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Women Writers*, ed. Maren Tova Linett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 160.

<sup>153</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Short Stories*, 183 and Edenfield, "Doomed Biologically," 142.

sensibility that their awareness of their existential isolation has created in them. This dilemma is shown in “Soldier’s” through the mother’s personification of society, and her manipulation and pressure on Krebs to behave as she asks. In “Snow,” the dilemma appears through the metaphor of contrast.

Krebs’ mother in “Soldier’s” personifies the pressure of society on Krebs to reintegrate. As I have previously discussed, there is a parallel between women and the society as a whole in the short story. Consequently, both Krebs’ mother and sister, Helen, represent tendencies in society. The first information the reader gets of Krebs’ mother is that she sits on his bed and asks him to talk about the war. He notices that her attention wanders, and that her asking is nothing more than an insincere gesture. This creates an association between her and the anonymous others who did not want to listen to any more war stories. Moreover, her sitting on his bed alludes to her tendency to infantilize Krebs, which she does again on a second occasion in the story. This time, she wakes him up telling him that “your father has felt for some time that you should be able to take the car out in the evenings.”<sup>154</sup> To this, he responds, “I bet you made him.”<sup>155</sup> In this short interaction, the story establishes her as manipulating and insincere, and implicitly argues for these tendencies in society through her personification of it. Krebs’ response reveals that in spite of their knowledge of his mother’s intentions, he and his father are still unwilling to contradict her. At breakfast, she makes him bend to her will, literally, by them bending down on their knees in prayer. At the end of the story, Krebs reflects on how this happened; “he felt sorry for his mother and she had made him lie.”<sup>156</sup> She has further convinced him of going “to Kansas City and get a job” because “she would feel all right about it.”<sup>157</sup> This reflection reveals that Krebs knows that he is being manipulated by his feelings of obligation. Moreover, the story reveals that pressure from his

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<sup>154</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 149.

<sup>155</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 149.

<sup>156</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 153.

<sup>157</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 153.

mother, and by extension the society as a whole, causes him to lie. As we have seen, the lies that Krebs tells in order to be heard is a strategy he initially employs in his attempt to belong in society. His reaction of nausea causes him to become wary of lying. However, the narrator reveals another effect that lying has on Krebs, namely losing the clarity of vision that his awareness of his existential isolation has created:

A distance for everything that had happened to him in the war set in because of the lies he had told. All of the times that had been able to make him feel cool and clear inside himself when he thought of them; the times so long back when he had done the one thing, the only thing for a man to do, easily and naturally [...]<sup>158</sup>

This ‘distance’ that Krebs experiences as a result of lying causes him to lose his confidence in the actions he did instinctively, free from the expectations of society. His description of his actions reflects Hemingway’s understanding of the best thing a soldier can hope for, namely “learning to suspend your imagination and live completely in the very second of the present minute with no before and no after.”<sup>159</sup> Lionel Trilling’s theory of Hemingway’s aesthetic further reveals the implications of Krebs’ reflection. Trilling argues that Hemingway’s fiction is “passionately and aggressively concerned with truth and even social truth.”<sup>160</sup> A consequence of this is that his prose reacts to the rationalization of society: “it is not so much *reason* as it is *rationalization* that [Hemingway] resists; ‘mind’ appears simply as the complex of false feelings. And against ‘mind’ in this sense he sets up what he believes to be the primal emotions.”<sup>161</sup> Krebs’ nausea thus relates to Trilling’s argument with further reveals the short story’s argument of the falseness in society. Moreover, the distance that Krebs experiences implies that he is slowly reintegrating into society by forgetting the effect that his

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<sup>158</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 145f.

<sup>159</sup> Vernon, “War, Gender, and Ernest Hemingway,” 35.

<sup>160</sup> Trilling, “Hemingway and His Critics,” 10.

<sup>161</sup> Trilling, “Hemingway and His Critics,” 12.

awareness of his existential isolation created in him. Trilling also argues that the effect of readjusting to society's "mind" is to "mak[e] them [people] 'reasonable,' which is to say dull and false."<sup>162</sup> Thus, the pressure from society is also described as a covert threat.

At the end of the story, we do not know whether or not Krebs returns to the repressed man he was before the war. His relationship with his sister, Helen, suggests the potential change in the society rather than in Krebs. She asks him if he loves her, like her mother does after her. However, she does not pressure him to say yes, but accepts his non-committal answer "uh, huh."<sup>163</sup> Also, she does not manipulate him or lie in order to have him do what she wants, but rather states honestly what she wants and how she feels. When he says he does not know if he will come watch her play baseball she answers "aw Hare, you don't love me. If you loved me you'd want to come over and watch me play indoor."<sup>164</sup> Also her first remark to Krebs reveals her unembarrassed honesty "you old sleepy-head. What do you ever get up for?"<sup>165</sup> As he does not have any plans for his future, and spends his days reading and wandering, he could have been offended, but rather thinks to himself in an equally blunt manner: "He liked her. She was his best sister."<sup>166</sup> His mother's approach to the same subject is using religious language, saying: "God has some work for everyone to do."<sup>167</sup> Krebs' response to this is embarrassment and resentment.<sup>168</sup> Although Krebs reluctantly decides to get a job, like his mother asks of him at the end of the story, he also decides to go watch Helen. This ending indicates Krebs' insistence on following his instincts rather than reintegrating to the old tendencies in society that his mother represents. The function of the open ending is to invite the reader to engage with the implications of the two proposed directions for Krebs' future. In this way, through appealing to the reader's sympathies with

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<sup>162</sup> Trilling, "Hemingway and His Critics," 12.

<sup>163</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 150.

<sup>164</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 150.

<sup>165</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 149.

<sup>166</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 149.

<sup>167</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 151.

<sup>168</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 151.



Krebs, the short story implicitly argues that there is a possibility for a new social understanding of masculinity. However, this possibility depends on the reader's acceptance of this understanding of masculine identity, thus facilitating change.

In "Cross-Country Snow" pressure from the society causes Nick and Helen to plan returning to the States when the baby comes, in spite of neither of them wanting to. Their sense of obligation comes from a social pressure, which is alluded to in the metaphor of contrast in the story. As mentioned, Nick's reluctance to returning to the States stems from his need to deal with his trauma before returning. In the contrastive description of the landscapes in Europe and the States, the story shows that Nick's reluctance is also due to a perceived hostility in the American society. When Nick and George discuss the skiing conditions in the States, they both agree that "the mountains aren't much."<sup>169</sup> Nick further describes them as "too rocky. There's too much timber and they're too far away."<sup>170</sup> In contrast, when they talk about places they would have liked to go in Switzerland, Nick remarks "gee, the swell places."<sup>171</sup> Thus, the story establishes a contrast between the needs that Europe and the States can meet for Nick. The rocky mountain landscape of the States contrasts the soft snow that they skied in on that day. The mountains being far away in the States also contrasts the impression of accessibility that George gives when talking about the places in Europe. However, this contrast does not only reflect the hostility of the States, but also that they have a romanticized perception of Europe. Another indication of this is Nick's use of the word "khud," which derives from Hindi, and was popularized through Rudyard Kipling's use of the word.<sup>172</sup> Its associations are therefore that of the exotic – what is far away and different from the familiar.

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<sup>169</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 187.

<sup>170</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 187.

<sup>171</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 186.

<sup>172</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, "khud"

The metaphor of contrast is established in the story from the onset, through the funicular car that carries Nick and George up the mountain. Edenfield refers to Barbra Sanders' observation that as the funicular car operates "under the tension of parallel opposites [it is] the metaphor on which the story operates."<sup>173</sup> Edenfield further elaborates that these opposites in the story are "the equal pulls of freedom and restriction."<sup>174</sup> In a similar manner to the funicular car's mechanic composition of equal weights that pull on both ends, Nick experiences a pull toward the romantic image of Europe and the obligations in the States. This reading implies that whereas the American society is interested in restricting Nick, his stay in Europe allows for unrestricted freedom. However, as both his wounded knee and the fetus reveal, his freedom is impeded in Europe as well. Nick and George are both aware that the way they talk about Europe is unrealistically blissful. Nick' awareness of his romanticized perception on Europe is revealed when he jokingly replies to George's remark "I wish we were Swiss," that "[t]hey've all got goiter."<sup>175</sup> This indicates that although Nick enjoys being immersed in the moment, he also knows that nothing is perfect. Another example where Nick reveals his awareness of this romantic perspective is when he realizes that the waitress is pregnant. As previously mentioned, his state of bliss makes him forget for a moment his responsibilities, and therefore he does not initially notice her swelling stomach. When he does notice, however, he becomes very perceptive, which is evidenced in his ability to theorize about her situation. He notices, for instance that she does not have a ring, and that she must have gotten pregnant without being married. Moreover, as Nick experiences a pressure from the American society, he is very aware of the social expectations regarding pregnancy, which makes him perceptive and sympathetic of her situation. He consequently corrects George for judging her service too harshly. Also, his awareness of his romantic perspective of Europe

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<sup>173</sup> Edenfield, "Doomed Biologically," 141.

<sup>174</sup> Edenfield, "Doomed Biologically," 142.

<sup>175</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 188.

enables him to admit together with George: “that’s the way it is,” regarding both the landscape in America, and implicitly about having to return to one’s responsibilities.<sup>176</sup>

## 2.5 The Veterans’ Loneliness

As I showed in the introduction, loneliness is a painful feeling that comes as a consequence of feeling isolated from others. A person who is lonely longs for close relationships, and will therefore try to approach others for social contact. Krebs’ loneliness can be mistaken for alienation, which according to Svendsen is a person’s isolation from society that lacks the emotional aspect of hurt or sadness characteristic of loneliness.<sup>177</sup> However, there are indications in the short story of Krebs’ sadness and his longing for closer relationships with others. This would indicate that Krebs becomes not only alienated, but also lonely when he returns to his hometown. “Snow” is a story of two men who enjoy each other’s company, who loves skiing together, and who show few signs of sadness. To read this story with an eye on Nick’s loneliness is therefore an unconventional reading. However, I find that the focus on Nick as a veteran draws attention to his underlying dissatisfaction with the expectations of the American society, and his loneliness as a possible outcome when he returns to the States. To discover Nick’s signs of loneliness, I will therefore explore two aspects; signs of his isolation and his longing to belong to a community.

The narrative strategies employed in “Soldier’s” suggest that Krebs seeks intimacy with others, and that his loneliness is caused by the society’s inability to understand him. The story is told through an omniscient narrator who employs a variation of a sarcastic tone, free indirect speech that conveys the thoughts of the characters, exposition and scenic development. The first half of the story is narrated as an exposition, where the narrator tells the readers about Krebs and his experience of living in postwar America. The first paragraphs

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<sup>176</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 188.

<sup>177</sup> Svendsen, *A Philosophy of Loneliness*, 14.

of “Soldier’s” establish Krebs’ current situation: having enlisted from college, served in the war and outgrown his uniform, he has now returned to the States. Following this, the narrator tells the readers about Krebs’ attempts at closeness with anonymous others through talking about his experiences in the war. However, as no one wants to listen to his stories he is rejected, and consequently isolates himself from society.

In the first two paragraphs, the narrator gives the impression of telling the story objectively, but this impression is contradicted in the third paragraph, which has a sarcastic, almost resentful tone. The impression of objectivity is created through the narrative strategy of describing two pictures of Krebs, with their function of speaking for themselves rather than the narrator overtly imposing his or her opinions on the readers. Also, their presentation at the beginning of the story creates an imitation of a news article, where the pictures along with the title create the first impression in readers. The effect of objectivity is soon counteracted by a strikingly sarcastic tone in the following paragraph, which tells of Krebs’ six months’ belated return with the second division to his hometown. In this short paragraph, Krebs’ quiet return is contrasted with the “great deal of hysteria” that the “greeting of heroes” a few months earlier had caused.<sup>178</sup> The sarcasm is even heavier in the last sentence, where free indirect speech is employed to convey the thoughts of a personification of society; “people seemed to think it was rather ridiculous for Krebs to be getting back so late, years after the war was over.”<sup>179</sup> This hyperbolic statement, which is an attribution of ignorance and indifference by the narrator to the people in general, ridicules the insincerity of the celebration of returning soldiers. Moreover, it problematizes the claim of objective texts, such as newspapers, of telling it as it is, and the impossibility, also for the short story itself of doing so. Consequently, expectations regarding objectivity, and by extension, society’s monopoly of

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<sup>178</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 145.

<sup>179</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 145.

the “facts of the front” is problematized.<sup>180</sup> This introduction leads to the next paragraph, where people in society will not listen to Krebs’ subjectively true stories about his experiences from the war. When he realizes that people in general do not want to listen to his stories, he accommodates these stories to their taste, and lies as a consequence, in an attempt at being heard. Even so, no one listens to him, thereby rejecting his attempts at intimacy with people from his community. Krebs’ behavior indicates that he longs to feel a sense of belonging in his society. Following these paragraphs where the reader has learned of Krebs’ failed attempts at closeness with others, comes the exposition of his isolated everyday life. Thus, the narrator implicitly argues that the cause of Krebs’ loneliness is that no one would listen to him. Also, his reluctance to lie indicates that his awareness of his existential isolation keeps him from belonging, and he must as a result stay an outsider so long as he does not compromise his values.

In “Snow”, a subtle sign that Nick longs to belong to a community is that he does not avoid thinking and talking about his own responsibilities when confronted with them. He does not notice the waitress’ pregnancy before they call her back to ask about cake. When he takes notice of it, he is reminded of his own responsibilities towards Helen, and this leads him to think of George’s responsibilities, and to ask about his education. Nick’s initial unawareness of the pregnancy signifies that the skiing trip successfully “plucked his mind” off of his concerns.<sup>181</sup> The concerns return when the three of them struggle with the wine bottle, and the imperfections of actuality serve to draw him out of his bliss. However, the fact that he asks George about his everyday life indicates that Nick does not shy away from thinking about his own. The manner in which he asks may be interpreted as though he sees everyday obligations as nothing more than obligations – “when have you got to go back to school?”<sup>182</sup> An argument for his youthful irresponsibility can be made by the formulation “got to,” which

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<sup>180</sup> Vernon, “War, Gender, and Ernest Hemingway,” 43.

<sup>181</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 184.

<sup>182</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 186.

indicates a childish response to his total lack of appreciation for the everyday occupation. However, the phrase is later echoed in the response “we’ve got to” to George’s statement “maybe we’ll never go skiing again, Nick.” In this setting, the phrase has a positive meaning, conveying Nick’s longing rather than his apathy. In light of this use of the phrase, I argue for understanding his question about when George returns to school as Nick’s way of conveying that he wished the skiing trip would not end, and a longing for intimacy with George for a longer period of time.

Although the two interpretations may seem like two sides of the same coin, the second argues against seeing Nick as being apathetic and reluctant towards his responsibilities. Moreover, it reveals his underlying longing to belong somewhere. When George asks him if he is happy about the pregnancy, he answers “yes. Now.”<sup>183</sup> His and Helen’s problem is not the child, but the fact that they feel they should go back to the States in time for the birth, even if neither of them wants to. To this, George says, “it’s hell, isn’t it?” to which Nick responds “no. Not exactly.” Nick’s reluctance to return to the States indicates his fear of not belonging in his community. Both Nick’s longing to stay in the Alps with George, and his nervousness about returning show that Nick longs to belong to a community, but is scared he might not when he returns to the States. This nervousness comes both as a response to the perceived hostility of the American society and to his fear of his traumas. In this way, the story reveals the possibility that Nick might become lonely when he returns to the States.

As the discussion in this chapter has revealed, the veterans in Hemingway’s short fiction acknowledge their existential isolation, and as a result, have gained a perception of the American society that makes them reluctant to reintegrate back into it. Moreover, I have shown that their newly attained values cause them to become outcasts, in spite of their longing to belong to a community. In this way, the American society is portrayed as

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<sup>183</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 187.

restrictive in terms of how a social actor can be a part of the community. Loneliness is thus presented as a social as much as individual problem, caused by restricting social expectations. However, the stories suggest the possibility of change through subtle signs of new tendencies in society that may lead to less confining expectations of the genders.

## Chapter 3: Aging Men and Their Loneliness

### 3.1 Introduction

I will now present the aging men in Hemingway's short stories, and discuss three ways in which they deal with their existential dread. This final chapter substantiates what the discussion in the previous chapters has led up to, namely the potential for creating a new, realistic masculine identity through the experience of loneliness. As argued in the previous chapter, Hemingway uses the war and the returning soldiers to make explicit the

contradictions he sees in society, and to reveal how men who face their existential isolation become outsiders in their American communities. This dilemma is also criticized, although implicitly, in the short stories featuring aging men.

As all Hemingway's protagonists face crises in the stories, they all have to deal with their existential dread in one way or another. In the first chapter I argued that the young men live in denial of fundamental existential fears by either conforming to society's gender expectations or by refusing to accept their roles as men and as a result be ignorant of the harmful consequences of their actions. The veterans, on the other hand, have had no choice, through their experiences in the war, but to face their existential isolation. This chapter will reveal that so too have the majority of the aging men, through a long life of confrontations with their existential dread. Consequently, the majority of the aging men are not in denial about their existential isolation but deal with it to the best of their ability. The exception is Manuel from "The Undefeated." The only aging man who still lives in denial, he represents the consequence of remaining conform over a longer period of time, much like the younger waiter in "Clean" as discussed in Chapter One. The second way the aging men deal with their existential isolation is exemplified by Zurito from "The Undefeated." His values, corresponding to what Hemingway scholarship generally terms the "code of behavior," enable him to suspend his anxiety concerning his existential isolation. This man is an outcast, as his values do not correspond to the expectations of society. The older waiter from "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place" and Jack from "Fifty Grand" represent the third way of dealing with existential isolation. Like Harold Krebs, they struggle to translate their values into the chaotic world they experience, neither of them understood or appreciated in society. This struggle causes them to constantly question both their values and their place in society. Their response can be placed between that of Manuel, on the one hand, and Zurito, on the other, as they seek both social belonging and to live with their new set of values alike. As this is a precarious



balance for the men to maintain, it suggests that Hemingway's argument for the potential of a new masculine identity is conditioned by society's openness towards change. The aging men's relationship with their own existential isolation is reflected in their worries, which the stories' narrative strategies reveal. In this last chapter, I will show how Hemingway, through the aging men, reveals that manhood in the early twentieth century America leads to one of three: the desperate search for social approval, which is a consequence of conformity; or the recognition of one's existential isolation, which either leads to a realistic and sustainable masculine ideal or, if they fail to integrate their values into their lives, to despair.

This chapter will examine four stories: two from the short story collection *Men Without Women* (1927), "The Undefeated," and "Fifty Grand," and "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place" from *Winner Take Nothing* (1933). A unifying aspect between the stories is the focus on aging men and their worries. The stories from *Men Without Women* both present athletes in their last matches. "The Undefeated" is the story of the bullfighter Manuel Garcia who wants to prove himself as a bullfighter, and who is severely wounded by the bull, but manages to kill it after a number of failed attempts. "Fifty" is the story of the mentally defeated boxing champion Jack Brennan, who in his dealings with some mysterious Jewish men decides to bet fifty grand against himself. Although his opponent, Walcott, is the superior athlete, he too has agreed to bet against himself, and commits a foul in the ring. However, Jack manages to stay on his feet and to foul Walcott in return, thereby losing the match, and taking the winnings from his bet. The older waiter in "Clean" serves, together with a younger waiter, a suicidal old man at a café somewhere in Spain and ponders on the concept of *nada*. The vast variation between the stories in contexts, situations, types of characters and their ambitions and fears reveals the complexity and range of Hemingway's understanding of how aging men react to a confrontation with their existential isolation. Although the stories are very different, their narrative focus is set to reveal the worries of the characters, presenting arguments about

masculinity, grace under pressure, and loneliness. In the following, I will first discuss Manuel and Zurito's worries, which reveal that the former is in denial and latter is a code hero according to Young's definition of the term. The following subchapter will examine the older waiter and Jack's worries and consequent behaviors through comparing them to those of Manuel and Zurito.

### 3.2. Aging Men in Denial and as a Code Hero in "The Undefeated"

The two main characters in "The Undefeated," Manuel and Zurito, represent two uncompromising ways in which aging men deal with their existential dread. They are both extreme examples that reveal the ultimate consequences of either denying or accepting fully the existential universe of the short stories. By examining what their worries are, and how they deal with these, we can get a picture of what the properties that come with uncompromised denial and acceptance are. The worries of the aging men are focal themes in all of the selected short stories that this chapter will address, revealed through the narrative strategies employed. The worries explain the aging men's respective behaviors, their understanding of themselves and others, and their aspirations in life. An exploration of this theme will therefore give an insight into the relation between the men and the perceived world in which they live. Through an analysis of the narration in "The Undefeated," I will first reveal the implications of the men's worries, before going further into detail in the next subchapter about Hemingway's argument for the possibility of a new, realistic masculine ideal through the experience of loneliness.

Manuel from "The Undefeated" is unable to face his existential isolation and lives in denial about it by conforming to the outdated masculine ideal of the pre-war era that he grew up with. He consequently strives for an ideal that contrasts the ironic post-war period of his time, which is reflected in the perspective of the narrator. Ironically, this indicates that his

denial causes him to be out of touch with the society he desperately tries to conform to. His worries about failing to live up to this ideal, which to him entails achieving glory through his career as a matador, therefore reveals that his denial has made him unable to reevaluate himself or his society. As the analyses of the man from “Hills” and the younger waiter from “Clean” in Chapter One showed, living in denial makes men perceive change as a threat to their state of delusion. Consequently, as Manuel has maintained his delusion throughout his life, he is now out of touch with society. The underlying cause of his worry is his fear of oblivion that a number of confrontations with his own existential isolation have created in him. As presented in the introductory chapter, being confronted with one’s existential isolation causes an individual to realize one’s subjective aloneness and the cosmic indifference of one’s existence. Manuel’s denial of his existential dread involves deluding himself of his own significance. Consequently, he deludes himself with regard to his athletic potential and the possibility of gaining glory through the sport, in spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, which the narration repeatedly reveals. Manuel represents what it entails to stick to the idea of conformity and is therefore a parallel to the younger waiter in “Clean.” I will first establish Manuel’s state of denial, before discussing how his worries are presented in the text.

In “The Undefeated,” the narrative shifts between the perspective of various actors and the narrator serve to reveal Manuel’s state of denial with regards to his existential isolation, and that his fear of oblivion drives him to keep seeking fame and glory in the sport. My reading of the short story is in dialogue with literary critic Scott MacDonald, who contends that “the most important aspect of the narrative strategy of ‘The Undefeated’ is Hemingway’s use of changes or expansions in the narrative perspective as a means of controlling and developing his characterization of the story’s protagonist.”<sup>184</sup> An omniscient narrator tells the

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<sup>184</sup> Scott MacDonald, “Implications of Narrative Perspective in Hemingway’s ‘The Undefeated,’” *The Journal of Narrative Technique* 2, no.1 (January 1972), 1f.

story from the perspectives of Manuel, Retana, Zurito, the audience and the critic from *El Heraldo* through the use of free indirect speech, which reveals the thoughts and judgments of the various actors. The narrative shifts reveal that Manuel is obsessed with achieving glory in the sport and that this is a futile pursuit, as there is no glory achievable in the post-war, modern world in which he lives. These contrastive perspectives between Manuel and the narrator recall Paul Fussell's observation in *The Great War and Modern Memory*; Manuel represents the innocence of the time before the war in his belief in abstractions such as glory, and the narrator the ironic "modern understanding."<sup>185</sup>

Manuel's obsession with glory is evidenced in his focus on symbols of honor from the sport. One symbol that represents the honor associated with the sport for Manuel is the stuffed bull's head over Retana's desk. Upon entering the office, the first thing Manuel notices is the head of the bull that killed his brother, under which he believes his brother's name is inscribed. From the conversation between two waiters later in the story, we understand that Retana is the person you have to be "in with" in order to be a matador in Madrid.<sup>186</sup> Therefore, it is the highest honor imaginable for Manuel to have one's name inscribed over his desk. The narrator first approaches the bull's head through Manuel's thoughts. He cannot read the plate, but "imagin[es] it [is] in memory of his brother."<sup>187</sup> Directly following this, the narration expands its perspective to the omniscient narrator, who tells the readers that the inscription reads "The Bull 'Mariposa' of the Duke of Veragua, which accepted 9 varas for 7 caballos, and caused the death of Antonio Garcia, Novillero, April 27, 1909."<sup>188</sup> Contrarily to what Manuel believes it does not mention his brother at all, but honors the bull and the family from whence it came. Thus, the narration exposes Manuel as one who is obsessed with grandeur and who romanticizes the sport. This is also shown during the corrida, where

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<sup>185</sup> Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 38.

<sup>186</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 241.

<sup>187</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 236.

<sup>188</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 236.

Manuel's judgment of his own performance is, on several occasions, at odds with that of the narrator, whose perspective is supported by the crowd's reaction and the critic's evaluations. One of the clearest examples of this is at the end of the first act, when Manuel walks confidently away from the bull after a successful number of maneuvers. This description convinces the reader of Manuel's skill. However, the omniscient narrator contradicts this impression immediately by relaying, "there was no applause."<sup>189</sup> The effect created by this sudden change of narrative perspective, where Manuel's thoughts are followed by a biased narrator's evaluation, is one of surprise. In this way, as MacDonald asserts, "the manipulation of perspective during the corrida [undercuts] Manuel's view of things and cause[s] modifications in the reader's understanding of the matador's actions."<sup>190</sup> Also, although the lack of applause is because the trumpet that announces the end of the first act had blown, it amplifies the reader's impression of Manuel being out of sync with the world.

The narration reveals that Manuel battles, internally as well as externally, with his fear of oblivion. To him, the bull represents the obstacle that stands in the way of his success, and his performance in the ring is therefore an overt representation of this battle. Consequently, his worries are most immediate when he is facing the bull, because everything is at stake in the ring. The pressure of the situation that he experiences, moreover, makes him unable to succeed in killing the bull before his fourth try. His worries are revealed in the narration through free indirect speech. Manuel knows that as an athlete, he has to act instinctively, rather than think when he is under pressure. He reminds himself of this when he prepares himself mentally for the faena, "his instincts and his knowledge worked automatically, and his brain worked slowly and in words [...] If he thought about it, he would be gone."<sup>191</sup> However, the narration reveals that Manuel struggles with doing this, as his repetition of the mantra,

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<sup>189</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 253.

<sup>190</sup> MacDonald, "Implications of Narrative Perspective," 3.

<sup>191</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 260.

“corto y derecho [short and straight],” whenever he is under pressure indicates.<sup>192</sup> He recites the mantra as an incantation or prayer, in hope of managing to act instinctively in spite of his all-consuming fears. Also, his worries about the bull are revealed through his personification of it, which implies that he cannot stop himself from thinking. One example of this is when he thinks “the bull looked at him. Eyes watching, horns straight, the bull looked at him, watching.”<sup>193</sup> As these personifications of the bull become gradually more frequent, the bull is eventually given a voice through the narrator, thinking “he [the bull] felt he was going to get this little one with the white face.”<sup>194</sup> Thus, the bull has become a wicked, unscrupulous being that has a personal vendetta against the protagonist. Manuel, fighting this perceived monster which represents the final obstacle to his success, sees his own quest as a noble one. The narration also presents this tragic reading by relaying, “he [Manuel] bowed at the dark, straightened, tossed his hat over his shoulder, and, carrying the muleta in his left hand and the sword in his right, walked out toward the bull.”<sup>195</sup> This description depicts Manuel as a heroic figure, who bows to the chaotic world that the word “dark” reflects, before attempting to kill the monster. However, as Manuel is presented as a fool who is out of touch with his reality, his contrast to the tragic setting creates a narration that is essentially ironic. Thus, the narration reveals the ultimately destructive effects of self-deception, to which a denial of one’s existential isolation must inevitably lead.

Contrary to Manuel, Zurito acknowledges the chaotic nature of the world in which he lives. He manages to do so through a code of behavior, which is indicated in his concern for his friend and athletic style. These properties are relayed in the narration through the contrasting figure that Zurito is to Manuel in several respects. His code enables him to act with grace under pressure, and he consequently does not fear the abyss that death represents –

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<sup>192</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 262.

<sup>193</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 253.

<sup>194</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 257.

<sup>195</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 257.

being forgotten, or being threatened, as the bull signifies in the story. Therefore, Zurito is not worried about his own safety when he is alone with the bull. Rather, he worries about the consequences of the reckless behavior of his friend, Manuel, and decides to come out of his retirement to help him in the corrida. It is this worry and his athletic style that reveals that he is a code hero in Young's definition of the term. However, although his commitment to his code enables him to function with the awareness of this world, it also causes him to become an outcast in his community. Zurito thus reveals the consequences of accepting one's existential isolation uncompromisingly. I will first establish that Zurito is a code hero, before I reveal the implications of his acceptance of his existential isolation.

The picador's worries reflect his code, which is to be a good friend to Manuel. To this end, he respects Manuel's stubborn pursuit of glory while simultaneously doing everything in his power to make sure he comes out of the bullfight alive. Zurito exhibits what Hemingway called "grace under pressure," as he is able to set aside his anxieties and fears and let his compassion for others determine the course of his actions.<sup>196</sup> This behavior reflects Earl Rovit and Gerry Brenner's description of the code hero, as showing "qualities of real humility and self-abnegation."<sup>197</sup> Moreover, it further reveals that he has accepted his existential isolation, and adopted a set of values that reflect a realistic perspective on the chaotic world. Zurito's worries are revealed in the story through his actions, both as a picador and as a friend. The narrator relays Zurito's worry about Manuel's safety through his contrastive behavior to that of the protagonist. There are several examples where this contrast can be seen. First, Manuel's worry about being forgotten causes him to go on as an athlete, but Zurito tells him that he is "not pic-ing" because he is "too old."<sup>198</sup> When Manuel says that he cannot keep away from the sport, Zurito answers sympathetically "I know how you feel. But it isn't right. You ought

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<sup>196</sup> Philip Young, "Ernest Hemingway," 10f.

<sup>197</sup> Rovit and Brenner, *Ernest Hemingway*, 48.

<sup>198</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 242f.

to get out and stay out.”<sup>199</sup> This indicates that he might himself have been tempted to pursue glory, and therefore understands what drives Manuel to go on, but he has accepted his cosmic insignificance and retired. When Manuel asks him to pic for him, he is consequently not tempted by the possibility of being remembered but implores his friend to stop going back into the ring. He eventually realizes that Manuel will not be persuaded and agrees reluctantly to pic under the condition that Manuel quits if he “do[es]n’t go big tomorrow night.”<sup>200</sup> This indicates that he is more worried about the well-being of his friend than he is about the bull. Also, it establishes him as a sympathetic and caring friend.

The description of Zurito’s athletic style also reveals that he is a code hero. As presented in the introductory chapter, Philip Young describes a “code hero” as a man who “represents a code according to which [he], if he could attain it, would be able to live properly in a world of violence [...]” and who “exemplifies certain principles of honor, courage, and endurance.”<sup>201</sup> Although the word “properly” is a vague definition, when seeing Zurito’s behavior in the corrida in relation to that of Manuel, the word assumes significant meaning. Thus, from the context of the story, we infer that being able to live “properly” for Zurito means to not be overwhelmed by fear, but rather, to act instinctively with grace. Zurito’s skill sets him apart from Manuel. In spite of having had a break from the sport, he shows great skill, and the impression of ease and natural flow that his movements give contrasts the spasmodic technique of the protagonist. The narrative emphasis on the contrast between the crowd’s reaction to his performance and Manuel’s reveals this difference – whereas Manuel received no applause, Zurito’s performance made the crowd stand up, shouting “Olé Olé!”<sup>202</sup> Also, Zurito’s preparation reveals that he, unlike Manuel, is not worried, but instead manages to do what the protagonist tries but fails to do, namely to act instinctively. Before they enter

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<sup>199</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 243.

<sup>200</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 144.

<sup>201</sup> Young, “Ernest Hemingway,” 10f.

<sup>202</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 251.



the bull-ring, Zurito “had already, since he had mounted [...] pic-ed through the whole corrido in his mind.”<sup>203</sup> Under the pressure of the sport, the characters reveal who they are to the readers and their audience. This is because the situation demands their full attention, which means that they cannot pause to consider how they behave, and in that way fake their identity. Those who have not incorporated their code as a part of their person will therefore reveal that their masculine behavior is an act. Thus, one of the most explicit expressions of the aging men’s character is how they perform under pressure. However, this line of reasoning only touches the surface of Hemingway’s argument about the relationship between the style of an athlete/artist and his code of behavior.

Hemingway critics agree that code and style are two sides of the same coin, and that a man’s artistic or athletic style (technical skill) reflects his genuine wish to live by his code.

Literary critic Robert Penn Warren writes about this relationship between code and style:

They [the Hemingway heroes] represent some notion of a code, some notion of honor, that makes a man a man [...] The discipline of the soldier, the form of the athlete, the gameness of the sportsman, the technique of an artist can give some sense of the human order, and can achieve a moral significance. [...] the code and the discipline are important because they can give meaning to life that otherwise seems to have no meaning or justification.<sup>204</sup>

Here Warren argues that Hemingway saw a man’s style as capable of creating order in a chaotic and arbitrary world, and that this style comes as a consequence of a man’s code. The relationship between style and code goes both ways; a code of behavior can only work if it is adhered to in all situations of life; and a man can only gain a superior style if he believes in his code of behavior wholeheartedly. In order to improve his style a man has to practice for

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<sup>203</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 246.

<sup>204</sup> Robert Penn Warren, “Ernest Hemingway” in *Modern Critical Views: Ernest Hemingway*, ed. Harold Blooms (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1985), 40.

hours upon hours and pay meticulous attention to every detail in his craft. This demands a discipline that an absolute conviction in one's code of behavior can give. Style, therefore, comes as a consequence of a man's code. As it is Zurito, not Manuel who displays the code through his skill, MacDonald goes against the Hemingway criticism in contending that Zurito is the undefeated man, both morally and physically.<sup>205</sup> In light of Young and Warren's descriptions of the property of the code hero, I agree with MacDonald.

Zurito's calmness in the face of danger reveals Hemingway's argument for the possibility of gaining a masculine identity outside of the social expectations. Furthermore, this identity is acquired through loneliness, that is, the acknowledgment of one's existential isolation. However, as men like Zurito are few and far between, he also exemplifies what most of the Hemingway men never will achieve. He is, in other words, an otherworldly figure. As Earl Rovit and Gerry Brenner point out, "the ones of greatest excellence, of dignity, are all non-Americans."<sup>206</sup> Thus, this ideal is symbolically removed from the reach of American men. Moreover, as Zurito is otherworldly, he too is removed from society, and consequently becomes an outsider.

Both Manuel and Zurito represent two extreme responses that men can have to their existential dread. Manuel's stubborn denial causes him to become completely out of touch with his reality, and Zurito's ability to stay calm under pressure allows him to transcend out of the angst-ridden society. In this way, they both become lonely men who do not find their place in society due to their response to the knowledge of their existential isolation. The aging men that the next subchapter discusses are men who struggle to understand themselves within society, like Krebs in "Soldier's" and Nick in "Snow" do.

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<sup>205</sup> MacDonald, "Implications of Narrative Perspective," 12.

<sup>206</sup> Rovit and Brenner, *Ernest Hemingway*, 48.

### 3.3 A New Masculine Ideal through Loneliness

The older waiter and Jack are both aware of their existential isolation. One consequence of this is that they have accepted that the world is chaotic, and that their response to this is to try to be agents of order in their spheres of influence. However, they are reluctant to become outsiders in their communities, and therefore struggle to translate their values to fit in with the expectations of the American society and are consequently constantly renegotiating them to fit in with their society's expectations. Through the discussion of "The Undefeated," I have established what the properties of aging men in denial and as code heroes are. Using these properties as guidelines, I will discuss what state the older waiter from "Clean" and Jack from "Fifty" are in, as portrayed in the narrations. This subchapter argues that the two men are somewhere between the two extremes that Manuel and Zurito represent, namely denial and code hero. The older waiter and Jack are two representatives of most of Hemingway's men – in a continuum between the two extremes where they struggle to come to terms with their existential anxiety and their place in society. Before this discussion, however, I will establish what their worries are, as these reveal what their values are, how they perceive themselves and the world they live in, and their relation to their existential dread.

The older waiter's worries are relayed in "Clean" in the narration through free indirect speech and suggestive narration. The older waiter is worried about an undefined *nada*. The narration reveals that so are the younger waiter and the old man, but only the older waiter knows and faces the nature of his worries. *Nada* as theme is first introduced after the opening paragraph at the onset of the waiters' conversation. The older waiter tells the younger waiter that the old man, the last customer in the café, attempted to commit suicide one week prior to the present events of the story. When the younger waiter asks why, he replies "he was in despair [about] nothing."<sup>207</sup> In this dialogue, the significance of the older waiter's "nothing" is

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<sup>207</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 379.

understated, as it is not elaborated upon – it is the development of the concept of *nada* throughout the story, with the climactic personalized Lord's Prayer, that gradually adds to its gravity. This understatement therefore establishes the theme without attracting the reader's attention. When the reader subsequently realizes that the story treats nothing as an existential concept, he/she also realizes that this was established from the beginning. Thus, the narration guides the reader through a gradual awareness of that which weighs on all three characters, namely the unknowable *nada*. In this way the text relays the omnipresence of *nada* that the three men experience. This reading is echoed in Hoffman's assertion that "Clean" portrays "Hemingway's detailed consideration of the concept of *nada*," and that "all three figures [...] confront nothingness in the course of the tale."<sup>208</sup> The initial dialogue also establishes the older waiter as the story's interpreter of the old man and his behavior. In this way, the narration implies that the two have a common understanding of wanting to seek some refuge from the darkness they experience, what the story terms *nada*. The narration also indicates this parallel between the two men, as the story starts with a focus on the old man, and goes on after he has left and ends with the thoughts of the older waiter. As the perspective of the narration in the first paragraph and the following conversation primarily concerns the old man and his character, the story sets up the old man as a focal figure. However, it does not take long before he becomes a peripheral character in the story whose function is more metaphorical than dramatic. By this I mean that rather than being a character that contributes to the scenic development, the old man functions as a symbolic figure to the two waiters. The narrative strategy of focusing on him and revealing his despair about nothing thus establishes his function as a symbolic presence that reminds the two waiters of *nada* itself. Moreover, as the narration also associates the old man with the older waiter, I argue that the old man reflects the worries that the older waiter battles with. The parallel between the older waiter

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<sup>208</sup> Steven K. Hoffman, "'Nada' and the Clean, Well-Lighted Place: The Unity of Hemingway's Short Fiction" in *Modern Critical Views*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1985), 173.

and the old man, who symbolizes nada to the two waiters, and the thematic establishment of nada in the story reflect the older waiter's worries.

In "Fifty," Jack's worries are revealed through the narrative focus on money, wealth, and ethnic stereotypes that are associated with money. It is not, however, the lack of money, but the inherent worries that owning things in general entails for him. This focus reflects Jack's understanding of himself and others and is therefore the lens through which his motives can be ascertained. His relationship to money and wealth is complicated and many-faceted. For one thing, he understands himself and others through racial and ethnic stereotypes, especially with regards to a person's morality. Throughout the story, racially derogatory terms such as "kike" and "Irish bum," are used to mean being cheap. This is first hinted at when Jack calls Kid Lewis, a boxer he defeated, a kike. A drunken woman at another table is provoked by this remark, and says, "whoever saw you ever buy a drink?"<sup>209</sup> This comment establishes the link between ethnicity and honesty/dishonesty with money. Jack, being Irish, affirms this stereotype in being financially dishonest. The story reveals, in various situations, that Jack is cheap and that he tricks people into paying for him. One indicator that he is careful with money is his attire – "He's wearing a sweater and an old pair of pants and boxing shoes."<sup>210</sup> Moreover, he sends letters to his wife instead of calling her. Hogan observes, "that's the first time he's called her up since he's out here," implying that this is because "a letter only costs two cents."<sup>211</sup> After a meeting with his manager and two mysterious Jewish men, Jack starts drinking and confides in Jerry, telling him that he is betting fifty grand on his opponent, Walcott.<sup>212</sup> This interaction affirms both stereotypes about Jewish and Irish dishonesty concerning money. Through this disclosure, the narration implies that it is not his championship, but greed that keeps Jack from retiring. This understanding of

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<sup>209</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 301.

<sup>210</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 303.

<sup>211</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 314.

<sup>212</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 313.

Jack becomes confused, however, by his worries. When Jerry asks why he lies awake at night, Jack answers “oh, I worry,” and goes on to tell that he thinks about his properties in the Bronx, in Florida, about stocks, and his family. This not only reveals that he is excessively wealthy, but also, that in spite of this, he worries about his property and family. This leaves us wondering; why then, does he keep fighting. The narrator, Jerry, describes Jack as being “sore and grouchy most of the time” at the training facility in Jersey.<sup>213</sup> This is affirmed by his perpetual complaining about being tired, wanting to be with his wife and kids, and not sleeping. However, when he is fouled by Walcott, he claims that his motivation to go on came from the thought of money: “it’s funny how fast you can think when it means that much money”<sup>214</sup> It seems at first as though he chooses to bet against himself because he is more interested in earning money on the fight than defending his integrity and championship. However, as he understands himself and the world in terms of money and wealth, betting against himself translates the fight into terms which he can understand. Jack’s defeated state reveals that he is unable to cope with the chaotic world. He is, however, able to act if he can see things in terms of money. Thus, the narrative argues that his bet is what drags him out of his defeated state and helps him fight without giving in to fear. In this way, the narration implies that money is both the source of his worries and his way of dealing with his existential dread.

Through the older waiter’s worries and his actions in response to it, the narration argues that he struggles with coming to terms with his existential dread. As the older waiter is worried about nada, he differs from Zurito by not being able to set aside his anxiety and avoid thinking. His behavior also differs from Manuel’s, however, as he does not romanticize himself or his reality, but through his awareness of his existential isolation acknowledges that

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<sup>213</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 301.

<sup>214</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 326.

he is among “those who need a light for the night.”<sup>215</sup> In this way, he admits that he is afraid of the chaotic world, but that he nonetheless does not live in denial of it. The narration reveals that the older waiter shares some characteristics with Zurito in several respects. For one thing, he cares about others, as his empathy and consideration for others reveal. Earl Rovit and Gerry Brenner describe the code hero, other than being non-American and advanced in age, as showing “qualities of real humility and self-abnegation.”<sup>216</sup> The first indication of the older waiter’s humility is his capacity to understand what the old man fears. This not only creates a link between the two, but also reveals his ability to empathize with others. His understanding of the old man is established from the start, and further developed in the third dialogue between the waiters, where the younger man again complains time about the lateness of the hour. To this, the older waiter tries to reason with him, so as to help the younger waiter see the customer’s needs by saying, “he stays up late because he likes it.”<sup>217</sup> Also, when the younger waiter utters disgust for old age, the older waiter responds “the old man is clean. He drinks without spilling. Even now, drunk.”<sup>218</sup> These utterances reveal that not only does he understand the old man, but also the ignorance and delusions of the younger waiter. Consequently, he tries to mediate the world to the younger waiter, in order to help him see the falseness of his biased perspective. This intention is even clearer in the next dialogue, after the younger waiter has thrown the suicidal old man out into the dark night. Rather than getting angry, the older waiter confronts him through reason in a compassionate but direct way, saying “why didn't you let him stay and drink? [...] It is not half-past two.”<sup>219</sup> When the younger waiter explains that he wants to go home, the older prompts him further, asking “what is an hour?”<sup>220</sup> Through asking questions, the older waiter manages to make the

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<sup>215</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 382.

<sup>216</sup> Rovit and Brenner, *Ernest Hemingway*, 48.

<sup>217</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 380.

<sup>218</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 381.

<sup>219</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 381.

<sup>220</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 381.

younger waiter become aware of his behavior and to admit that he is wrong without becoming hostile or defensive. In this way, the narration reveals that the older waiter is compassionate towards others and perceptive of their behavior. As this property reflects that of a code hero, his humility further indicates his realization of his existential isolation. His compassion for others guides his behavior, and he therefore approximates acting in accordance with a code of behavior. He formulates his understanding of his social and existential role in the following manner: “each night I am reluctant to close up because there may be some one who needs the café.” However, as his worries reveal, in spite of having incorporated these properties, the older waiter is still anxious about the concept of nada. The reason for this can be ascertained through the characteristics that he shares with Manuel. These are his inability to stop thinking, and the destructive effects that his fear of nada have in his life. The narration creates an associative link between the concept of nada and the older waiter to reveal that he is worried. The narration also reveals that he cannot stop thinking about it. The clearest example of this is when he continues the conversation internally, after the younger waiter has left. The free indirect speech of the narration relays that what he fears is “a nothing that he knew too well.”<sup>221</sup> After he admits this to himself, his thoughts take on a recitative tone, initiated by the words “nada y pues nada y nada y pues nada [nothing and then nothing].”<sup>222</sup> This launches him into the Lord’s Prayer, where words with significant meaning are replaced by the word “nada.” The natural development of the internal monologue, from the admittance of his fear to the incantatory recitation, informs the reader of the strong associative relationship between the two for the older waiter. Moreover, the narrative flow from the one to the other reveals that this is a frequent pattern in his mind. Thus, we infer that these thoughts occupy much of his attention. The use of the personalized Lord’s Prayer also juxtaposes his need for praying, a reaction to his anxiety, with his belief in nothing, and not an omnipotent God. The story’s

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<sup>221</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 383.

<sup>222</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 383.



penultimate sentence, “after all, he said to himself, it is probably only insomnia,” emphasizes the extent of his anxiety.

Jack’s inability to act without seeing things in terms that he feels he can control reveals that he is closer to being in denial than the older waiter is. In spite of this, he does have a few similar properties to Zurito; the clearest of which is his ability to perform his sport automatically, without getting in the way of himself by thinking. Jerry narrates, “it’s just as though it’s automatic. Jack just raises the left hand up and it’s in Walcott’s face,” and “it’s just like [his hand] was connected with Walcott’s face and Jack just had to wish it in every time.”<sup>223</sup> The ease with which he moves reflects that of Zurito. Moreover, as Jerry perceives it, “Jack is always calm in close and he doesn't waist any juice.”<sup>224</sup> This calmness is another property that Zurito has, and which accounts for their perfected athletic technique. Jerry, who himself used to be a boxer, asserts “there wasn't anybody ever boxed better than Jack.”<sup>225</sup> He later elaborates on this, saying “Jack was as safe as a church all the time he was in there [the ring], as long as he was strong.”<sup>226</sup> These properties create a strong resemblance between Jack and Zurito as athletes. However, as the narrator relays, Jack “wasn't strong any more.”<sup>227</sup> This is where the two athletes differ, in their acceptance of the consequences of their decay. Jack bet against himself because he knew that he is not strong enough any more. This reveals his recognition of his own decay. In spite of this knowledge, he refuses to retire, revealing that he does not accept the consequences of his decay. In order to understand this choice, a comparison with the properties of Manuel is necessary.

Both Jack and Manuel are guided by exterior motivators, namely wealth and glory respectively. The narrations show, however, that this is not because they have a bloated sense of self, but rather, because it is a strategy they employ in order to find some refuge and thus

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<sup>223</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 321ff.

<sup>224</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 322.

<sup>225</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 321.

<sup>226</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 322.

<sup>227</sup> Hemingway, *The First Forty-Nine Stories*, 323.

protect themselves from the chaotic world. Author of *A Reader's Guide to the Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*, Paul Smith, summarizes the criticism on the short story, and shows that the intentions behind Jack betting on himself can be understood as “a recognition of his own prospects,” “an act that defeats the forces of immorality upon their own grounds,” or as a confusion of the “wisdom of the ring” with “the wisdom of the world.”<sup>228</sup> The first is an ironic reading, which is Smith’s understanding of the act, and the latter two are tragic and comic understandings respectively. As his reading also reflect the ironic understanding of the modern world that Paul Fussell portrays, I agree with Smith’s reading. Moreover, understanding Jack’s action as a realistic response to an indifferent world further explains Jack as a defeated man who has created an understanding of the world that allows him to function in it without succumbing to despair. Also, the fact that understanding things in terms of money drags him out of his defeated state indicates that he is in partial denial. Like Manuel, he understands the world on different terms than does his society. Although he does not romanticize reality, Jack does narrow down his reality to a two-dimensional world that he more easily can navigate and control.

Through this discussion, I have revealed that the older waiter and Jack both represent men who strive to deal with the awareness of their existential dread. They exhibit properties of both Manuel and Zurito, and are consequently ambiguous characters whose motivations are difficult to determine. Their struggle to deal with their knowledge of their existential isolation, moreover, creates an uncertainty concerning the stories’ endings – whether the aging men enter a state of despair or mental peace. The effect of these endings is to involve the reader through sympathy with the characters and the application of one’s imagination to change his or her perception of masculinity. In this way, the stories suggest the possibility for

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<sup>228</sup> Smith, *A Reader's Guide*, 129.

a new masculine identity that is able to deal with the chaotic world, as Hemingway perceives it.

This thesis has shown that the male characters in Hemingway's short stories cannot avoid the chaotic world and its arbitrary brutality. The young men in the short stories all live in denial of this world as the masculine identities they assume are not adequate for dealing with it. The veterans in Hemingway's short fiction acknowledge their existential isolation, and as a result, gain a perception of the American society that makes them reluctant to reintegrate back into it. This reluctance, moreover, causes them to be treated as outcasts in their communities. In this way, American society is portrayed in the stories concerning veterans as restrictive in terms of how a social actor can be a part of the community. The aging men are either uncompromising in their response to their existential dread, or struggle to deal with their knowledge of their existential isolation. This struggle creates an uncertainty concerning the stories' endings as to whether the aging men enter a state of despair or mental peace. Through this systematic analysis of the reason behind the male characters' loneliness, this thesis reveals the social criticism of the stories. More importantly, it reveals Hemingway's invitation for understanding masculine identities in relation to the chaotic world he portrays in his stories.

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