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# Reader's Guide: A Foray into Violence, Trauma and Masculinity in In Our Time

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Claremont McKenna College

Reader's Guide:  
A Foray into Violence, Trauma and Masculinity in  
*In Our Time*

Submitted to  
Professor Kathryn Stergiopoulos

by  
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for  
Senior Thesis  
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## INTRODUCTION

Hemingway's first ever published book is an experimental novel titled *In Our Time* which grapples with issues of violence, trauma and identity in a postwar society. The book's unconventional structure conveys the "newness" of its subject matter and defies expectations of the traditional novelistic form. Hemingway's new approach to narrative in this book is very much in dialogue with the Modernist movement and its response to WWI, which has been described as "a reaction to the carnage and disillusionment of the First World War and a search for a new mode of art that would rescue civilization from its state of crisis after the war."<sup>1</sup> Hemingway, along with other writers, such as Woolf and Joyce, attempts this rescue by re-thinking aspects of the novel that were taken for granted in earlier periods, just as the conventions of modern life were taken for granted pre-WWI. Hemingway specifically challenges the concept of a linearly-structured novel told from a single, unified perspective through *In Our Time*, which has multiple narrators and stories that don't exist in a clearly in a unified and linear temporal space. While *In Our Time* could have been published as a collection of short stories, Hemingway is intentional in presenting the book as a single, cohesive work. Each short story is divided into "chapters," which further adds to our desire to read it as a traditional novel. Yet, *In Our Time* is not a conventional story about military or civilian life, but one that confronts the simultaneous presence of these opposing realities in a single space and how that defines a post-war identity in the modern world.

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<sup>1</sup> Lewis, Peter. *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism*. 7th ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, pp. 109.

*In Our Time* is Hemingway's first novelistic attempt at confronting the traumatic and societal aftereffects of World War I. My understanding of trauma has been influenced by readings from other scholars, such as Dominick LaCapra who defines trauma as a "disruptive experience that disarticulates the self and creates holes in existence; it has belated effects that are controlled only with difficulty and perhaps never fully mastered"<sup>2</sup> (Dodman, 84). For the purposes of my essay, the most resonant parts of LaCapra's definition of trauma are the disarticulation of the self, that we will see from the opening story of the book, and the belated effects of trauma, that we will return to throughout the entire text. An important piece of my definition of "trauma," not included in the above mentioned definition is identifying the process through which said trauma was formed. For my purposes, "trauma" refers to any kind of psychological or physical change an individual or society suffers as a result of exposure to physical or other violence, be it directly or indirectly. With a fuller understanding of the formation trauma, and its subsequent consequences, we are more prepared to approach this work.

Though most critical work to date on Hemingway and the war has been focused on his more popular novels, *The Sun Also Rises* and *Farewell to Arms*, my own arguments are an attempt to apply the findings from these influential readings to a new discussion on *In Our Time*. Dodman establishes that, "Hemingway's work has long been woven tightly into the cultural fabric of modern memories of the Great War, but it must also be understood as a vital literary access point to America's shell-shocked past"<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Dodman, Trevor. *Shell Shock, Memory, and the Novel in the Wake of World War I*. Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 84.

<sup>3</sup> IBID. pp. 85.

(Dodman, 85). While the important cultural and historical implications of Hemingway's work are echoed throughout my essay, Dodman's research focuses exclusively on trauma *Farewell to Arms*. Paul Fussell, a literary scholar focusing on memory and war trauma in British literature of the 20th century, also writes about the literary response to WWI in great depth, but he chooses to overlook American literature because "without a consciousness of a national literary canon...American writing about the war tends to be spare and one-dimensional"<sup>4</sup> (Fussell, 160). As we will see, despite Fussell's denial of the relevance of American literature a greater historical discussion on WWI, many of his arguments can be applied directly to *In Our Time*. Furthermore, in Vernon's insightful article on "War, Gender and Hemingway" he establishes the important link between trauma and masculinity that will be explored in Chapter II. He says, "Military and war experiences affect the soldier's sense of gender identity...his masculinity, his conception of himself as a man, and by extension his general conception and experience of gender relations"<sup>5</sup> (Vernon, 35). However, by limiting his essay to "Big Two-Hearted River" he neglects to see the important connections between trauma and masculinity that are present throughout the entire book. In response to these helpful, though limited, critical works, my essay seeks to build an understanding of the connection between violence and the resulting trauma and of the effects that that trauma has on the self and the subsequent expression of the self communicated through the storytelling of *In Our Time*.

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<sup>4</sup> Fussell, Paul. *The Great War and Modern Memory*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989, pp. 160.

<sup>5</sup> Vernon, Alex. "War, Gender, and Ernest Hemingway." *The Hemingway Review* 22.1 (2002): 34-55. Web.

*In Our Time* conveys the duplicity of life in military and civilian contexts through the evocation of different voices and modes of storytelling. The storytelling is separated into two categories: brief journal-esque vignettes and longer, more novelistic short-stories. The vignettes are characterized by their confounding anonymity, brief eruptions of violence, and matter-of-fact tone. In these vignettes, there is a conflict between the traumatic content and the emotionally-detached tone of the narrator. The short stories offer a greater narrative structure--and in turn greater perceived familiarity--by giving more plot, setting and characterization in comparison with the vignettes, which float in a narrative limbo. The short-stories feel like narratives taken from real-life, while the vignettes feel like attempts at capturing a hellish dream. The categorical differences between the vignettes and short stories make it difficult for readers to develop a unified understanding of the book as a single, cohesive work.

Another disruptive element of the book is its lack of clear/linear structure. The stories jump around chronologically and geographically and the narrator is either unknown or constantly varied, making it difficult to discern the relationship, if even there is one, between one story and the next. The effect of this experimental narrative style is a disjointed sense of reality where the violence of war exists separately from the violence of civilian life. However, this disjunction is complicated once we get to the heart of the book when the previously separated characters and settings converge in a single text, be it a short story or vignette. Through these moments of intersection, the book challenges our understanding of war and civilian life as distinctive, unrelatable realms. By amplifying the connections between war and civilian reality, *In Our Time* intimates the horrors of

war and the traumatic impacts that it has on society. Furthermore, it encourages society to engage in a more open conversation about experiences of violence and trauma on both individual and communal levels.

Despite disruptive narrative, the book uses recurring motifs and protagonists to connect episodes of war and civilian life and to convey the universality of violence and the resulting trauma. Nick is a character that returns across the text. He is first introduced as a young boy, geographically and temporally removed from the war context. The war episodes, present throughout the book, are initially sidelined to the vignettes. Over time the narrative, along with Nick, is thrust into the middle of the Great War and the reader's sensibility about the great divide between civilian and military life during the war is ruptured. Furthermore, the connective links between the war and civilian stories constructs trauma as both an individual and collective experience. For example, in stories like "Indian Camp," "The Battler," and "Soldier's Home" we see how the individual experience has been shaped by various forms of violence. These stories share recurring themes such as early encounters with violence, inability to communicate trauma from violent experience and a search for a source of authority. This authority is often informed by a construction of an idealized masculinity. These themes connect the various war and non-war stories across the text and construct a more universal understanding of trauma.

*In Our Time* takes part in a greater historical discussion about language and war through its engagement in the discussion on the (re)creation of memory and the (un)availability of language in war/violence/a traumatic setting. Fussell explores the difficulty of using language, or man-made rhetoric, to describe a war that seemed so



“indescribably” larger than life. In his chapter “Oh What a Literary War,” Fussell challenges the notion of war as indescribable and suggests rather that it was an “unspeakable” (170) experience, one that did not conform to language that was available at the time. War as an experience is entirely physical and defies language. Yet, language was created by man to try to express physical life, but the events of the Great War had never before been seen or experienced before so there was no precedent on how to use language to describe the kinds of things that were happening. As evidenced by Hemingway’s written, the initial reaction was to deny the existence of the events at all, and by doing so soldiers and writers developed a new way of language to talk about trauma--by not talking about it. We have to read through the silence.

Hemingway rarely gives readers enough information to be able to make hard, concrete conclusions about his writing. The closest we can get to a conclusion is a well-supported conjecture. Thus, Hemingway allows, and even encourages, readers to have multiple and even competing interpretations. The reader often plays just as an important role in constructing the narrative as the writer. The obscurity and open-endedness of much of the text mimics real-life stories and how they rarely have clearly-defined answers. Furthermore, it mimics the heart-breaking and logic-defying obscurity and uncertainty that defined many lives after WWI.

In this essay, I have chosen to address the silence by constructing a “reader’s guide” that moves linearly through the book examining the progression of trauma through various formative moments of violence. The reader’s guide is formatted in accordance with the book’s own tripartite structure. This structure informed by the various stages of

Nick's life: childhood and the formation of self, adolescence and questioning of the self and of authority figures, and adulthood and questioning of the world. In each of these sections, the themes of violence, masculinity and trauma are apparent in various forms. I have chosen to discuss the book in this linear segmented structure because it gives preference to the Nick stories which, as the only continuously developing story, is meant to be read as a guiding and connective thread throughout the book. While the trajectory of a novel traditionally follows the trajectory of one particular character, the recurrence of Nick in this book provides that traditional form and the intermittent stories that do not include Nick rupture that form. Nick helps to familiarize the books unfamiliar structure and by extension, its highly unfamiliar subject matter of war and violence.

The first section of this essay focuses on the formation of self, early observations of violence, and the disruption of the self that occurs as a result of trauma. The second section focuses on adolescent experiences that complicate this early sense of self. In this section, the protagonist directly experiences violence for the first time and is forced to redefine his ideas on masculinity and authority because of this experience. In the third and final section, there is a further distancing from the self as the narrator/protagonist seeks external relationships to distance himself and find healing from their previous trauma. In the end, the narrator/protagonist is unsuccessful in building sustainable healthy relationships and rejects society. Readers are left with the crucial question of whether or not it is possible to return to a pre-war/pre-trauma self in a post-war society.

Another reason for my linear-analysis approach to the book is my belief that a "reading guide" structure best highlights the connective links throughout the book,

ultimately rendering a better understanding of the importance of recognizing *In Our Time* as a cohesive, unified piece of literature and not just several disjointed short-stories and vignettes. While there has been ample critical academic research produced on WWI literature, this research neglects to include a thorough investigation of *In Our Time* into the discussion. Again, considering that *In Our Time* was Hemingway's first book ever published, its heavy engagement with the themes of war, violence and trauma, and his presentation of these arguments in a totally different form than his other works, I argue that *In Our Time* is the most important foundational work to consider in forming an understanding of Hemingway and how his literature responds to a war shook world. Furthermore, *In Our Time* provides readers with an inside look at the evolution of Hemingway's writing process. The exploration of masculinity, violence and trauma explored through *In Our Time* prepares readers to address these themes in greater depth in Hemingway's later war novels. In "A very short story" readers are introduced to a war-wounded protagonist who struggles to maintain romantic and sexual relationships due to his war-trauma. The relationship between a wounded soldier and war nurse, their individual and collective struggles for survival are developed further in *Farewell to Arms*. The wounded soldier that appears in the Chapter VI vignette provides a basis for interpreting Jake Barnes' injury in *The Sun Also Rises*. *In Our Time*'s move to Europe after the war also sets readers up for the later European-entrenched novel. Furthermore Our exposure to and understanding of the traumatized narrator in *In Our Time* teaches us how to approach and make sense of his later works.

## REPRESSION 101: FORMATION OF TRAUMA

### Establishing Speaker, Tone and Context.

It is important to recognize that the book in its entirety is an attempt to rediscover both a pre-war and a pre-trauma self through the reclaiming of memory. This book grapples with more than just the rewriting of a war-specific trauma, but is also interested in the trauma, in general, that affects and defines all of us. Through the various vignettes and short-stories, Hemingway creates and explores snapshots of the lives of various characters, focusing on the most formative moments. This process begins at early childhood (“Indian Camp”) and moves through various periods of a life, such as adolescence, young adulthood, marriage and loss. This trajectory is explored in an effort to understand or to communicate the progression of a traumatic experience and how this experience impacts a general understanding of a traumatized self living in an overall traumatized society.

As the first story in *In Our Time*, “On the Quai at Smyrna” sets the tone for how to read and interpret both the form and content of the book as a whole. Formatically, the story stands alone in the text. It is neither specified as a prologue or preface, nor does not belong to any of the succeeding chapters. Chapter I of *In Our Time* starts off in a pre-WWI context and the stories progress chronologically from there. Yet, “On the Quai at Smyrna” is a post-WWI narrative, and exists outside of the chapter-organization of the book. The unique storytelling of “On the Quai at Smyrna” establishes the impact of war-trauma on the narrator. Due to this story’s placement at the very beginning, we can conclude that the perspective of the traumatized narrator from “Smyrna” can be applied

to the narrational perspective throughout the book. Thus, “Smyrna” provides the lens through which we can contextualize the violence and interpret the trauma across *In Our Time* as a whole.

The primacy of “Smyrna” in the book is one element that makes this story stand apart from the others, and which supports our reading of the story as a foundational text. The communication of a specific location through the title is another aspect that sets “Smyrna” apart from other short stories in the text that have vague and nondescript titles. The title, in conjunction with the story’s context, can be used to identify the specific setting--time and place-- of the story. The inclusion of this specific and informative detail alerts readers to the importance of setting in this story. The book as whole tends away from specificity and descriptive detail; thus, the writer chooses to reveal this detail so that readers can readily identify the post-WWI context of the story and the implications of trauma suggested by that context. The post-war and post-trauma aspects of this foundational story show that Hemingway prioritizes the themes of violence and trauma across the text.

In addition to its uniquely specific setting, the structure and thematic content of “On the Quai at Smyrna” also set this story apart from the rest of the book. The disjointed narrative style characteristic of the text as a whole seems, for a brief moment, to cohere in this opening story. Whereas episodes of war are contained within the journal-entry-esque style of the vignettes, and episodes of everyday life are communicated through the more familiar novelistic style of the short stories, these two forms of storytelling coincide in this first story.

Despite the cohesiveness of “Smyrna” in comparison to other stories in the book, there is an oddness about the speaker’s narration due to a tension between the emotional impact of the story and the way that it is narrated. This oddness is prevalent from the first line, “The strange thing was, he said, how they screamed every night at midnight” (9). This sentence conveys a frightening, if not horrific, scene. However, the narrator’s tone is flat and emotionally detached from the human suffering suggested. A few lines down, when he says “We used to turn the searchlight on them to quiet them. That always did the trick” (9), his tone shifts from apathetic to unsympathetic. Not only is the narrator unconcerned by their suffering, he makes efforts to silence them so that their suffering does not inconvenience him. There is a clear divide between the sufferers, “they,” and the observer, “I,” that tries to deny their suffering in this passage. From its opening lines, “Smyrna” introduces the important themes of emotional detachment from suffering and the incommunicability of suffering from victim to witness which will continue to shape our understanding of the rest of the story and influence our reading of the book as a whole.

The tension between the story’s emotional and contextual information is further developed through the juxtaposition between the presence of war and the absence of fighting in “Smyrna”. We do not know immediately from either the title or the first few sentences that the speaker is in a war-setting. In fact, the war is never explicitly mentioned in this story, but it is something we can piece together through clues. Half-way through the first paragraph the speaker mentions “One time I was a senior officer on the pier and a Turkish officer came up to me in a frightful rage because one of our sailors had

been most insulting to him” (9). This sentence conveys several details of importance to our deciphering the war setting. First of all, it establishes the speaker’s identity in connection to the military. While his specific rank is not evident, we know that “one time” he was a senior officer. Furthermore, the detail of the Turkish officer amplifies our understanding of the setting and the identity of the speaker. It identifies the speaker as a non-Turkish officer, an unknown “other” officer in this scene. The detail of a “Turkish officer” along with the specific geographic marker is expected to be enough for the average reader of Hemingway’s time period to recognize the setting as the Turkish occupation of Smyrna in 1922<sup>6</sup>. While it is unclear from the story how much Hemingway expects his reader to know about this conflict, it is important that the reader recognizes that there are at least two different nations, the Turks and the Greeks, fighting over the same territory and that the speaker belongs to an external group acting like the watchdog to the whole conflict.

A few lines down, it is revealed that the speaker communicates with the Turkish officer “through an interpreter,” which further establishes the “otherness” or foreignness of the speaker to the setting. We can infer that the speaker is not a Greek officer because at the time of the occupation, the Turks and Greeks likely would not be having an amicable conversation on the same pier. The next detail of note in this passage is that the interaction is set on a pier where the speaker specifically mentions being in charge of sailors. Britain and other Allied forces maintained warships off the coast of Turkey at this

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<sup>6</sup> Lim, John, and Jeff Benvenuto. "The Genocide of Ottoman Greeks, 1914-1923." *Rutgers–Newark Colleges of Arts & Sciences*. Rutgers, n.d. Web. 22 Apr. 2017.

time. By piecing together small but descriptive details from the passage, we are able to deduce that our speaker was a member of the British military engaging with the war.

In a book that carries the weight of WWI on its shoulder, but under its sleeve, the setting of this story outside of the context of the Great War seems relevant. It emphasizes the ongoing experience of war that is a recurring theme across the text. WWI was thought to be the war that ends all wars; yet in 1922, just five years after its end, violence is still very much present. The persistence of violence in a post-war world defies the notion that war ever truly over. *In Our Time* uses the example of WWI to argue that war is not an event that can be singularly pinpointed down in history as having a specific beginning and end date, but that the effects of war, and even the event of war itself, continue to reach into history long after the immediate experience or official declaration of war is over.

The war context and the speaker's identity in "On the Quai at Smyrna" introduces the theme of otherness, also central to our understanding of the formation of trauma across *In Our Time*. Many stories in the book communicate hardships that are experienced by characters left out of, or intentionally excluded from, the mainstream narrative. "On the Quai at Smyrna" is a story about otherness experienced or observed on multiple levels. It focuses on a war that is outside of the mainstream narrative of war of the time period. Compared to the novelty and expansiveness of WWI, the stand-off at Smyrna is just an "other," lesser war. The speaker-protagonist is an "other" as a Westerner in a prominently Eastern setting. He is also an "other" because he observes violence but does not experience it himself. This denotes an interesting paradox where



the story's setting is "othered" compared to a greater worldly perspective, while the main character is "othered" compared to the focused setting of the specific story. The various layers of "otherness" in "Smyrna" suggest an understanding of "otherness" as a relative term that depends not on an inherent quality, but on the perspective of the subject performing the "othering." The theme of otherness goes hand in hand with the incommunicability of trauma that was mentioned briefly earlier. As we will explore in greater detail, the narrator of "Smyrna" experiences a dichotomy where he is unable to communicate his trauma both because he is an "other" to the violence and because he is "othered" by his trauma and rendered incapable of speech. Otherness and incommunicability of trauma are important themes for this story and the text as a whole.

Like the other vignettes, this short story is vague in terms of who is speaking and who is being spoken to. The occasional address of a second-person "you" gives a sense of a specific and intended audience for the story. Just as an understanding of the narrator in this story can be applied to the entire book, an understanding of the audience can be applied to the whole book as a whole as well. The narrator inserts the phrase "You remember" (11) twice in his narration. The use of the second person implies a conversational tone and suggests that the narrator intends specifically to share his personal experience with an intimate relation. The phrase, "You remember" also allows readers to infer that the addressee has some degree of experience in the setting that the narrator describes. The sentence fragment, "You remember when they ordered us" allows readers to determine the relationship between the narrator and intended audience because of the relationship between the pronouns "they" and "us." The "us" unifies the mentioned

“you” and the first-person “I” and the fact that the “us” is given orders by a “they” implies a shared status of inferiority held by the “us” in relation to the “they”. Thus, the narrator writes to a comrade of similar rank about his own experiences on the ship. While the comrade once shared in those experiences with the narrator, as evidenced by the “you remember,” the narrator’s retelling of his experiences suggests that the comrade is no longer around. While it is not clear what happened to the addressee in the present, the important point is that the narrator longs for someone with similar experiences with whom he can share his own.

Considering the psychological framework of the book that this chapter lays out, another justifiable inference is that the unidentified “you” denotes a split sense of self in the narrator who shares his war experience with an imagined comrade because he has no one else to talk with about his trauma. This reading of a psychologically unstable narrator is backed up by the disjointed narrative and inconsistent speaker that is characteristic of the text as a whole. Despite the shifting plots and narrators, the stories seem to have a unifying link that ties them all together. Whether this suggests that each story represents one attempt by the narrator to capture a single experience, or whether the narrator wishes to show the universality of all human experience by telling stories from different perspectives with overlapping themes and content, remains still to be argued.

The incommunicability of the nature of war is a theme we have already discussed at length in the context of “Smyrna” and one that continues to pop up in this story, and across the text. I have made the claim that the narrator in “Smyrna” makes a continuous and concerted effort to erase the violence from his story. Yet, here is our narrator, directly

relaying his experiences on a ship during wartime. Or is he? Though there are mentions of occurrences of violence, they are not described in great detail and they exist without context. No specific war or battle is mentioned. The possibility of violence is presented in the first sentence which introduces the image of “they” screaming at midnight. As the story progresses, there is no context for who is screaming or why. The narrative voice progresses without paying much attention to the screaming and the reader absent-mindedly follows suit. The possibility of violence is introduced again when the narrator describes his encounter with the angry Turkish officer. The officer approaches the narrator in “a frightful rage,” suggesting the potential for a fight to break out between the two parties. The narrator then calms the officer down by assuring him that the sailor will be “most severely punished” (9). He repeats the phrase “most severely” again emphasizing the severity of the punishment. Though the specifics of the punishment are not described, the language of severity and the situational context of the military implies a physical punishment. However, though this assurance of retribution quells the Turk’s frustration, readers get a different perspective. The narrator’s personal perspective and his conversation (in English) with the accused sailor lead readers to believe that the sailor is not going to be punished at all. In just one page and a half, we have been presented with three potentially violent scenarios and yet not one act of actual violence.

The narration of “Smyrna” exists in a realm of near-violence that continues in the scene of the dead babies in the following paragraph. The narrator gives no context about the babies, how they died, what they looked like etc. He just mentions that they were dead. Despite the lack of context, the phrase “dead babies” is visually and viscerally

disturbing on its own. Further explanation or description would have clashed with the understated tone of the rest of the story. The image of the dead babies escalates the possibilities of violence mentioned earlier to actual violent occurrences. It prepares us for the next scene where the narrator describes the moment when he watches someone die. However, again, this moment is not descriptive, but simply declarative. He says, "So I had a look at her and just then she died" (10). He then tries to distance himself from the immediacy of that moment, of his presence in that moment by clarifying that her body looked "exactly as though she had been dead over night" (10). If he suggests that the woman died overnight, he does not have to acknowledge or recognize the fact that he just witnessed a person die. Despite the war context of the story, the language of the story seems to want to ignore the deadly connotations of war.

The language that the narrator uses to describe the woman's dead body is limited and thus, further perpetuates the tension between the story's emotional information and its narration. Several stories later, "Soldier's Home" presents society's stereotype for war stories to glorify and expand death beyond what it actually is. However, the narrator here does the opposite of that. His vocabulary of death is limited to two phrases: "she died" and her body "went absolutely stiff," (10) both of which are repeated in loosely varied forms. The absolute lack of descriptive language or sentimentality used to describe the woman's death impedes the reader's ability to imagine it or glorify it in any way. There is no grandeur or sentimentalism that surrounds her death. It just is. At the end of the scene, the occurrence of her death is straight out denied by the "medical chap" who declares the

episode “impossible” (10). The entire scene is wrapped up in such a way that communicates no sense of loss, or even the event of a loss.

By not embellishing the moment of the woman’s death, Hemingway rejects our desire to find greater meaning in death. However, the sentimental reader feels an incongruity between the fact of the woman’s death and the way it is described. The tension between the fact of death as it is communicated in the narrative and society’s expectations about how it should be described highlights the key tension between combatants and civilians, those who have first-hand experience of war and those with a limited second-hand exposure. Through this war story that defies all expectation about what a war story should look like, Hemingway makes a social critique on the unbridgeable divide between a civilian’s and a combatant’s reality. The gap in communication that exists between civilians and combatants leaves us to wonder question is if this gap is caused by the very nature of war or the nature of society’s approach to trauma. As an introductory story “Smyrna” does not go into enough depth in the nature of war nor of society and we will have to look to later stories, such as “Indian Camp,” “The Battler,” and “Soldier’s Home,” for a better understanding of the causations of this gap in communication.

As mentioned, despite the fact that “Smyrna” introduces the war setting that will shape much of our discussion on *In Our Time*, the actual event of war is excluded from the narrative. The narrative exists in a grey area where violence is an ever-present possibility, but never enters the realm of reality. This grey zone takes off when the narrator describes a would-be battle between two (possibly three?) unidentified groups.

Though the battle is one that never takes place, it feels real because of the way it is described, detailing specific moments and actions. The speaker sets the scene by describing what he was doing at the time the battle was supposed to have taken place--“I had the wind up when we came in that morning”--and what his opponent was doing--“He had any amount of batteries and could have blown us clean out of the water” (11). The stage for the battle is set and war seems like the likely outcome of the confrontation between the “I/we” and the “He”. However, the anticipated shift between the conditional and the declarative is never realized. Instead, the description of the battle continues in the conditional tense, “We were going to come in, run close along the pier, let go the front and rear anchors and then shell the Turkish quarter of the town. They would have blown us out of the water, but we would have blown the town simply to hell” (11). The speaker exaggerates this moment of battle, drawing out the scene to add to our sense that this battle actually occurs. By the time the speaker gets to the last clause, the reader has forgotten that the sentence opens with a conditional statement and that all of the actions that follow are only imagined. The speaker conveys such a strong mental image of what the battle would have looked like that readers are convinced, if just momentarily, that it actually occurs. Hemingway constructs a situational irony where the reality of the battle is a fantasy and the fantasy of the battle is the reality. In the end, the violence proves only minimal as the speaker admits that “They just fired a few blank charges at us as we came in” (11).

The passage about the would-be battle produces a sea of confusion for the reader. The use of the conditional tense along with the elaborate details of the battle are

confusing because we know that the battle never actually occurs. The lack of specific characters or players in the battle is confusing in a different way because we can clearly picture this battle happening, but we have no idea who is involved. The passage opens by referring to a “You,” which we have defined as the real/imagined comrade who is the intended audience of the story. The perspective then shifts to an “I,” which seems to be at odds with a “He,” but then the “I” shifts to a “We” and the “He” becomes a “They”. This disorienting assortment of pronouns is further complicated by the sudden introduction of two specific characters, Kemal and the Turkish commander. The only actual fighting in this story takes place between Kemal and the commander. An initial reaction is to register these characters as opponents because they are introduced fighting, but in reality, they are on the same side. It is interesting then that the speaker includes the specific name of one, but not both, of the Turkish men. The detail of a specific name stands out in a story where characterization is ambiguous at best. Hemingway only includes a specific detail when it feels central to the understanding of a text. It is clear that Kemal is an official of high authority because, according to the speaker, he sacks the other commander for “exceeding his authority or some such thing” (11). Despite Kemal’s elevated status in his own society, it is clear that the speaker does not recognize his authority in the same way. Kemal’s authority is othered and thus deemed unimportant to the speaker. As evidenced by other parts of the story as well, the speaker has a clear distaste for the “other,” which is further evidence of the remnants of WWI divisions and the extends the possibility for volatility between nations into the present day. The pattern of “othering” is felt strongly in this section because the speaker looks out at the violence as it happens on shore and

fantasizes about a violence that he can be part of, or even, initiate. Yet again, our central character is left out of the personal experience of violence. However, despite his indirect experience with violence, his necessity to relay this scene is evidence that he has been impacted by it in some way. As we have noted, his narration is focused on the facts and is devoid of his own interiority. He lacks the ability to communicate his experience particularly because he has no physical proof of his experience with violence or of the trauma that results from it. If he cannot concretely show how he has been affected, how can society possibly help or even believe him?

The closing sentence of the paragraph, "It would have been the hell of a mess" conveys an unusual tone that falls somewhere between relief--that the fight didn't actually go down-- and an oddly placed light-heartedness towards what the outcome of the fight would have been had it occurred. This unusual and uncomfortable tone echoes the speaker's response to the dead woman mentioned earlier and repeats again in the final lines of the story, "It was all a pleasant business. My word yes a most pleasant business." These remarks come in response to the horrific violence that is described in the preceding sentence about the "baggage animals" whose forelegs had to be broken and who had been "dumped into the shallow water" (12). The narrator describes the mules as "baggage animals" (11), emphasizing their utilitarian value over their value/rights as living beings. It also paints an unfavorable image of the Greeks who seemed to have thoughtlessly used their animals to carry their baggage to the ship and once they realized they could not take the animals with them, had no other remedy but to dispose of them in a quick, but cruel and painful manner. Despite the cruelty and uncomfortable sentiment produced by these



events, the narrator passes no judgement in favor of or against the Greeks in his terse speech. His tone conveys a complete lack of recognition of the brutality before him and is at odds with the uncomfortable scene he describes and conveys a resignation to his powerless position as a distant spectator of violence. He cannot pass any moral judgement onto the scene because he is unable to intervene in any way. His resigned tone is necessary to preserve his sense of self and to find some way to justify his spectatorship and powerlessness during these horrific episodes.

The speaker understands that, regardless of his personal opinion on the present brutalities, the deaths were an inevitable outcome of the situation--and one he has no control over. Therefore, since he cannot control the story he observes, he chooses to control his response to it. He controls the way he memorializes the event in his mind. For the sake of his mental health--the preservation of his untraumatized self--, he chooses not to recognize the violence, which, in this instance, is the next best thing to not having witnessed the violence at all. As remains clear, "Smyrna" is, surprisingly, a war story. It is not a conventional war story because the narrator is merely a witness to and not participant in the violence. His experience is limited to his indirect interactions with violence and mostly, to his observations of the violence. The narrator's side-line perspective of the war is emphasized through his narration that purposefully leaves out any description or reference to actual moments of war. Though the narrator is not an active participant in the war, he observes clearly the violence that goes on, and yet he cannot communicate fully this experience of witnessing a war without actually being directly part of it.

Just as the narrator of “Smyrna” struggles to communicate the entirety of his experience, the book as a whole struggles to communicate the entirety of its story to the reader. The written word on the page tells one story, but there is a sense that the narrator wants to share a different story, but lacks the language to do so. Furthermore, since the narrator is unsure of how to communicate this trauma, he chooses not to recognize it at all. By curbing his emotional response, he can exert control over how he memorializes the event. His repeated assertion of “You remember” throughout the story help to insist on a particular narrative that, over time, can become the reality. Thus, by suppressing the violence and his response to the violence, over time he can erase the violence from his experience completely. Or can he?

#### The First Vignettes: Another Evasion.

Hemingway continues to pull the reader back in time along this journey of the re-discovery of past memories to the next most relevant memory, the Chapter I vignette, otherwise noted as “[Everybody was drunk]”. Though this memory is structurally placed after “Smyrna,” its WWI context places it temporally before that story. This vignette begins along a similar vein as the introductory chapter. Just as the narrator in “Smyrna” assumes a level of contextual familiarity between the speaker and the audience, the opening line, “Everybody was drunk” (13), throws the reader into a setting of assumed familiarity without actually giving any context. From the opening sentence, the reader is thrust into an “othered” position. Readers feel that they are intruding on a story that is not directed at them, but rather, intended for some other audience who is more familiar with

the speaker. The overall lack of concrete details in this story leads to two arguments based on the speaker's intentions. On the one hand, the speaker is wary of giving too much context, which shows a disinclination towards complete openness and intimacy with a potential reader who does not share the same connection to the subject matter. On the other hand, the lack of concrete details in the story allows a more universal story to be told. The focus of the story becomes the retelling of a generic war-story and what this memory says about the experience of war on a general and not individual level. Additionally, the use of the first-person plural to narrate this story adds to that sense of a collective experience, which contrasts with the first-person singular narrator in "Smyrna" that made the story feel specific to an individual. Whether Hemingway seeks to convey a story about an individual versus collective experience is a question that will remain prominent throughout the book.

As we read and parse out certain identifying clues in the text, we can piece together the story's setting, but we cannot conclude with certainty the specific details of the vignette. One specific detail that the text offers is the military setting which is made evident through the military-specific terminology used in the story: "the whole battery," "the lieutenant," and "kitchen corporal". The situational information of the vignette agrees with the military setting that this language denotes. Just like in "Smyrna," the narrator mentions a specific place-name, "the Champagne" (13), that allows readers to situate the story in a specific geographic and temporal setting. Two major WWI battles

took place in the region of France known as the Champagne<sup>7</sup>. Both of these battles were fought between French and German forces and both ended up in defeat for the Allied powers. Thus, the specific geographic and temporal of “[Everybody was drunk]” denotes the important connection of the story to a specific war moment in history, yet readers are left to parse out the significance of this connection for themselves.

Considering the context of the Battles of the Champagne, it is interesting that the narrator quotes the dialogue in English, “I’m so drunk, I tell you” with some intermittent French, “mon vieux” (13) because it appears there were no English-speaking forces in the attack and the use of English suggests an “other” among the group. In relation to “Smyrna” and the soon-to-be explored “Indian Camp,” “othering” is used to distance a character from violence. However, there is no explicit violence in this vignette and the use of “othering” suggests that there may have been violence lurking beneath the surface that the narrator has successfully erased from the scene. It is difficult to identify who exactly is the “other” in this scene, but we can assume either the speaker or the addressee are not native French speakers. As we know from “Smyrna” and other stories, like *A Farewell to Arms*, Hemingway frequently writes from the point of view of an “othered” soldier in his war stories. In the previous story, and across the book, the narrator is pretty consistently an English speaker. Thus, concluding that the narrator of “[Everybody was drunk]” is the non-French speaking Englishman, we maintain that link between the

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<sup>7</sup> History.com Staff. "First Battle of Champagne begins." *History.com*. A&E Television Networks, 2009. Web. 4 Apr. 2017.

disjointed narratives in the text and highlight again the theme of “otherness” and how it is used to distance the speaker from immediate violence.

The text further supports a reading of the narrator as “othered” through the subtleties that differentiate the narrator from the group. Firstly, the first two sentences talk about “everybody” and the “whole” group being drunk, but there is no specific mention that the “I” fits in with this image of everyone else. Secondly, among a group of “lieutenants” and “adjutants,” the narrator is the only specified character that holds a non-combatant role. As a “kitchen corporal” (13) he sticks out of the group as a non-soldier. In the story, the fire in his kitchen literally causes him to stick out among the group. He is also pressured by the adjutant to “put it out” for fear that his fire would be “observed,” that his otherness would be observed (13). This passage further develops and challenges the ideas of “otherness” thus far presented in the text by introducing a moment where the “other” does not just exist on the fringes of the story, like the immovable narrator in “Smyrna,” but is situated directly within the group of non-others. The coexistence of the other and non-others is challenged by their direct contact. The “other’s” nonconformity is described as “dangerous” (13) and he must either conform or, considering the stakes of war, die. Again, we are confronted with a war-story in which violence is absent, yet the potential danger alluded to by the speaker’s fire, allows the possibility of violence to remain just under the surface of the story, like a bubble floating in air, waiting to be popped.

Speaking of violence floating under the story’s surface, the story’s reference to the Battle of the Champagne carries strong connotations of violence as both the first and

second battle resulted in horrible losses for the French army. The Second Battle of Champagne is an especially interesting case to consider, especially in our discussion of violence as something that is not actually allowed to enter the reality of the story, but is held an arm's length away, always an ever-present possibility. This battle was delayed multiple times due to the need for extra time to obtain sufficient resources necessary for a "major offensive"<sup>8</sup>. In the end, the one-month delay of the battle turned out to be fatal for the French forces because it "gave the Germans time to increase the strength of their defenses."<sup>9</sup> In the actual Battle of the Champagne the prolongation of violence resulted in an eruption of violence that was that much greater. If we apply historical lessons to this story, as I suggest Hemingway intends, considering the specific historical background he provides, we can conclude that the longer violence is stalled in the narrative, the more destructive the eventual eruption will be. "[Everybody was drunk]" is the second war story, but still the reader has not encountered an actual moment of fighting. On the one hand, the absence of violence in this explicit war-setting serves to challenge the stereotype that the most defining or most regular aspect of war is combat. On the other hand, this vignette confirms our understanding about a narrator that is unwilling to confront the traumatic realities of his experience.

"[Everybody was drunk]" challenges stereotypes other stereotypes about war, such as the conventional heroic image that society imposes on soldiers. The sentence, "The whole group was drunk going along the road in the dark" (13) indicates anxiety,

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<sup>8</sup> Rickard, J. "Second Battle of Champagne, 25 September- 6 November 1915." *Second Battle of Champagne, 25 September-6 November 1915*. N.p., 16 Aug. 2007. Web. 21 Apr. 2017.

<sup>9</sup> IBID

rather than bravery, towards confronting the sobering and gruesome reality of war. Though Hemingway's depiction of the nervous soldier does not fit with our ideals of the courageous soldier, it is a more realistic representation of the men going off to battle because it strips away their indelible exterior armour and reveals their flawed human interior. The drunken and nervous soldier exemplifies the reality of an unidealized human soldier. The image of a regular human soldier contrasts with the introduction of automatic weapons in WWI and further explains the soldiers' nervousness in the moment and the speaker's repression of the trauma looking back. Furthermore, the depiction of soldiers as "real people" allows readers to connect the trauma of war and the trauma experienced by regular, everyday people. Thus, the vignette communicates the experience of trauma on two levels: the hardships of a soldier going into war, and the universal hardships that precede moments of uncertainty. This unprecedented connection between a war and civilian experience are one step towards breaking down the barriers that make communication between these two worlds so difficult to achieve.

#### Moving Away From War, But Not Violence.

Turning to "Indian Camp," the third story in the book, that marks the end of book's backward looking trajectory and the beginning of the story's linear progression. In this story the narrative voice and setting shift again and place the reader in a sense of disorientation and "othered-ness" from the story's opening lines that is reminiscent of the two previous narratives. "Indian Camp" is narrated in third-person, unlike the two previous stories that have been in first-person. Additionally, this story is a departure from

the European war settings of the previous two stories and returns the speaker to the home base of the U.S. in a pre-war setting. The dramatic shifts in narration and setting are confusing because we are no longer certain if the book maintains the same trajectory and intentions that the previous two stories presented. The previous stories look at themes of trauma and otherness and the way that otherness has been used to communicate trauma in different ways. However, these stories allow readers to identify the narrator as the traumatized “other” because of the detached narration, which subverts any attempts at facing trauma. In “Indian Camp” the narrator is not present as a character in the story; we cannot attribute any sense of otherness or trauma to an absent figure. Thus, the reader becomes the “other,” forced to silently witness the instances of violence from afar. In this way, the reader in “Indian Camp” has a similar position to the speaker in “Smyrna” who witnesses death and murder from his permanent and removed position. By turning the reader into the observant “other,” Hemingway changes the stakes of the novel. As we discussed, both “Smyrna” and “[Everybody was drunk]” are stories directed at an intended audience, and do not take into account the general readerly audience. Now, the readers are forced to take on the role of the passive bystander and participate in the trauma that characterizes the book. This shift further solidifies our understanding of the universality of traumatic experiences across all people, regardless of their connection to war.

In “Indian Camp,” the readers are not alone in their observation of violence. Nick, a recurrent protagonist throughout the book and in this story is also subjected to a position of passive observation, one which he does not completely accept. While his



father performs the operation, he repeatedly urges Nick to “see,” but Nick refuses, “looking away so as not to see what his father was doing” (18). Nick’s unwillingness to witness the violence in “Indian Camp” echoes the narrator’s unwillingness to recognize the violence in “Smyrna.” However, despite his desire to erase the violence in this story, Nick is forced to confront it in the end. Nick and the reader share a unique position in this story where both are forced to sit back and observe a moment of violence that they cannot control. Again, this story emphasizes a crucial distinction between spectator and participant of violence, focusing on the spectator’s inability to openly communicate what he has observed. Because of Nick’s lack of expressed interiority, we must turn to the minute details of the story to gather information about how Hemingway intends this story to be read. As before, it is helpful to begin this process of dissemination with the story’s title.

Despite this story’s movement away from the experience of war in the 20th century, the title of the story “Indian Camp” reminds us that even in a story that feels temporally and spatially removed from the trauma of 20th century wars, there are still examples of violence and feuds between groups with or without the immediate context of war. The use of the word “camp” in the title “Indian Camp” carries connotations of war-like setting. A camp is defined as, “the place where an army or body of troops is lodged in tents or other temporary means of shelter.”<sup>10</sup> Alternatively, if Hemingway used the word “reservation” instead of “camp,” the connotation would have been simply, “The

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<sup>10</sup> "camp, n.2." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, March 2017. Web. 21 April 2017.

action or fact of reserving or retaining for oneself some right or interest in property...”<sup>11</sup>

The decision to describe the location as an Indian camp, portrays an image of the Indians as soldiers in a camp, still struggling for ownership over the land. The Indians are conveyed as temporary inhabitants, as outsiders.

On the other hand, the term Indian reservation conveys the sense of a finality of ownership and the Indians as the rightful and permanent inhabitants. Thus, it would paint the Indians as natives and not outsiders. Hemingway makes the conscious decision of using the term “Indian” over other popular terms such as “American Indian” or “Native American”. The term “Indian” is a blatantly incorrect identifier for the indigenous people of the Americas. We cannot ignore the true definition of “Indian” as denoting someone from the country of India, again, denoting an “other”. As evidenced in earlier stories, “otherness” also carries the possibility for danger. These connotations of “otherness” and danger were surely not lost on Hemingway, who is always so deliberate in his word choice and identifying details, when choosing the title of this story.

The use of personal names is another important element that immediately draws attention to the division between groups in the story. The white/ “American” characters in the story can be identified by their individual names: Nick, Uncle George and Nick’s father. The non-white/ “non-american” characters are not individualized by name and are just referred as Indians/the Indian. The lack of individuality given to the Indians perpetuates the reader’s perception of these characters as foreign, as other and as potentially dangerous. It is interesting that “Nick’s father” is a name that is neither super

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<sup>11</sup> "reservation, n." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, March 2017. Web. 21 April 2017.

specific nor super generic because it situates him in this middle-ground between the known and familiar and the unknown and fearful. The idea of Nick's father as a potentially dangerous other will be explored further in relation to his father's perspective of violence and how that challenges Nick's/the narrator's perspective.

We might explore the perception of Nick's father in the story in order to understand the story's relationship to violence. The name "Nick's father" suggests both a respect for an elder and authority figure and at the same time conveys an unfamiliarity between the speaker and the character in question. While the name "Uncle George" also conveys a similar respect for an elder and authority, the specificity of the name conveys less of a sense of unfamiliarity than that of Nick's father. The way that the adult characters are introduced gives the sense that the story is told from a youthful perspective. Nick is the only child that appears in this story. Nick's youthfulness makes him the only non-other, because he does not belong to the foreign realm of adults. However, his age simultaneously "others" him because he is the only one that does not fit in with the rest of his group. Nick's young age as an "other" is also apparent in his unique perspective on violence.

The way that the images and events of the story are described also conveys a narrative voice that seeks to capture and convey the perspective of a child in this strange new land. One element of this youthful perspective is the narrator's complete innocence towards controversial issues. For example, as discussed previously, the title "Indian Camp" presents a certain, skewed perspective of the people living in the camp as temporary residents, rather than indigenous people. Although the narrator adopts the term

“Indian,” his narration is completely ignorant of the prejudices this term conveys. For example, the opening lines, “At the lake shore there was another rowboat drawn up. The two Indians stood waiting. Nick and his father got in the stern of the boat and the Indians shove it off and one of them got in to row” (15) are purely descriptive. If the narrator held any biases against the Indians we would expect it to show in his initial description of them or in the initial interaction between the whites and the Indians. Instead, the narrator simply states what is happening in the scene without trying to alter the reader’s perspective.

There is nothing special or different about the Indians in comparison with the other characters other than their names. However, as readers we are aware of a tension between the two groups of characters that is not communicated through the narration. We know this because of our historical/literary knowledge (and our analysis of the title), but not because of anything overtly expressed in the text. Thus, we recognize that we are presented with a story that is intentionally made to seem ignorant or naive because of the narrator’s youthful perspective. The naivety that pervades the narration is in conflict with the gruesome facts of the story and readers must find some way to reconcile these two different perspectives. We must ask ourselves, why does Hemingway choose to convey a story about pain and death through the eyes of a child? What can this perspective show us that we cannot see from an adult perspective?

The text shows important moments where “otherness” and/or fear of the unknown ultimately results in some form of violence. Through the characterizations of Nick and of Nick’s father, the narrative presents two possible approaches to violence. The narrative

voice, outside of these characters presents a third approach to violence. The first instance of violence we encounter is the screaming of the woman who “had been trying to have a baby for two days” (16). The woman “screamed just as Nick...followed his father and Uncle George into the shanty” (16). Here, we are given an image of Nick and his family, but not of the woman screaming. Her screaming seems to exist outside of the scene and separate from herself. When the woman is described, “she lay in the lower bunk, very big under the quilt. Her head was turned to one side” (16), and there is no mention of her screaming or of her pain. Again, readers know what the narrator does not know, or cannot convey. We know that the woman is screaming because of the pain of being in labor, but the violent screams are incomprehensible to the young narrator who has no knowledge or understanding of pregnancy. As exhibited earlier, fear of the unknown often leads to violence. The narrator’s, alongside Nick’s, attitude towards the woman in labor is much more ominous in the story than it needs to be. The story creates a violent perception of the woman’s screams because of a lack of understanding of what the screams represent.

Other characters have different responses to the pregnant woman’s screams in the story. For example, the Indian men’s response is to “mov[e] off up the road to sit in the dark and smoke out of range of the noise she made” (16). Their response conveys a different approach than Nick’s. The men move away from the woman so as not to be bothered by her “noise.” The men don’t even recognize the noise as “screams” which suggests a response that is apathetic rather than fearful, and echoes the narrator’s response to violence in “Smyrna.” Again, the consciousness of the adult reader interrupts the narrative voice here because common sense tells us that resignation or apathy towards

a screaming pregnant woman can end in harm if the screaming is not addressed. As noted in the Champagne vignette, the prolongation of the eruption of violence results in a more intense eruption. The condition of an ailing pregnant woman will be much worsened if left untreated. Neither Nick nor the men make an immediate effort to understand the woman's pain. Thus, Nick's fear of violence and the men's denial of it accomplish the same result in the end: greater violence. This outcome re-affirms the conclusion from "[Everybody was drunk]" that attempting to erase violence by ignoring it only leads to greater harm in the end. In "Indian Camp" this harm takes the form of the inexplicable and brutal death of the Indian woman's husband. This death is communicated in a similar way to the death in "Smyrna." The narrator of "Indian Camp" avoids mentioning the Indian man's suicide instead reporting that "His throat had been cut from ear to ear" (20). It is not until Nick bluntly asks, "Why did he kill himself?" (21) that the fact of his suicide is even addressed. The fact that Nick is the only character that directly confronts the man's fate is further evidence that Nick does not totally accept the perspective of violence that he is exposed to as a young boy. Nick's refutation of authority will be further explored in Chapter II.

The "othering" of violence in "Indian Camp" is not limited to the husband's death. Nick's father does the same in response to the Indian woman's pain when he refutes Nick's pleas with, "her screams are not important. I don't hear them because they are not important" (17). Just as the narrative tries to deny the woman's death in "Smyrna," Nick's father denies her pain here. The Indian woman is hardly referenced throughout the entire operation, further showing Nick's father's ability to block her out

completely from his task. It seems here that Nick's father is able to overcome any psychological trauma related to the woman's suffering because he "others" her and feels no human connection to her.

Nick's response to the violence does not agree with his father's ability to overlook the woman's pain. While the woman screams, Nick's father explains to young Nick that "The baby wants to be born and she wants it to be born. All her muscle are trying to get the baby born. That is what is happening when she screams" (17). He rationalizes the woman's pain and explains it away as a necessity of her childbirth. Nick is not able to adopt this perspective and begs his father, "Oh, Daddy, can't you give her something to make her stop screaming?" (17). The observation of the woman suffering causes Nick pain, and his inability to stop this suffering causes him greater pain. It is clear that Nick, unlike his father who dissociates the pain, has an aversion to the woman's suffering. It is not clear if his aversion is due to empathy, a sense of connectedness with the sufferer, or the grotesqueness of the violence he witnesses. The bottom line here is that Nick cannot separate himself from the violence in the same way that his father does because he has not yet learned the vital importance of "othering" trauma. Nick's empathy towards the woman shows that he is still in a state of pre-trauma, suggesting that a post-trauma self is not a natural state of being, but rather, one that is incurred through some experience of violence. The differentiation presented here between a pre- and post-trauma self extends our understanding of trauma as something that is formed over time and influenced by the socially learned behavior of "othering."

By the end of the passage, it seems that Nick's perspective towards the suffering of the Indians has shifted. The moment where Nick's father uncovers the death of the woman's husbands conveys a shift in the narrator's tone and portrayal of human suffering. During the woman's labor, the narrator avoids giving detail or clear images of what is going on at the time. The narrator describes the father's preparations in detail: the boiling of the water, the scrubbing of the hands, but when it comes down to the actual moment of the operation, the narrator focuses on everything but the father's actions. "When he started to operate" (18) the narration shifts focus to the actions of "Uncle George and three Indian men" who "held the woman still" even when she "bit Uncle George on the arm" (18). We know that the operation happens, but the scene is not narrated in the story. The entire event is summed up by the line, "It all took a long time" (18). Furthermore, the narrator's aversion to portraying the suffering is expressed through Nick's repeated aversion to the scene. While Nick's father tries to explain to him what he is doing, "He was looking away so as not to see what his father was doing" (18), "His curiosity had been gone for a long time" (19).

In the midst of the surgical operation we are presented with a narrator and a Nick who avoids directly acknowledging the violence in front of him at all costs. However, at the end of the passage, when the Indian's husband's death is revealed, the narrator describes the scene in clear detail.

He pulled back the blanket from the Indian's head. His hand came away wet. He mounted on the edge of the lower bunk with the lamp in one hand and looked in. The Indian lay with his face toward the wall. His throat had been cut from ear to ear. The blood had flowed down into a pool where his body sagged the bunk. His head rested on his left arm. The open razor lay, edge up, in the blankets. (20)



The narrator uses specific details, such as “his head rested on his left arm” to create a complete vivid image of the gory scene before him. This contrasts with the previous passage about the woman in labor, where the narrator uses extraneous dialogue to fill the gaps in context. Here, the narrator confronts the scene head on and does not hold back from communicating this scene. Similarly, we find out that, “Nick, standing in the door of the kitchen, had a good view of the upper bunk when his father, lamp in one hand, tipped the Indian’s head back” (20). Unlike in pages prior where Nick avoids seeing the bloody scene in front of him, here we know that Nick has full view of the scene and, for whatever reason, chooses this time not to look away.

The shift in narration between these two moments of violence also conveys a shift in Nick’s perspective of the violence that occurs in the story. Immediately after the shift, Nick exits the camp just as, “it was just beginning to be daylight when they walked along the logging road back toward the lake” (20). The connection between Nick’s metaphorical coming to the light and his physical coming into the light moment is not mere coincidence. Hemingway uses the narrational shift, the change in Nick’s behavior towards the bloody scene, and the detail of the impending daylight to show us the changes in Nick that occur at the end of this story. The story opens with the perspective of a naive young boy, blissfully ignorant of violence, death and otherness in the world. By the end of the story this perspective has shifted and is nearer to the emotionally removed, pragmatic perspective of Nick’s father. Yet, Nick’s perspective has not yet been as hardened as his father’s. We know this because of the image of natural beauty that closes the story--“the sun was coming up over the hills...” (21)--and Nick’s certainty

in the final line that, “he felt quite sure that he would never die” (21). Despite the proximity that Nick has just experienced to death, his youthful perspective still hangs on. Because of his “othered” perspective, he denies that death cannot ever happen to him. Nick “others” death in order to avoid the traumatic realization that death, like trauma and otherness, is a universal experience that happens to all of us eventually.

After this analysis it should be noted that the quality of otherness can be applied to just about every character, narrator and reader in these stories because it suggests the universality of not only trauma, but “otherness” as well. In other words, it brings to mind that “otherness” is a shared experience across humanity and a subjective, rather than unmovable, trait. Depending on which perspective the narrative takes, our perception of otherness changes. If we alter our perspective, thus our perception of otherness changes as well. Furthermore, since otherness and violence are so often intertwined in situations of war/violence in *In Our Time*, one can conclude that if we re-evaluate our perception of otherness in society, by changing our perspective, we can also re-evaluate the negative stereotypes and connotations assumed by that “otherness” which lead to fear of the unknown and possibly, violence.

Through this chapter, we have explored how Hemingway introduces the themes of trauma and the repression of violence that characterize the rest of the book. Hemingway introduces three different kinds of settings and speakers in the first three stories to show readers how violence is an ever-present reality, regardless of the specific time or place. By connecting post-war, in the midst of war, and pre-war stories, *In Our Time* asserts the universality of violence and of the traumatic experiences that shape all of

us. Furthermore, through the intentionally dry narration across these texts, the book shows how trauma, when unrecognized and untreated, causes one's capacity for empathy to dry up as well. We can conclude the question raised earlier about the causation of the incommunicability of trauma by looking at the connections between these introductory stories. The fact that Nick's father, who exists in a pre-war context, insists on refuting violence in the same way as the narrator of "Smyrna," who exists in a post-war context, suggests that the incommunicability of trauma is due to society's overall inability to confront emotionally-complex, and potentially damaging, situations. Through the alignment of these important themes across these three stories, Hemingway offers that war and social life are not as distinctive as society would have us believe. However, as we will see in Chapters II and III it is society's inability to recognize the similarities that perpetuate further trauma and incommunicability of this trauma.

## TOXIC MASCULINITY 101: EARLY EXPERIENCES WITH VIOLENCE AND MASCULINITY

The first chapter notes the narrative's repeated refutation of violence/death in events directly witnessed by the narrator. This distancing of the self from violence occurs because of the narrator's physical distance from violence through their position as spectator, rather than participant. The narrator's emotional detachment from violence is affected by the various authorities that teach him how to interpret that violence. The best example of the narrator's conditioning occurs in "Indian Camp" when Nick's perspective on the violence he witnesses is influenced directly by his father's, an important source of authority for him. Nick's father emphasizes that, "her screams are not important. I don't hear them because they are not important" (17). Nick is silent in response to his father's declarations as he processes the violence in front of him. Ultimately, Nick echoes his father's perspective at the end of the story when he says, "he felt quite sure that he would never die" (21). His absolute refutation of death is a re-interpretation of his father's earlier refutation of violence. However, Nick does not change his perspective immediately, but rather takes time to consider his father's ideas. As Nick develops and matures across later stories, he challenges the authority figures around him and the notions of violence and manhood that they have constructed for him. Because the authority in Nick's life comes from masculine figures, masculinity and authority are conflated in this text, with violence never far from the conversation. As violence becomes more prevalent and explicit in the stories, so does the protagonist's desire to embody an

idealized version of masculinity. However, as Nick becomes exposed to more violence, he challenges the conventional masculine standards set for him by his male authorities.

The erasure of violence that was noted in the previous chapter goes hand in hand with an erasure of an authority to define that violence. This chapter will explore a series of stories that suggest that ultimately, violence is used to replace an outdated or insufficient authority. Just as the previous chapter engages with stories that encompass a range of settings and narrators, the stories in this chapter will also be highly varied. “The Three Day Blow” introduces an adolescent Nick that continues to develop a masculinity identity. We see that Nick’s sense of masculinity is informed heavily by his father’s and expand our understanding of his father’s perspective that was briefly introduced in “Indian Camp”. The war-stories that will be explored through the vignettes in this chapter stand out from previous vignettes in that they depict actual moments of violence. Although the vignettes, situated in a war context, and the short stories, situated in a civilian context, differ greatly in terms of plot/setting, they are linked through a shared element of direct interaction with violence. Again, Hemingway introduces a common thread to connect stories from different contexts. This chapter will be focused on exploring the thread of overt violence and the struggle to find an authority that is strong enough to overpower that violence.

### Alcohol, Masculinity and Practicality.

“The Three Day Blow” is an important transitional story that shows an adolescent Nick and his friend Bill isolated from adult supervision. Despite their implied

independence the narrative reminds readers of the paternal authorities that the boys depend upon for housing, liquor and a prescribed masculinity. The boys' decision to drink whisky while their parents are away is an act that screams teenage rebellion. Their subsequent realization that they don't know anything about liquor, re-emphasizes their adolescence. Nick tries to comment on the whiskey when he says, "It's got a swell, smoky taste" and Bill responds "That's the peat" (46). Nick tries to assert his more informed knowledge of whisky by asserting, "You can't get peat into liquor" (46). Bill fires back, "That doesn't make any difference" (46) in an attempt to maintain his dominant footing in the conversation. In the end, the boys decide to drop the subject after admitting that neither one of them has ever seen peat before in their life and thus, probably have no idea what peat is (46). Despite the boys' effort to discuss and admire their whisky, like grown men, their actual inexperience disrupts this fantasy and instead reaffirms their adolescence and ignorance on mature topics. As we saw in "[Everybody was drunk]" liquor is associated with men and masculinity. Thus, Nick and Bill use their "knowledge" of liquor as a means to assert their own masculine authority. However, the narrative clearly distinguishes that the liquor they drink is not their own, but belongs to Bill's father, showing that the boys still must rely on more mature masculine figures to inform their own authority. The discussion of father figures that follows this conversation further emphasizes their ideas about masculine authority which are based on the examples of their fathers.

Their consumption of alcohol results in a discussion on their fathers' views on alcohol. Each boy tries to shape his own perspective based on his father's experience. As

the boys trade opinions, it becomes clear that their respective experiences with alcohol has differed greatly from family to family. Bill's father "says that opening bottles is what makes drunkards," while Nick reflects that "he had always thought it was solitary drinking that made drunkards" (52). However, Nick accepts Bill's opinion without refutation and communicates with Bill "respectfully" (52). Nick's easy acquiescence to Bill's opinion echoes the unacknowledged tension in "Indian Camp". In that story, Nick wants to conform to his father's views, but at the same time is initially wary of blindly accepting something he does not fully understand. Similarly, Nick is conflicted by his desire to not offend Bill, while still appealing to his father's guidance.

The narrative provides a unique visual moment through the description of whisky which accompanies the boys' conversation in this scene. The visual description catches the reader's attention because, as noted with earlier scenes, Hemingway rarely draws upon imagistic language. When he does, it is of great relevance. The narrator describes Nick's actions as "He poured water into his glass out of the pitcher. It mixed slowly with the whisky. There was more whisky than water" (52). This description of two elements coming together, water and whisky, but not mixing completely represents the conflict of opinion between the two boys. Nick seems to want the perspectives of both fathers to coalesce equally and without friction. The final line, "there was more whiskey than water" sounds ominous and potentially volatile. We can picture one element winning over the other, as one father's opinion wins over the other. This line calls to mind "[Everybody was drunk]" again with the alcohol that foreshadows moments of extreme violence, but also numbs one's awareness of that violence. In this scene, the alcohol

seems to foreshadow some sense of danger in Nick's argument, while at the same time, Nick tries to distance himself from that danger. He drinks more whisky and ultimately, submits to the pressure of Bill's authority.

The tension between the boys increases as their discussion reveals greater differences between their fathers. Bill admits that his father "gets a little wild sometimes," while Nick proudly announces that his father has "never taken a drink in his life" (52). The juxtaposition between the fathers' relationships with alcohol makes Bill uncomfortable and he remarks defensively, "Well, he's a doctor. My old man's a painter. That's different" (52). Bill seals the comparison between their fathers by arguing that their difference in opinion on alcohol is a result of their different occupations. The juxtaposition between a doctor and a painter has multiple potential implications. The text only gives one concrete implication which is that the painter father drinks, while the doctor father abstains. Painters depict life, while doctors grapple with death in real-life. If alcohol is a means of coping with trauma, one would expect doctors to have more trauma because of their real-life proximity to death. However, perhaps Hemingway suggests that an aesthetic representation of life and death is more traumatic than a real-life confrontation. As evidenced by "Indian Camp," the doctor takes a practical approach to death, which prevents him from having an emotional connection and experience of that trauma. The text does not show us an artistic approach to death, but if it is the opposite of a medical approach, we can assume that an artistic approach is emotional and sympathetic and therefore invites greater trauma onto the artist-observer. We might understand the narrator of the story to be the artist-observer here. As discussed



in Chapter I, the manner of narration suggests a narrator who is deeply affected by some trauma. Though the text itself represses emotionality, we interpret this repression as the speaker's way of coping. Thus, the tension between the clinical and artistic approach to trauma is evident not only on the level of plot, but also through the narration of the story. Hemingway, as the artist of this story, falls in an interesting middle ground in his approach to violence. His fiction conveys an aesthetic representation of life and death, while his manner of storytelling brings a clinical approach to an artistic medium. Hemingway's fusion of the two approaches is mirrored by the boys' fusion of their fathers' approaches to violence.

As Nick reflects on his own behavior, he remarks that "he wished to show he could hold his liquor and be practical. Even if his father had never touched a drop Bill was not going to get him drunk before he himself was drunk" (53). Here Nick emphasizes his prioritization of practicality over emotionality. While Nick's actions are in conflict with his father's personal preferences, he seems to wish that he could "be practical," like his father. The narrator notes that here Bill "was also being consciously practical" (53). Though we are not told which father's perspective is "right" or "better" from Nick and Bill's conversation, their desire to act "practically" shows that both boys try to adopt Nick's father's practical approach over Bill's father's more sentimental one.

Though the boys seem to align more with Nick's father through their intentions to be practical, they don't stop drinking. Inwardly, they accept the practical approach, but outwardly they display the artistic one. This inability to commit to one approach suggests that the boys are not mature enough to be able to form a complete understanding and

application of either approach. On the other hand, their fusion of the two approaches could conversely suggest a desire to move away from their fathers' outdated views on masculinity and forge their own opinions. The boys' mix and mesh masculine ideal in order to achieve a more complete conceptualization of masculinity. In the same way, *In Our Time* mixes and meshes various narratives in attempts to attain a more conclusive understanding of trauma.

The tension between Nick's actions and his inner desires reflect a deeper tension between wanting to pave his own path versus wanting to follow in his father's footsteps. Here the text re-emphasizes Nick's immaturity when, just after his declared wish to be practical, Nick knocks over a tray of apricots. In order to correct his mistake and re-assert his practicality, he "carefully picked up all the apricots off the floor...and put them back in the pan" (53). After completing this task successfully, he congratulates himself on being "thoroughly practical" (53). Nick's obsession with displaying practicality--yet his inability to be thoroughly practical--shows that he is in the process of thinking hard about authority and his own interpretation of masculinity. By theorizing and implementing the approaches of their fathers, the boys practice mimicry, which is an important step in the artistic process. Through mimicry, artists gain a better understanding of their own personal style. Similarly, the boys gain a better understanding of their own masculinity through trying out older versions. Again, the narrative suggests that the boys' chose a fusion of their fathers' conflicting authorities, rather than a complete acceptance or erasure of one or the other. Although the boys' repeatedly show signs of immaturity, their shift away from antiquated and concrete ideals about masculinity suggests a unique sense

of innovation and independence that seeks to adopt a more fluid approach to masculine authority.

### The Woman Question.

Despite the boys' evolution towards a more progressive masculinity, the narrative reminds us of their actual insecurity. The boys have tried to mask this insecurity by adopting behaviors and attitudes that they feel are representative of masculinity. However, the boys' efforts are focused on an external presentation of self (eg. someone who drinks and is knowledgeable about whisky), rather than the internal development of the self. Though there is no proof that the boys have experienced great trauma in this story, their unwillingness to explore the inner-self echoes the narrator's unwillingness to explore the emotional/psychological trauma suggested by the stories in Chapter I. This parallel further suggests that disinterest in the inner-self is not a symptom of a post-war or post-trauma condition, but rather, is symptomatic of society's insufficient conceptualization of masculinity.

Bill aggressively paints a depressing picture of marriage for Nick in attempts to intimidate and assert his own superior knowledge on the subject. He insists, "Once a man's married he's absolutely bitch...He hasn't got anything anymore. Nothing. Not a damn thing. He's done for" (56). Despite a complete lack of context on Bill's romantic experience, Bill has no problem espousing his firm and unsupported viewpoints. Bill continues to preach his negative view of marriage while Nick remains silent. From his father's discussion about pain in "Indian Camp," to the argument about alcohol in "The

Three Day Blow,” Nick has shown himself to be a character that shies away from verbal conflict, preferring quiet personal reflection instead. The decision to quietly acquiesce to another man’s opinions, rather than refute them loudly and aggressively is another way in which Nick rejects a more conventional masculinity. Nick rejects Bill’s argument and his presence altogether when he says, “Bill wasn’t there...All he knew was that he had once had Marjorie and that he had lost her. She was gone and he had sent her away. That was all that mattered” (57). By choosing not to argue directly with Bill, Nick places higher value on his own personal understanding of self than on society’s perception of him. The narrative’s rejection of society and convention will be explored to a greater extent in Chapter III.

Despite Nick’s rejection of Bill’s authority and the kind of hyper-masculinity that Bill represents, Nick cannot let go of his masculine need for female companionship. After his strong rejection of social convention, Nick’s sudden desire to get back together with Marjorie seems the result of a juvenile sense of insecurity rather than a mature realization and expression of love. He insists,

He felt happy. Nothing was finished. Nothing was ever lost. He would go into town on Saturday. He felt lighter, as he had felt before Bill started to talk about it. There was always a way out. (60)

The first lines of this passage echo young Nick’s refutation of the finality of death at the end of “Indian Camp”. In both of these passages, the possibility of finality is what causes Nick the greatest distress. This passage does not convey or express any sort of affection or love for Marjorie. In fact, Marjorie is left out of his thoughts completely and replaced by “Nothing”. We would interpret his thought differently if he said, “Marjorie was never

lost...There was always a way to get her back.” But instead, Nick’s focus on “a way out” likens him to a child in trouble and who looks for a way out of his punishment, rather than acknowledgement of his fault. Nick’s consciousness about his relationship with Marjorie, and his refutation of Bill’s comments about the finality of marriage, show that Nick does not value his relationship with Marjorie as a channel towards a fully realized manhood, but rather, as a child values their favorite toy that has been taken away. This passage introduces another important theme that I will explore further in Chapter III: the insufficiency of social relationships to replace a whole and unified sense of self. The significance of this story overall is its portrayal of Nick’s exploration of himself, of his own masculinity and other masculine influences and his relationships with others. The abrupt shift to violence that we will see in the next paragraph further emphasizes adolescent Nick as a Nick-in-transition and the importance of an exploratory phase to a solidly defined manhood.

#### Violence and the Re-appearance of the Vignettes.

Although the boys in this story don’t have a clear history of violent experience, they have experienced toxic masculinity, which has resulted in a sort of trauma and causes them to respond as if they had experienced some violent trauma. As we discussed in relation to “[Everybody was drunk]” and “Indian Camp,” the repeated suppression of violence only leads to greater violence in the end. Through “The Three Day Blow” we have been noting hints of violence in Bill’s and Nick’s relationship through their arguments about whisky, their father and women. The danger that was alluded to in the

passage with the whisky comes to the surface in the final scene. After Nick's happy realization concerning Marjorie, he abruptly shifts tone and suggests, "Let's take the guns and go down to the point and look for your dad" (60). Nick's comment communicates an uncomfortable shift because we have just been discussing the boys' self-conflated images of their own maturity. We also recall that the boys just decided to "get drunk and go swimming" (59) one page prior and their sudden conviction to go shooting is not just disorienting, but also frightening. Nick tries to appear very adult here by convincing himself that though "He was still quite drunk," he could control himself because "his head was clear" (60). There is nothing to convince us that Nick is sober enough to manage a gun. After all, he did just spill a tray of apricots all over the floor and has had more to drink since. The combination of drunkenness and weaponry is a volatile combination and the boys' absolute rejection of this volatility is not only disconcerting for the common sense reader, but also exemplary of their immaturity. This dangerous concoction of guns and alcohol calls to mind again the vignette "[Everybody was drunk]" and the challenges that this story presents to an idealized perception of soldiers. The final scene in "The Three Day Blow" shows Nick's unexpected and perhaps, impulsive, embrace of conventional hyper-masculinity. The urgency that this final scene evokes reaffirms our understanding that the narrative seeks to reject a hyper-masculinity and replace it with something softer, more fluid. Throughout the story, Nick teeters between an acceptance and rejection of conventional masculinity, not quite certain enough to completely break off and forge his own path.

The conflicting energies in this final scene relate back to the earlier conversation about the boys' relationship with alcohol as an extension of their relationship with their father's. We concluded that the boys conflated differing perspectives on alcohol in order to form their own opinions and assert their own authority. In this passage we see the fathers' contrasting approaches to alcohol merge in a frightful way. Nick's desire to prove his sobriety through shooting echoes his father's insistence on the importance of practicality in dangerous situations. However, his irrational and impulsive decision making echoes Bill's father's more "wild" relationship with alcohol. The boys' attempt to reject conventional authority and forge their own leads to a potentially violent situation. However, the story ends before the reader has a chance to find out whether or not violence erupts in this scene and we are reminded again of Hemingway's trend of "othering" trauma by erasing or silencing the expression of a traumatic experience altogether.

The suggested, but repressed, violence from "The Three Day Blow" erupts unexpectedly in the opening of Chapter V with "They shot six cabinet ministers at half-past six in the morning against the wall of a hospital" (63). This vignette assumes a third-person perspective that breaks away from the first-person perspectives that have been the standard for the vignettes. The opening sentence is also a break from the traditional vague and obscure narration of violence that has been standard for the book. The narrative provides specific details such as the exact time, place, and number of victims. The unusual specificity of the sentence creates a sense of the story disjointed from the typical narrative. Furthermore, it reads like a news or police report. The tone

here is clinical and pragmatic and calls back the discussion of Nick's father and his commitment to practicality in times of violence. The story is set in a hospital, which is another way of tying Nick's father into the scene. However, the story takes place far from Nick's familiar setting because "cabinet ministers" denotes a foreign, non-American government. Furthermore, the details of soldiers and officers denote a military setting that was absent linguistically and spatially in the Nick stories.

It seems relevant that the setting and situation of this vignette denote a departure from the previous Nick stories, yet these two types of narrative are very much in dialogue with each other through the recurring themes of violence and authority. Although it jumps to a new setting, the vignette from Chapter V, "[They shot]", picks right up where "The Three Day Blow" left off with gun-violence in the opening scene. Just as the experience of trauma can be applied across settings, so can the struggle for authority/autonomy. Despite the few details given, the overall anonymity of the characters/setting further allows for a generalized reading of the passage. The assassination of the cabinet ministers communicates some sort of conflict between two primary sources of authority in a specific community. Similarly, "The Three Day Blow" communicates a conflict between the two primary sources of authority in Bill and Nick's life. While the conflict for Bill and Nick seemed to be focused on the debate between science and art, or fact and feeling, the conflict in "[They shot]" is between two methods of governance: military (aka violent) and elected governing officials (aka non-violent). In this passage the violent regime overtakes the non-violent regime, through an extreme display of violence, resulting in a perceived threat to greater non-violent society.



The two warring bodies in “[They shot]” are highly structured institutions, constructed for and supported by society. The relationship between these institutions mirrors that of father and son. Typically in western countries, the military is controlled by the government, which creates and enforces the structural conditions under which the military is allowed to exist. When the military turns against the government, it is like a son rebelling against his father. The vignette provides no context for the rebellion, only that it occurs. It is not possible to determine whether or not the narrator supports the rebellion or how readers are supposed to feel about it. The neutral tone of the narrator, evidenced by the impersonal narration, makes an argument against the vilification of the militant rebels, challenging the interpretation of a militant overthrow as violent and dangerous. By not vilifying the rebels, the narrator is indirectly justifying their rebellion. This story brings into question the traditional associations a reader might have about the act of rebellion against authority and the use of violent measures to do so.

Everything about the rebellion in “[They shot]” is more violent and extreme than Nick and Bill’s adolescent rebellion in “The Three Day Blow”. Nick and Bill don’t fully rebel against their fathers. They create a modified structure based on the old models. However, their fathers are wholly absent from the story, which could be interpreted as an erasure of their authority, similar to the erasure of authority in “[They shot]”. The difference is that in the vignette, this erasure occurs explicitly and violently. By repressing the violence in “The Three Day Blow” and sequestering it to the war vignette, the narrative highlights the tension between war and civilian settings, which lies not in the presence or absence of violence, but rather the willingness to recognize the violence

that is there. Hemingway also constructs a connection between the nonviolent and violent forms of rebellion by placing “The Three Day Blow” and “[They shot]” one after the other and connecting them thematically. The act of erasing one kind of authority and replacing it with a new one is a form of violence in itself, which carries with it the implications of an experience of trauma. The vignette applies authority, violence and the experience of trauma to a new setting that differs from the domestic one we looked at previously.

In the vignette, the horror of the violence is amplified through its non-description. The only vivid image that the narrator gives is the recurring image of “pools of water” (63) that decorate the outdoor setting. Compared to the violence established in the opening sentence, “They shot the six cabinet ministers...,” the visual shift to the “pools of water in the courtyard” in the next line is both disruptive and disorienting. The fact of the shooting suggests that pools of water would be red with the blood of the assassinated ministers. However, the narrator is intentional in abstaining from this horrific and clichéd image. The pools of water are mentioned again in the closing image of the sick minister “sitting down in the water with his head on his knees” as he is shot to death by the soldiers. Again, a description of the minister’s blood that seeps into the water and turns it red is the expected image, but again the narrator refuses to allow this intensely vivid violence to enter the scene.

The fact that the narrator does not allow readers to visualize the horror of the violence that takes place, makes the scene that much more violent and horrific because the violence becomes *indescribable*. Without concrete words to tie the violence to a

specific image, the reader's imagination takes off and is able to infinitely amplify the violent imagery. The inability to communicate the violence leads to an inability to know or see the violence, which results in fear. The violence is "othered" by its inaccessibility and, though the reader wants to feel some sort of emotional response to it, the intangibility of the moment does not allow readers to make this connection.

Instead, the reader's focus is on the only tangible image the narrator gives, that of the pools of water. The pools of water and the inability of the water to mix with the ministers' blood echoes the passage about the mixing of the whisky and the water from "The Three Day Blow". The fact that the whisky and the water do not mix symbolizes the authority figures of Nick and Bill that similarly do not mix. In the vignette, the (unmentioned) blood of the ministers and the pools of water represent the two structures of authority that are in conflict in the story. The blood is erased from the scene just as the ministers and their power is erased from existence. An important element of the rebellion in "[They shot]" is the use of authority to control one's exposure to violence and subjective experience of trauma. This is a theme we will explore in more depth in the short story, "The Battler," which conveys a wholly-independent Nick and his direct experiences with violence as a result of his newfound independence. It is important to remember, as we were reminded by "The Three Day Blow," that independence does not always imply maturity.

Nick Experiences Real Violence (and Independence) for the First Time.

The opening scene in the “The Battler,” also contains water imagery, however, the water imagery holds a different significance in this story, suggesting that its focus will be a departure from the previous stories we have explored. In addition the water imagery, “The Battler’s” opening provides a description of Nick’s physically wounded body. Up to this point in the book, Hemingway has not disclosed a description of what Nick looks like and it is interesting that the first image we get of him is a wounded one; “The pants were torn and the skin was barked. His hands were scraped and there were sand and cinders driven up under his nails” (65). The elaborate description of Nick’s wounded body offers a response to the question of physical injury that is open ended in “[They shot]”. The vignette ends with the invisible death of the minister and “The Battler” opens with Nick’s highly visible wounds. In the vignette, we get the event of violence, and in the short story we are given the physical trauma that results from it. Though the two stories have entirely different settings and situations, there is a common narrative thread that flows across the text. The stitch on which this thread stops suggests that the focus of “The Battler” will be on an immediate, personal and physical experience of trauma--which contrasts with the impersonal experience of physical violence that we have seen up to this point in the text.

Following the description of Nick’s wounds is a description of how he cleanses his wounds, “He went over to the edge of the track, down the little slope to the water and washed his hands. He washed them carefully in the cold water, getting the dirt out from the nails. He squatted down and bathed his knee” (65). While the previous two texts use

water mostly to exemplify the tension between various stand-alone figures of authority, this text uses water to emphasize its healing properties. Just as the pools of water in “[They shot]” erase the minister’s blood and in a sense, erase the act of violence, Nick uses water in this story to erase his wounds, thus erasing his trauma. The dirt and blood from his body are washed away by the water, leaving his body closer to its original state pre-violence. If he can erase the signs of violence from his body, he can erase the trauma experienced by his mind and body as well.

Despite Nick’s success in washing away the dirt and blood, he becomes aware of “a big bump coming up” (66) by rubbing his eye. Nick’s awareness and certainty that “He would have a black eye, all right” implies his inability to completely erase his wounds. Though the black eye hasn’t formed yet, Nick insists that “It ached already” (66). The oddness of this line “it ached already” to describe an injury which has not yet formed brings up the topic of invisible wounds and invisible traumas, and connects this passage to our previous discussion of war. Shell-shock, after all, was the official name given to the condition which, to those not affected by war, seemed invisible--made-up even. Hemingway uses a physical wound to introduce the topic of invisible pain. The physicality of the wound makes the concept more tangible to outside readers. However, this physical pain does not even begin to explain the emotional response to a violent event.

Nick’s thoughts, interspersed throughout the narration, call attention to the internal pain he experiences as a result of the violence. Though the story begins after the actual moment of violence occurs, we parse together the details through Nick’s mental

re-creation of the scene. Nick identifies his assailant as “that lousy crut of a brakeman” and vows that “he would get him some day” (65). The “lousy” brakeman is characterized through Nick’s internal monologue, but the actual moment of the assault is brushed over by the word “*wham,*” which turns it into an invisible and incommunicable event.

“*Wham*” replaces any mention of the actor, the action and the victim all in one. The details leading up to the violence, and the physical repercussions of the violence are described quite clearly, though Nick struggles to communicate the moment of violence itself. Through the way the violence is communicated--or rather, not communicated--we can see that Nick struggles with more than just the physical pain of the event. The obscurity with which this other pain is expressed suggests its greater impact. Nick’s objection to communicating his emotional pain echoes the repression/denial of trauma that Nick learned from his father in earlier stories. This passage gives an example of how masculine authority influences Nick’s response to violence, but also how the influence of that authority affects Nick violently, denying him the ability to confront his pain.

While Nick blames the brakeman for his scars, it appears that some of Nick’s pain/frustration is directed inwards. He specifically remembers the brakeman referring to him as “kid” and chastises himself for getting kicked off, “a lousy kid thing to have done” (65). In the preceding story, a young adult Nick seeks to assert his independence and masculinity. His father plays a significant role in forming his own ideas of manhood. The Nick in the previous chapter struggles to maintain his respect for authority, while also fulfilling his desire to replace that authority as himself. Nick’s encounter with the brakeman causes him to break down and question his entire construction of his

masculinity. He “had fallen” (66) for a silly kid-trick and is reminded again of his immaturity and adolescence, at a time when he is trying to be more mature than ever before. As usual, there isn’t much context to establish the scene, but it is likely that Nick was off riding trains as a stow-away because he was running away from something. From what, we do not know, but keeping in mind the continuous narrative threaded throughout the text, we might also infer that Nick hides on the train to run away from authority--his father--and to begin to pave his own path into freedom. It is interesting that the story is titled “The Battler” when Nick’s battle with autonomy begins with him being on the wrong side of the fight. The evolution of the protagonist as a battler is something we will have to watch for as the book progresses.

#### Physical Violence, Long-Term Repercussions.

In “The Battler,” Nick is introduced alone for the first time in the book. As we have just noted, the very first time Nick seems to be truly independent in the world, he quickly finds himself in trouble and in a violent situation. It would seem that the masculine ideals he learned--or attempted to learn-- from his father have not helped prepare him for fighting in the real world. Without proper or effective guidance, Nick must continue to search for and try to develop his own sense of masculinity; however, as is foreshadowed by the story’s violent opening, this task is easier said than done.

Nick’s encounter with the two outcasts living in the woods off the side of the railway begins when he catches sight of a fire off in the darkness. The symbolism here seems pretty straightforward. Nick runs away from home, gets sidetracked and follows a

guiding light to lead him back in the right direction. Despite the seeming simplicity of this metaphor, it turns out to be more complex. While the guiding light saves Nick from one danger, it lures him into another. In this light, Nick encounters two grown men, living the life of rebels/social outcasts. These men tie “The Battler” back to the vignette “[They shot]” and the impartiality towards rebellion in that story also suggests an impartial view of the rebels in this story. Through Nick’s interactions with them, he learns that the life of a run-away might not be all that it is cracked up to be.

When Nick first encounters Ad sitting alone by the fire, he goes unnoticed. The man seems to be in his own world and Nick has to shout out “Hello!” in order to pull the man out of his daze (67). At first the man doesn’t see Nick, despite his standing “quite close to him,” but he immediately recognizes the “shiner” on his face (67). Nick’s black eye is has just been portrayed as an invisible wound. Ad’s ability to recognize this invisible wound suggests that he, like Nick, has a propensity for the feeling of wounds that go beyond the visual/physical. When Nick gets a chance to examine the man’s face, he sees that “...his face was misshapen. his nose was sunken, his eyes were slits, he had queer shaped lips” (68). Nick’s observations of the man’s face reveal Ad’s own experience with physical injuries--and implied inner wounds-- and explains his intimate knowledge of Nick’s wound. Though the man can clearly see Nick’s wounds, Nick is not able to “perceive” all of the man’s wounding at once. Instead, “he only saw the man’s face was queerly formed and mutilated...Dead looking in the firelight” (68). Nick sees there is something not quite right with the man, but can’t exactly explain what it is. Instead, he describes the man as looking “dead” (68). His appearance communicates



something which is inaccessible to Nick. Though their appearances confess their experiences with violence, the older man knows something about pain and trauma that young Nick has still to learn.

The “inaccessibility” of the man’s pain seems to be connected to his mental state. The man confesses, “I’m crazy,” (69), but Nick does not believe it. He “felt like laughing” and denies the man’s proclamation of his mental state, assuring him that “You’re all right” (69). The fact that Nick does not recognize Ad’s mental instability immediately, in the same way he recognizes his physical wounds, reaffirms the invisibility of the psychological effects of trauma. But the man persists, “No, I’m not. I’m crazy.” He asks Nick if he’s ever been crazy and Nick confesses that he has not, inquiring “How does it get you?” (69). Nick’s question characterizes “crazy” as an external “it” that is contracted, rather than an internal change in oneself. Ad answers that he does not know and that “When you got it you don’t know about it” (69). Nick and Ad’s discussion about being crazy shows that neither man has a clear understanding of the direct relationship between external events and internal consequences. Despite Ad’s implied greater experience with violence, he is no closer to understanding the formation of trauma than Nick. Ad’s incomprehension of trauma is another warning sign for Nick to not follow in the footsteps of this man.

As discussed in “The Three Day Blow,” autonomy/independence are important elements for Nick’s conception of masculinity. The former hero’s downfall is not only characterized by his mental and physical destruction, but also by the loss of his autonomy. The story emphasizes his inability to take care of, or even fight for, himself

when Bugs enters the story. The first thing Bugs does is prepare the food for Ad and his company. Food preparation implies the role of care-taking, which, in a traditional domestic setting, is a feminine role. On the one hand, the story could be said to be redefining gender roles by placing men in traditionally feminine spaces. On the other hand, the story could uphold traditional gender roles and by placing men in traditionally feminine roles, attempt to highlight their complete lack of masculinity. In “The Three Day Blow” Nick searches for and tries to create a masculinity that defies traditional concepts. The champion fighter turned invalid and the ex-convict turned caretaker do represent an attempt at a departure from classical masculine roles. However, Ad’s deranged mental state seems to confirm that this attempt is failed.

We begin to see the champion fighter fall from his position of superiority to one of feeble infantility. While Nick cuts bread for the crew, Ad says to him “Let me take your knife” (72). Bugs quickly intervenes and urges both Nick and Ad to keep to themselves. Typically, one would not bat an eye at a former fighter asking to check out another man’s knife; however, the fact that Bugs intervenes complicates this simplicity. Bugs’ actions assert that Ad is not responsible or stable enough to be allowed to check out another man’s knife. Instead, he appears as a reckless young boy lusting after the shiny new toy of another. It is especially insulting to Ad’s masculinity that he is not allowed to touch the knife considering his former position as a highly-regarded fighter. Again, Bugs’ intervention shows his role as Ad’s caretaker, further emphasizing Ad’s loss of autonomy, masculinity and his very identity. Once a model figure of strength and

bravery, he reverts to a position of childlike dependency, with no self-control and no acceptance or even recognition by society.

The fact that Bugs only resort is to knock out Ad for trying to start a fight with Nick is another example of Ad's emasculation. Ad's former social status as a model masculine figure was based on his ability to defend himself in man-to-man fights. Now, he is denied the ability to defend himself at all and must be knocked out before he gets out of control. In some way, Ad is likened to a child in this scene, who has to be put to bed before getting out control. Just as children are not fully in control of their behavior, Ad's experience with violence has resulted in his inability to have adult autonomy and independence.

Bugs also provides an interesting perspective on Ad when he remarks of his beating, "I have to do it to change him when he gets that way" (76). His defense implies that greater violence is the only solution to quieting the violent tantrums caused by the earlier violence in Ad's career. In the conversation that follows, we get a sense of how seriously Ad was damaged by his earlier life as a career fighter. Bugs responds that "He took too many beatings...but that just made him sort of simple" (76), implying that his physical wounds had a direct mental effect. Bugs speaks to Nick in euphemisms, not wanting to disclose everything. One might interpret Ad's "sort of simple" mental state as a positive one; however, it is later revealed that his newly acquired simplicity is what drove him to love and marry his sister. The revelation of this unorthodox relationship is also communicated in a roundabout, euphemistic way, "how she loved her brother and how he loved his sister, and then they got married in New York and that made a lot of

unpleasantness” (77). On an initial read, a brother loving a sister does not scream anything out of the ordinary and the reader has to do some work to realize that the “they got married” refers to a marriage between the brother and sister. As discussed in “Smyrna” the use of impersonal pronouns here is intentionally disorienting. Also, “unpleasantness” is a mild way of describing society’s reaction to their incestuous relationship.

The way that Bugs talks to Nick seems like he is too ashamed to reveal the story in its entirety. Perhaps, in Bugs’ view Nick is just a kid and does not yet need to or is not yet capable of understanding all of the horrors of real-life. Bugs’ repression or obscure manner of expressing the details of Ad’s life calls to mind earlier stories, such as “Smyrna,” “Indian Camp,” or “[They shot],” which include violent scenes, but repress the violent details. Thus, by connecting these stories which are all very different in terms of content, the narrative suggests that violence occurs in a variety of contexts and to all kinds of people, in other words, the universality of the experience of violence.

Throughout this chapter we have looked at various attempts to remove an established authority in order to overcome the effects of violence. The ultimate answer may be that violence is inevitable and is something that everyone must learn to confront. Nonetheless, “The Battler” shows what happens when, rather than trying to deny or avoid violence, you commit yourself to it as a way of life in (misguided) hopes of conquering it.

Ad’s lifelong pursuit of fighting has come with two sets of consequences. On the one hand, there are all the personal consequences that result from it: his deformed physical appearance, his insanity, his loss of autonomy/independence. On the other hand,

he has suffered real social consequences as well: his ruined career, marriage and public record, eventually ending up in jail for “busting people” (77). It seems that the only language Ad knows is violence, whether it be directed towards himself or others. At the end, he lives alone in the woods, totally cast out from society. The only person he has to look after him is Bugs, a black man and ex-convict. At the time of the story, Bugs’ race and criminal record would have put on one of the lowest rungs of the social ladder. The fact that Ad relies on Bugs for survival, places him even farther below Bugs. Once at the summit of social strata, Ad’s obsession with violence and his inability to cope with the mental and physical trauma that stem from it, leave him alone and “dead looking in the firelight” (68). The Ad that Nick encounters is only a shred of the man he used to be. The similarities the story sets up between Nick and the little man in the beginning of the scene now seem like a warning to Nick to not allow violence to define, and inevitably corrupt, his manhood. He needs to find a different way to combat authority. Ad’s mistake was choosing violence as his guiding light, but just like the light from the campfire, this light only led Ad into greater darkness. Violence and authority have been closely linked in this book and across Nick’s life. This story warns against an absolute submission to violence, but it does not yet provide an alternative outlet for how Nick should confront violence and subsequently develop his own authority.

### Two Worlds Collide.

The last vignette we will look at in relation to the question of violence and authority is the one that opens Chapter VI. Throughout Chapter I we noted the important

connections and distinctions between the book's various approaches to storytelling. One of the most notable distinctions is that between the Nick stories and the war vignettes. "Smyrna" suggests a rupture of that divide by placing a story set in the heart of war in one of the short-story sections. However, the fact that "Smyrna" is structurally so separate from the rest of the text and is told from a unique and unknown first-person narrator, we cannot directly link Nick to this story. Thus, the Chapter VI provides another rupture to the book's seemingly straight-forward structural division. Placing Nick in the immediate context of war, complicates a separatist approach to the book and opens the possibility for a greater understanding of the trauma which characterizes its narration and overall structure.

From the first sentence, "Nick sat against the wall of the church where they had dragged him to be clear of machine gun fire in the street" (81) it is clear that the story takes place in a moment of war, though the exact setting and context are not explicit. Applying contexts from previous war stories, it can be assumed that Nick is somewhere in Europe around the time of the Great War. This story introduces the detail of machine gun weaponry, a specific invention of the 20th century. This detail further situates the story in or after WWI, when automatic weaponry was first introduced. The detail of the "two austrian dead" provides further evidence for claiming WWI as the setting. Though this vignette presents a war story, similar in language and context to past war vignettes, this story has a crucial difference in that it takes Nick, for the first time, away from U.S. soil. Despite the warning about the danger of committing to violence that we learn from "The Battler," in this vignette it becomes clear that rather than rejecting state-sanctioned

violence as a form of authority, Nick embraces it wholeheartedly. However, instead of fighting for entertainment and in the confined setting of a ring, Nick is caught in a more dangerous situation where there are no limits to the violence.

Though we can surmise relatively where and when the story is set, it is unclear what Nick's position is in this new world; is he a soldier or a civilian caught in the crossfires? Unlike the narrator in "[Everybody was drunk]", this narrator does not call upon specific military terminology to give readers a sense of the protagonist's specific status. By not explicitly mentioning the war, the story seems to be rejecting the war context altogether and Nick's involvement in it. Another example of the rejection of war comes from Nick himself when he says to his dying friend, "You and me we've made a separate peace...We're not patriots" (81). Nick rejects the idea that they are fighting for or against something. In some way, this statement defines the war, from Nick's perspective, as violence without a purpose. Thinking back to the previous vignette, "[They shot]," the violence here is amplified and more out of control. The violence was previously focused on a specific institution, and served a more symbolic than destructive purpose. Here it shifts to the heart of civilian life, thus endangering a greater number of people, including innocent people, and causing greater damage to society by destroying the town. While the violence in "[They show]" was an act of rebellion against a specifically targeted group, the violence in this vignette targets all of society and has devolved into chaos.

This story fast forwards from Nick in "The Battler" to show us that his quest for authority has somehow led him deeper into violence, instead of away from it. Compared to the black eye he receives in "The Battler," Nick's wounds are much more severe here.

His legs “stuck out awkwardly” and “he had been hit in the spine” (81). This information, along with the detail that Nick had to be “dragged,” suggest a severe injury to Nick’s mobility. Just like Ad in the previous story, Nick’s injuries have caused him to become dependent on others to ensure his survival. His wounds are too great to be relieved through a simple cleansing and in this passage we get the opposite of healing water imagery. Instead, “the sun shone on his face. The day was very hot” (81). There is no sense of immediate relief for Nick; the only thing he can do is sit and wait for “stretcher bearers” to come to his rescue. In some sense, Nick has fallen even further below Ad because his injury has rendered him entirely immobile, entirely dependent. This story shows us that Nick does not learn from the lessons of his predecessors to avoid getting sucked into violence. We don’t know how Nick has ended up in the war, but there he is nonetheless, nearly dying. He is alone and has no way to save himself, but to wait for someone else. The whole concept of authority has been shattered in the chaos of war, and his masculinity--no matter how “strong” or tough it is-- is no match against automatic weapons.

The war has turned everything Nick learned in his childhood in the U.S. on its head. Here, there is only death, there is only war. We are reminded again of the senselessness of war and death that arose in “Smyrna.” The only thing that holds some meaning or some sign of hope is the “separate peace” Nick refers to. What does this “peace” mean? How can peace even exist in their war-torn and death-filled environment? Is the finality of death the peace he refers to? If we piece together the detail of the church in the opening line and the peace referred to at the end, we might conclude that the



church offers peace through its promise of an eternal life, one that exceeds the immediate and violent reality. The church provides literal physical support for Nick in this passage, just as religion might provide a sort of healing authority. If this is so, where is God in this scene, where is mercy or grace? The closing line, “Rinaldi was a disappointing audience” suggests that Nick’s words don’t carry any meaning here. Perhaps there is no peace, there is no hope for a more promising end than the immediate one they are faced with--death. The question of religion arises in later stories that we will explore more in Chapter III.

Previous stories have looked at how Nick’s concept of masculinity is formed by ideas of his predecessors or people he looks up to. Primarily, these stories raise the question of whether an authority based on violence can be sustainable. We looked at the figure of Nick’s father, whose career as a doctor is driven by the presence of violence in the everyday. He seems to get by by ignoring the presence of violence entirely. We also encountered the figure of Bill’s father, whose proximity to violence is not known, but apparently has caused him to turn towards alcohol to erase something or ease some pain. Then in “[They shot]” we see the relationship between violence and authority play out on a larger scale when a group of violent rebels overthrow an entire national structure, replacing a non-violent governing structure with a violent one. In “The Battler,” Hemingway returns to a micro example to show us the consequences of what happens when violence replaces authority. These consequences are carried out even further in the final vignette when Nick nearly dies because of his misguided decision to allow violence to be his authority.

The move towards, rather than away from, violence in this story sequence responds to Chapter I's discussion of trauma with a pretty desolate picture. At the end of Chapter I, we noted the narrator's tendency to repress trauma and how this contrasts with the importance of confronting trauma through open communication in order to heal from it. The stories we explored in this chapter show a continued refutation of violence. As we predicted in Chapter I, this refutation of violence only leads to more and more intense encounters with violence that we see in the Chapter V and VI vignettes. The stories explored in this chapter also continue to build on our understanding of universality of trauma established in Chapter I. Just as the stories in Chapter I are linked through the use of multiple voices to share a common experience, the stories in Chapter II explore various relationships with violence centered in different settings and at different stages of life. As we turn to the final story sequence of the book we will investigate whether or not Nick/the narrative overcomes his/its dependence on violence, and if not, what this means for the future of a post-trauma individual and a post-trauma society.

## NIRVANA 101: RE-DISCOVERY OF SELF AND REJECTION OF SOCIETY

### POST-TRAUMA

Chapter I of this essay establishes the perspective of *In Our Time* as a post-traumatic narrative. It follows the narrator across several stories, focusing on the progression of Nick and other related, but un-identified, narrative voices. The previous chapter closes on what might be considered the climax of the entire text: the moment where Nick joins the war and replaces --or perhaps, reveals himself as--the main protagonist in the war-vignettes. Despite the majority of the book's third-person narration, Nick's consciousness is never far from this narrator's perspective and his interiority, though not revealed directly, often comes through through the narrator's speech. Chapter I discusses the book's aim to convey the universality of the experience of trauma through collective voices and narratives. The moments where these voices/narratives overlap is further evidence to support the reading of *In Our Time* as a universal story. Though the Chapter VI vignette and "A Very Short Story" are not explicitly related, the almost linear progression from Nick in the vignette to the "he" in the short story supports a reading that directly connects one story to the next and invites readers to continue making connective assumptions across the text in order to understand how all of the independent stories work together to communicate one, unified message. In the latter half of the book, moreover, Nick is altogether erased, and new characters and settings are introduced. Though it is tempting to want to identify a single, unchanging

narrator, the constantly varied and quite usually unspecified narrative voice prevents us from assuming that Nick is the dominant narrative voice across the entire text.

Unlike the traditional novel, *In Our Time* is bound by a narrative, rather than personal, thread that links one story to the next. This chapter will continue to explore the threads of violence and trauma that we have been following throughout and will focus more specifically on stories where the protagonist looks outward for healing through the formation of different personal relationships. From "A Very Short Story" to "Cross Country Snow" the protagonist(s) engages in various sexually and romantically unconventional relationships in an attempt to erase his trauma and re-enter the civilian world. However, each of these relationships proves unsustainable and causes greater trauma to the protagonist. Ultimately, the protagonist, who returns at the book's end in the form of Nick, rejects society and kinship altogether and moves into the wilderness to remove himself from civilian society altogether. As we will see, Nick's physical separation from the social world unfortunately does not enable him to achieve a psychological separation from the traumatic effects of his failed relationships and post-war trauma. The final story "Big Two-Hearted River" will try to answer what solution there can be, if any, for the reclaiming of the pre-traumatic self.

#### Disentangling From War, Entangling with Women.

After the climactic synthesis of the Nick and war stories, the narrative begins to ease away from the war and from Nick. The first transitional story is "A Very Short Story" and is about an unnamed "he" who, like Nick, has been injured and rendered

immobile. The first line, “One hot evening in Padua they carried him up onto the roof...” (83), echoes the preceding vignette and offers a continuation of that previous story. This continuation is evidence from the progression from the “very hot” day in the previous story to “one hot evening” (83) in this one. Then, “they carried him” establishes the protagonist’s injury, without giving any context to how or where this injury occurred. The preceding vignette clearly establishes the details of Nick’s injury--“hit in the spine” (81)--and the location--“machine gun fire in the street” (81)--which can be used to fill the missing contextual information in “A Very Short Story.” It is interesting that the “he” in the short story is moved “up onto the roof...look[ing] out over the top of the town” (83) because it symbolizes both a temporal and a spatial progression from one story to the next, a movement to distance the protagonist away from war on a literal and figurative level. The physical and narrative distancing reminds us of the ironic tension between spectator and participant of violence. The protagonist-spectator is close enough to see the violence, but far enough from it that will not be harmed by it. The further irony here is that the protagonist’s safety has only been secured because he has already been wounded by the violence happening on the ground. The distance between the elevated safety of the protagonist and the danger in the streets calls to mind the physical separation between God and his creations. The fact that the protagonist only procures safety after being seriously wounded suggests that not even God can protect soldiers or provide them an escape from the horrors of war. Just as the soldier in this story is only liberated from the war after injury, we are only liberated from the violence of the world after having

suffered it, suggesting that death is the only possible liberation from violence, which is an unavoidable part of life.

Another way that this story transitions away from other war stories is through the use of names to identify specific characters. The transitional war stories are the first time that characters with specific names are introduced in stories about war. As a result, these war stories feel less obscure and impersonal than stories like “Smyrna” and “[Everybody was drunk]” that give readers no concrete individuals to hold onto. The use of generic pronouns, rather than specific names, creates greater distance between the reader and the story, which is in this case the war. By introducing Nick, a recurring character, the reader feels that his world and his struggles are more familiar. However, the introduction of Nick’s new friend, Rinaldi--a never before seen character-- without any context threatens this familiarity. "A Very Short Story" exists somewhere between the known and unknown because the “he” is not named, yet contextually and thematically can be tied to Nick. This story also introduces a new type of character: a romantic partner found in a war nurse named Luz. Luz’s name helps her feel more concrete and relatable, but the fact that she represents a major thematic shift in the narrative, makes her obscure. The use of personal names has a duplicitous significance in this story that leaves readers unsure how Hemingway intended for it to be read.

Still shifting away from war, the heart of the story takes place around an affair between “he” and a war nurse named Luz. The narrator does not directly offer specific identifying details about Luz or he, but as with the other stories, their roles can be inferred from subtle clues. We know that Luz is a war nurse because she goes on “night

duty” while he is in the hospital and has various others patients that she treats. “He” is understood to be a wounded soldier because the line “he went back to the front” (83) subtly references his war duty. It is relevant that the war does not take the forefront of this story, because it separates "A Very Short Story" from previous vignettes where the backdrop of war is of primary importance, and from previous short-stories where the war is not mentioned at all. Here, we get a middle ground where the war is an important piece of contextual information, but the heart of the story moves away from war to a domestic social setting. Just as the use of names has a dual significance in "A Very Short Story" the war setting also plays a dual role that both familiarizes and otherizes the story, Though the protagonist recovers from his physical wounds in this story, the thematic shift emphasizes personal relationships and invites readers to consider how the loss of romance can be just as painful as the loss of war.

At the end of the Chapter VI vignette Nick is crushed by his experiences with war and violence. Chapter two explores the question of authority and concludes that violence only leads to a dead-end when it is used as a primary authority. The fact that "A Very Short Story" opens with a soldier’s recovery suggests that there is hope for rebirth, for life after trauma, if there is new authority to replace the violence structures. The stories in this section will determine what that new authority is. In "A Very Short Story" Hemingway explores the possibility of love to guide the wounded soldier through the process of rehabilitation and re-assimilation into society. We talked about the guiding light in “The Battler” that leads Nick further into instead of away from danger. Here, Luz literally translates to light and a guiding light is exactly how she is presented to us.

Physically radiant, she is described as “cool and fresh in the hot night” (83), like the reinvigorating water explored in the previous chapter. As a nurse, she is well liked among her patients and she “stayed on night duty for three months” (83) bringing the wounded “light” or comfort during the dark nights.

However, the protagonist clearly does not feel secure in his relationship with Luz. Though none of “his” insecurity is explicit, there is a sense of possessiveness in the repetition and emphasis on the image of Luz in his bed, “Luz sat on the bed,” “so Luz would not have to get up from the bed,” and “as he walked back along the halls he thought of Luz in his bed” (83). Furthermore, he tries to keep her light for himself by “tak[ing] the temperatures so Luz would not have to have to get up from the bed” (83), thus, prohibiting her from interacting with, and possibly sharing her light with, the other patients. He does not try to hide his relationship with Luz either, admitting that “there were only a few patients, and they all knew about it” (83), despite the inappropriate relationship between a wounded soldier and a war nurse. There is a sense that the protagonist continually tries to exert greater control over Luz and it is not clear if this is because he does not trust her fidelity, or because he feels threatened by his physical dependency and inability to be the dominant male authority that Nick/the protagonist has been conditioned to idealize. Here, we are reminded of the unconventional caretaker dynamic in “The Battler,” where the prize fighter is completely emasculated and forced to rely on someone else for his survival. The violent conclusion to Ad’s romantic relationship with his sister-wife-caretaker serves as a warning to “his” terminal



relationship with his nurse. Additionally, the title, "A Very Short Story" also hints at the ephemerality of their affair.

Despite the soldier's efforts to hold onto Luz's light and her love, it slowly slips away. The story alerts us to this transition with language that begins to lose its brightness. In contrast to Luz's light, the Duomo is described as "dim and quiet" (83). The Duomo is a church setting that could be interpreted as symbolizing the light of God or more generally, hope for the future, in this story. However, the fact that this major religious setting is devoid of light sends an ominous message about the future of their relationship. The theme of religion, or the insufficiency of religion to offer guidance and life, has appeared in scattered mentions across multiple stories. In the preceding vignette "Nick sat against the wall of the church" (81), which provides him physical support and a barricade from the shooting in the street. However, the church only functions as a physical structure and its symbolic meaning does not carry greater significance in this vignette. The off-hand references to church/religion/god further our understanding that not even the power of a religious authority can heal the wounds suffered by the protagonist.

The ephemeral quality of their love is further communicated by their haste to get married, "to make it so they could not lose it" (84). Though the text does not say so directly, the "it" in this sentence can be interpreted as their love. Marriage is wrongly conceived as a tool to concretely bind love. Not only is marriage unable to accomplish this because love is abstract and cannot be physically constrained, but they are not able to get married because "there was not enough time...and neither of them had birth

certificates” (84). Their ability to get married, but not their ability to love is limited by real, physical constraints: legal documents and time. Marriage is, in a religious sense, a rebirth of two people into one unified person. Without proof of their individual identities--their birth certificates-- they are unable to prove the existence of their love. The fact that their love seem to really rely on their ability to marry questions the authenticity of this love and the power of a romantic relationship to heal wounds.

Luz as a source of love and light for the soldier is continually challenged. After he leaves for war, she writes to him “how terrible it was missing him at night” (84). The emphasis on night here and the implied darkness suggests that her source of light, and the source of their love, dissolves when he leaves for war. Eventually, Luz starts an affair with someone else, but “living in the muddy, rainy town in the winter” this affair is far from the light and love of her previous affair. Through the evaporation of this relationship, we see that Luz was really a false source of light for the wounded protagonist and his hope in this false love only leaves him emotionally (and physically) battered all over again.

Eventually, Luz finds someone to replace her soldier and allows that someone to “made love” to her in the winter. The affair between Luz and the Italian major is the first time sex is made so explicit in the text and we might infer then that sex was never a part of her relationship with the soldier, because it was not referred to so explicitly. Furthermore, Luz writes that “she expected, absolutely unexpectedly, to be married in the spring” (85). The repetition of the word “expected” here suggests that her unexpected expectation alludes to pregnancy and that Luz accepts from the major battalion what she

never accepted from her former lover: sex and marriage. It is interesting that these things seem to come out of order (sex before marriage) and it is even more crushing for the soldier that Luz agrees to sleep with the major before getting married. The possibility of a sexual relationship between Luz and the soldier is further discredited when Luz dismisses their love as “only a boy and girl affair” (85), compared to her relationship with the major battalion, which apparently she feels is more mature.

We are not told explicitly why Luz chooses the major over the soldier, but his title, and Luz’s willingness to sleep with him, suggest that the major fills an idealized masculinity more so than the injured soldier. He is only referred to in the story as “the major” which emphasizes his fancy, manly title. The only other detail we are given is that he is Italian and “she had never known Italians before” (85). Thus, perhaps there was something about his mysteriousness that made him seem more masculine to her. In the end, her hopes of a happy union with the major are crushed when he “did not marry her in the spring, or any other time” (85), revealing that, to the major, *theirs* was only a boy and girl affair. Finally, the soldier protagonist “contracted gonorrhoea from a sales girl in a loop department store while riding in a taxicab through Lincoln Park” (85). This closing sexual encounter is completely devoid of any love or romance. Furthermore, it is characterized by carelessness (hence the gonorrhoea) and impulsivity (hence the taxicab). Whatever ideas the soldier had about sex and marriage before Luz, his break-up has clearly changed his opinions.

As mentioned, "A Very Short Story" presents the ephemerality of an incomplete love. We have seen a relationship fall apart because one person was in it for the love and

the other only wanted the title of love. Another relationship falls apart because one hopes for love through sex and the other only wants sex. Finally, Hemingway stops trying for love altogether and creates a union based solely on sex, but this falls apart too because of the health consequences posed by reckless sexual encounters. All of the relationships that try to succeed in this story are conventional, heterosexual relationships, and they all fail. Hemingway provides more examples of failing heterosexual relationships, leaving readers to question if the root cause of the failing relationships is the people in the relationships or the nature of the relationships themselves.

There is an important connection to be noted between the failure of the soldier's physical body and the failure of his physical relationship. Using information from the "The Battler," which shows how physical wounds in *In Our Time* are symbols to represent a less obvious emotional trauma, we can solidify the connection between the soldier's external and internal wounds. As mentioned, this Chapter explores the relationship between a traumatized individual and his ability to form and maintain interpersonal relationships. The devolution of love in "A Very Short Story" shows that the search for love/fulfillment from external sources is not a replacement for internal harmony. Until the soldier heals fully, internal and external wounds, he will not be successful in achieving harmony with other people. Furthermore, by attempting to build relationships with others, the soldier tries to re-integrate himself into civilian life, which is characterized by personal relationships, and distance himself from a military reality, which is characterized by anonymity and de-humanization. Thus, his inability to confront his trauma prevents him from achieving both personal happiness and social stability.

The vignette that follows this chapter shows another example of a soldier looking to sexual encounters to heal past wounds. This vignette, unlike the previous two stories, is embedded in a moment of battle, while also revealing the protagonist's consciousness at the same time. While the Chapter VI vignette and "A Very Short Story" are plot-heavy and action-based, there is not much introspection or insight into the protagonist's mind. The Chapter VII vignette, however, gives readers direct access to the soldier's thoughts. The first sentence--"While the bombardment was knocking..." (87)--provides the war context for the soldier's prayer,

Oh Jesus Christ get me out of here. Dear Jesus, please get me out. Christ, please, please, please, Christ. If you'll only keep me from getting killed I'll do anything you say. I believe in you and I'll tell everybody in the world that you are the only thing that matters. Please, please, dear Jesus. (87)

In this prayer, though there is not great depth or beauty of language, the emotion and tone are very moving. The reader really gets a sense of the desperation that soldier feels in this moment. Through a deeper perspective into the protagonist's mind, the reader can form conclusions of greater depth and concreteness concerning the protagonist's relationship with/perspective on authority.

It is interesting that a story infused with prayer and religion comes right after "A Very Short Story's" exploration of romance and illicit sexual experience. The sequence of these stories suggests the possibility of moral retribution in this vignette. However, since morality is not something mentioned earlier in the text it seems unlikely that the Chapter VII vignette is meant as a punishment for the illicit actions in "A Very Short Story." After proposing the possibility of morality, the vignette rejects any moral

standards in the closing line, “The next night back at Mestre he did not tell the girl he went upstairs with at the Villa Rosa about Jesus. And he never told anybody” (87). The prayer at the beginning presents the possibility for a religious awakening or spiritual shift, while the closing action brings the story back to a hard, cold reality where the only thing that matters is gratification in the immediate present moment because, as conveyed by the violence in the opening line and the ephemerality of "A Very Short Story", one never knows how much time there is left. Just as past stories have questioned whether or not God could be an adequate authority for healing past wounds, this story looks to God briefly, but eventually rejects religion and turns to sexual relationships for healing. This time, there is no mistaking or wasting time on the possibility for romance, since "A Very Short Story" proves romantic relations as a futile path towards wholeness. Instead, this story dismisses the concept of authority altogether, valuing only the experiences that can bring immediate gratification.

#### Loss of a Son, Return of a War-Torn Soldier.

The past few stories have been slowly withdrawing the narrative focus away from the war and towards more domestic settings, with their focus on romantic and sexual relationships. In “Soldier’s Home” this rise of domesticity comes to a head when the narrative returns to the U.S. and tells the story of a soldier who returns home from war. This narrative connects to "A Very Short Story" that was also about a soldier returning home from war. “Soldier’s Home” provides a deeper look at the soldier’s experience assimilating back into his community. While the stories we have just looked at explore a

soldier's attempted rehabilitation through romantic and sexual relationships, this next story looks at a soldier's struggle to rehabilitate through his inability to communicate with others or form any sort relationship with them. In this story, the soldier's loss of language is a marker of his emotional trauma.

The social consequences of his trauma are made more explicit in this story compared to others. The soldier in this next story is scrutinized by his community because of his inability meet their expectations of what a soldier returning from war should be. This story furthers our understanding of the lasting consequences of trauma and brings attention to the difficulties that trauma causes not just to the traumatized individual, but to his relations with the entire community. In this way, "Soldier's Home" offers connects with "The Battler" because we see the progression of this soldier's social isolation, which results from his battle wounds. In the end, the soldier finds no way to connect with his community and shuts down emotionally in order to cope with his isolation. The soldier's emotional shut down is the narratives first step towards rejecting society that will be explored in greater depth later in this chapter.

In earlier stories we explored the importance of names that give characters a greater sense of individuality. "Soldier's Home" introduces a brand new protagonist whose name is important to our understanding of his split character. He is known to his family as Harold, but referred to in the story by his last name, Krebs. The age, gender and war experiences of this character link him to Nick and "he" the we explored earlier. The use of different names to refer to this character denotes a tension between the narrator's

perception of him and his family's perception of him. While Harold is the name of the boy who grew up in the town, Krebs denotes the wounded soldier that returns.

The story further emphasizes the soldier's split sense of self through its opening description of two very different photographs of the same character. The first photograph, taken before the war, "shows him and his fraternity brothers, all of them wearing exactly the same height and style collar" (89). Harold's appearance suggests his ability to fit in easily with his community. In the second photograph, taken during wartime, "shows him on the Rhine with two German girls and another corporal. Krebs and the corporal look too big for their uniforms. The German girls are not beautiful. The Rhine does not show in the picture" (89). Here, Krebs is an outsider pictured in a foreign land. Additionally, everything in the photo seems to be off-kilter. The clothes are not right, the girls are not pretty and the river they were posing for does not even make it into the picture. We cannot physically see the photo, but we understand its awkwardness and its significance as a physical evidence of Krebs' changed persona. The first photo communicates the formidable status that Krebs once held as a member of his community. The second photo communicates his change and his inability to fulfill the standards previously set for him by his community. Across the rest of the story, Krebs struggles to conform to his community's notions of who he should be.

The community's expectations of Krebs are not just based on his former self, but also on their unrealistic concept of masculinity, which is tied strongly to their unrealistic concept of veterans. The community holds a collective expectation that all soldiers return from war as heroes and have sensational and glorious war stories to share. Krebs does not



fit into this mold because “he came back much too late” and by this time “the greeting of war heroes was over” (89). Krebs does not come home at the *expected* time and “people seemed to think it was rather ridiculous for Krebs to be getting back so late” (89). Krebs’ community is wary of welcoming him back because his behavior does not conform to their expectations. The fact that this community has such strong views on acceptable behavior for veterans, though they have little knowledge of the reality of war, shows the community’s desire to regulate others in order to control what they cannot understand. In this story, we see the collective voice come together to form a source of authority. This authority is more dangerous than the singular authority figures, like Nick’s father, because it cannot be traced to a specific individual, but rather exists through and is powered by an amalgamation of invisible individuals. In Chapter II we saw how violence replaced authority. In Krebs’ community, violence and authority are still conflated. The community uses the group influence of its authority to impose the violence of erasure of Krebs’ violence/trauma. By using violence on a macro scale to try to erase personal experiences of violence, the community becomes guilty of the same kind of faulty thinking that characterized stories such as “The Battler” and the Chapter VI vignette where the protagonist’s allowed violence to replace their social beings. By trying to erase the presence of war in the community, it promulgates greater violence and creates an environment more akin to that of war than before.

Krebs spends a lot of time at home, since he is not accepted and does not fit in anywhere else in his community. But even at home he is an outcast. Krebs’ mother criticizes him for being “idle” (98), while the other “boys are all settling down; they’re all

determined to get somewhere...are on their way to being really a credit to the community” (99). One would expect that service in the greatest war in history would be good enough to make one “a credit to the community,” but Krebs’ mother’s comments show just how incapable she is of recognizing his sacrifice or even understanding its depth. Throughout the story, Krebs’ struggles to navigate the gap between society’s perception of war and his service and his own lived experiences. The hardest part to accept is that Krebs’ family says that they love him, as reminded by his mother and sister, but they do not understand him. They do not understand that Krebs can’t love anybody (100) and when he tells his mother this he realizes, “he couldn’t make her see it...he had only hurt her” (100). Neither society nor Krebs’ family ever gives him a chance to open up about his experiences, but even if they had, would they have understood? The utter hopelessness that surrounds this world for Krebs is due to the great chasm of communication between himself and those who have not experienced war.

Although Krebs lacks an audience to communicate the reality of his experiences with violence, his community is eager to listen to the made-up violence communicated through glorified war stories. Krebs does not have the kind of war stories that the community desires and so his own stories and experiences are ignored by his community. Krebs’ truth is that “he had been badly, sickeningly frightened all the time” (91) but “no one wanted to hear about it...Krebs found that to be listened to at all he had to lie....Even his lies were not sensational” (90). The unrealistic expectations set by Krebs’ community trap him in a web of lies. Instead of being able to share his experiences as a form of catharsis or healing, “Krebs acquired the nausea in regard to experience that is the result

of untruth or exaggeration” (90-91). Society’s entire perception of the war seems to be based on sensational stories and their rejection of the truth denies Krebs any agency in owning his own experiences. Ultimately, Krebs felt “he lost everything” (91) because with no one to talk to it’s like his experience never happened. Krebs, like Ad, is another example of a fighter who goes into battle praised and supported by society and comes out a social reject. In both instances, the fighters are changed by their direct experience with violence but society denies their trauma. By denying their trauma, it robs them of their identity, which is not the same as it was before.

Krebs returns from war a more aged and disillusioned man than the innocent boy who was sent away. Because of his changed sense of self, his perspective on the outside world changes as well. What was once familiar and comforting is now dangerous and foreign. Krebs’ perspective of the “young girls” in his town shows that he presently lives in a constant state of battle. In contrast to Krebs’ changed identity, he notes that “nothing was changed in the town except that the young girls had grown up” (92). With no hope for happiness or recognition, Krebs turns his attention to sex. A definition a page earlier insinuates that sex is “the only thing for a man to do, easily and naturally” (90). It is unclear whether this definition is about sex or killing, but as mentioned, both seem to be closely linked. This quote connects sex to notions of masculinity and, as we explored in relation to Nick, his social identity is strongly connected to his masculinity. Thus, Krebs tries to regain his masculinity, and his social identity, through female relationships.

As he observes the girls in his community he realizes that “they lived in such a complicated world of already defined alliances and shifting feuds that Krebs did not feel

the energy or the courage to break into it” (92). The description of this female world as one of “defined alliances and shifting feuds” sounds like a description one would use to define the world at the time of WWI. Krebs goes on to describe the girls’ physical appearance and we see further evidence of the connection between the girls and war. He says, “Most of them had their hair cut short...They all wore sweaters and shirt waists with round Dutch collars” (92). The description of the girls in uniform recalls the picture of Harold before he went off to war. However, this, in combination with their “short hair,” connects them an image of soldiers in war. Their appearance at once conveys a childishness because of their short hair when “only little girls wore their hair like that” (92), but it also conveys uniformity and masculinity, which frightens Krebs because of its relation to his own violent experiences.

For Krebs, the world of these “young girls” is parallel to a world ripe for war. Their complexity and mysteriousness prevents him from being able to initiate any kind of communication or a relationship with them. He says, “He did not want any consequences ever again” (93), showing that Krebs’ fear of violence is so strong that it overpowers his most natural desire. He does not have the “courage to break into it” because his courage has already been broken from fighting in the world war. Krebs loses a young and innocent part of himself--Harold-- in the war and he does not want to risk losing another part of him by entering war again, even if that means forgoing sexual/romantic companionship.

Without the ability to connect with any aspect society, Krebs shuts off emotionally and becomes a shell of the person he used to be. IThrough reading about the

war in history books, which he claims were “the most interesting reading he had ever done” (95) he “others” his own personal experiences with war. The line, “Now he was really learning about the war. He had been a good soldier” (95) shows that Krebs erases his personal knowledge of war and replaces it with a less personally traumatic narrative. Unlike his community’s reactions to his stories, that make Krebs feel alienated and inadequate, the history books make him feel reassured. His interest in the maps suggests that the books incorporate a level of fact and authenticity that his community does not understand. Krebs’ takes comfort in this emphasis on truth versus fantasy, which seems surprising considering how truth has been suppressed across other stories. Krebs enjoys reading on the history of war because in these books the war exists separately from himself. He can reflect generally upon his experiences without having to remember the painful personal moments.

When Krebs returns from war back to the State, we see the unification of a post-war narrative and a pre-war setting, which suggests the unification of the book as a whole. This cohesion is also evidenced across the multiple themes that make a resurgence in this text: the incommunicability of trauma through the “othering” of trauma and of its victims, the failure of “othering” to relieve trauma, the failure of external authorities to overcome violence and the further promulgation of violence through its attempted erasure. All of these are themes that we have been discussing over the course of the book and which have appeared disparately in different scenarios. “Soldier’s Home” brings these issues to ahead, but, in coordination with the Chapter VI vignette and “A Very Short Story,” the end picture is disparaging. These wounds cannot be healed by sex, love,

god, community or even family. How is one to continue living in a world where there is no hope for being understood? The last few stories turn away from conventional ideas about society to try to answer this question.

### Traversing International and Sexual Borders.

After “Soldier’s Home,” the narrative takes a new direction and moves its sights back to Europe, suggesting that a change in geography and culture might provide the answer to this chasm of communication. On the one hand, “Soldier’s Home” shows how the trauma suffered by veterans causes them to feel like foreigners, even in their own communities. Thus, moving to a community where one is overtly recognized as a foreigner might make it easier to cope with an internal “othered” identity. Furthermore, WWI was fought entirely on European soil, so it is possible that Europe started to feel like home for soldiers that fought there. If this is not the case then maybe it is just too hard to leave Europe and go back home because doing so means acknowledging the end of the war, all of the loss and death it caused, and recognizing the changes that one now faces in themselves.

This chapter has focused on personal relationships and exploring how a traumatized protagonist forms relationships with others while dealing with brokenness in themselves. The stories that take place in Europe move away from youthful sexual escapades and center on adult relationships. “Mr. and Mrs. Elliot,” “Cat in the Rain” and “Out of Season” are stories that feature heterosexual couples, with hints of homosexuality lurking in the background. This hint of homosexuality really takes the stage in “Cross

Country Snow,” which brings back Nick, now a fully grown married man, and introduces his friend George as they go skiing across the Alps. In the story, the physical act of skiing carries two important implications for Nick. The burst of physical activity provides a “rush and 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” (139). Skiing provides a mental release for Nick where the intensity of the physical experience overpowers his mind. It is odd that skiing is described as a “wonderful flying” and “dropping” sensation since flying and dropping are movements that seem to be in opposition. It is the contradictory nature of this physical experience that allows Nick to let go and immerse himself fully in an unconstructed sensory reality.

This uninhibited sensory reality does not just apply to Nick’s own experience, but also to the way he views the skiing experience of his friend, George.

He looked up the hill. George was coming down in telemark position, kneeling; one leg forward and bent, the other trailing; his sticks hanging like some insect’s thin legs, kicking up puffs of snow as they touched the surface and finally the whole kneeling, trailing figure coming around in a beautiful right curve, crouching, the legs shot forward and back, the body leaning out against the swing, the sticks accenting the curve like points of light, all in a wild cloud of snow.(141)

This description of George’s movements is filled with really vivid and poetic imagery. Phrases like, “his stick hanging like some insect’s thin legs” and “kicking up puffs of snow as they touched the surface” beautifully break apart each aspect of the movement and capture each moment like it’s part of a dance. This description feels erotic because of the mixture of constrained beauty and wild intensity. The reader holds their breath from one comma to the next and finally gets a chance to release at, “all in a wild cloud of

snow” (141). The imagery of the passage, as well as the sensation one gets when reading puts the reader in a sexually-charged trance.

The fact that skiing is a shared pleasurable experience for both Nick and George, leaves readers to wonder whether it represents a shared sexual experience between them as well. Their conversation at the bar hints at an intimacy between the two friends that goes beyond friendship. Nick starts off with, “There’s nothing really that can touch skiing, is there?...The way it feels when you first drop off on a long run” (142-43). Here, Nick describes skiing as a physically transcendent experience, and one that stands apart from all other experiences. Beyond a physical release, skiing seems to be an allusion for a sort of sexual release as well because of its ability to transcend average sensory experience, releasing the body and mind at the same time.

However, George quickly shuts down the conversation, insisting that “It’s too swell to talk about” (143). George’s response emphasizes the untouchable/unspeakable quality of the physical release and suggests he does not want to or feels it should not be discussed. The unspeakability of the experience again connects sex to violence, since both are experiences which the book is unable to discuss openly. Just as war, sex is an experience that is purely, even abstractly physical. It defies language and one’s ability to discuss it in concrete terms. Furthermore, the sexual relationship alluded to between George and Nick is unconventional and would be considered highly inappropriate by their community. George and Nick’s inability to discuss their relationship because of social conventions/expectations is reminiscent of Krebs’s inability to be honest with his community about his unconventional war experiences. Even though they are removed



from their communities and pressures of social conformity, their actions are still influenced by their community's standards for social acceptability. Just as Krebs' war trauma follows him home and disrupts his ability to be a normal member of his society, Nick and George's social trauma follows them away from home and disrupts their ability to re-define what "normal" means for them. Thus, this story further shows the inexplicit connections between civilian and military life in the form of violent authority.

It is important that the details in "Cross-Country Snow" only offer suggestions or hints of homosexuality. As we saw in "The Battler" Hemingway uses suggestive, restrained language to discuss relationships that would otherwise be inappropriate. In "A Very Short Story" the illicit sexual relationship between the soldier and his nurse is never explicitly mentioned and is covered up by the facade of their love. In "Cross Country Snow" the story never says directly whether or not Nick and George are lovers, or whether there is some pent up sexual desire between them. The uncertainty of this sexual tension is hinted at in the story's closing conversation. Nick's wife is going to have a baby, which means that Nick will have to move back to the U.S., despite his desire to stay in Europe. It is also important here that Nick's wife is never mentioned, or even the fact that he has a wife, but the story allows us to infer this through other suggestive language. The way the story avoids discussing this male-female relationship furthers our impression that the story wants to focus on a different relationship, the one between Nick and George.

George asks Nick if he will ever go skiing with his wife in the States and Nick responds "I don't know" and that the mountains are "too rocky" and "too far away"

(146). Unlike Europe, the U.S. does not have the right physical conditions for skiing and “the boys” contemplate having to end their relationship with the sport once they leave Europe. It is possible that the European backdrop to “Cross-Country Snow” allows not just the proper physical conditions for skiing, but also the proper social conditions for a sexual relationship between two men. The story alludes to Europe as a more socially liberal environment when Nick notes that “no girls get married around here till they’re knocked up” (144), thus insinuating that European culture has different standards for sexual relationships and romance than American culture. Their relationship to skiing seems to be an allusion for a physical relationship between men and once they leave the liberal European society, they will have to leave behind their relationship as well.

Neither Nick nor George wants to accept this fate and George appeals, “I wish we could make a promise about it” (147). George refers specifically to skiing in this conversation, but again, skiing can be interpreted as a front for their sexual desires. The openness and suggestivity of George’s comment makes Nick uncomfortable because he stands up and prepares to leave. He responds that “there isn’t any good in promising” (147), expressing his aversion to solidifying their relationship in any kind of concrete way. Nick enjoys the intangibility of skiing/ his relationship with George because it allows him to idealize or fantasize about the relationship, without actually having to commit himself to the actual experience, which could be complicated and fraught with social and personal consequences. While previously it was George who shuts down the sexual implications of their conversation, Nick now internalizes George’s anxieties. He shows his preference to remain in the realm of possibility and he again opens the door for

possibility in the last line, “Now they would have the run home together” (147). This line conveys a pleasure and excitement for the journey to come and for the mystery that it brings.

#### Retreat to the Pastoral, Failed Escape from Trauma.

The final stories take a decisive turn when the book rejects society and kinship altogether, providing a response to the question of survival in the emotionally complex world that proves to be too much for Krebs. This response comes in the form of a pastoral oasis, a literary technique in which “bouts of violence and terror” are contrasted with “moments of brief recurrence to the pastoral ideal” with the desired effect of producing “points of illumination or refreshment” in the narrative (Fussell, 235). In his chapter on “Arcadian Resources,” Fussell argues that “if the opposite of war is peace, the opposite of experiencing moments of war is proposing moments of pastoral” (231). Krebs tries to accomplish this pastoral moment through his solitude and resignation from his community. However, his obsession with books on the war only pulled him further into, rather than away from, his trauma. In “Cross-Country Snow,” Nick also tries to achieve this peaceful pastoral, however his rocky relationship with George only served as a constant reminder of the community he is ostracized from and the trauma that forces his ostracization.

*In Our Time* ends re-centering on our main male protagonist, Nick, and his retreat into a deserted landscape to catch trout. This story is the book’s final attempt to re-claim a pre-trauma self through Nick’s return to the U.S. in springtime. As discussed

previously, the U.S. is the only physical space in the book that has not been corrupted by the presence of war. Additionally, situating this story in the springtime is an effort to reclaim a peaceful pre-war setting as spring is simultaneously known as the “favorite time for launching offensives” as well as the best time to catch trout (Fussell, 239). By asserting the peace and serenity of this natural environment, and claiming it as his new home, Nick tries one last time to erase his past trauma and start life anew. However, as we have witnessed time and again, the attempted erasure of trauma only leads to an eventual more violent eruption.

The Nick that is re-introduced at the end of the book is decidedly more mature and assertive than the shy, uncertain Nick introduced earlier. As Nick enters this barren landscape, he imposes force and control over his new environment. The stories feel post-apocalyptic and Nick, by default, becomes the new authority and gets to establish the moral/ethical code in this empty and unclaimed land. It is interesting that Nick does not abolish violence altogether in his new home. Rather, he asserts a new balance between life and death. Within this balance, there is room for death and violence, but in moderation and exhibited only in restrained activities. This balance could be interpreted as a response to the overwhelming death and destruction that WWI introduced into the war. Furthermore, these stories assert the power of man--not machinery--as the ultimate authority. Nick rejects all modern conventions and modes of life and chooses to construct his own destiny out in the wild, with only the help of his physical strength, mental toughness and a few basic tools.

In the opening of “Big Two-Hearted River” the thread circles back to “The Battler” where young Nick struggles to assert his independence in the world. Both stories begin with Nick’s departure from a train and his venture out into the surrounding country. The opening lines here--“The train went on up the track out of sight...Nick sat down on the bundle of canvas and bedding the baggage man had pitched out of the door of the baggage car” (177)-- start the story off on a different and more composed tone than the one in “The Battler”. Compared to “The Battler” scene where Nick gets kicked off a train for free-loading and chastises himself for his boyish immaturity, the opening scene of “Big Two-Hearted River” is more relaxed and that immediate interaction with violence is absent. Instead of being kicked out of the train, it seems that Nick departs of his own free will. From the first sentences, a new Nick is introduced with more self-control and autonomy than in the past. Even in previous stories with adult protagonists they were constrained by society’s expectations of how they should be/ behave. In this story, Nick is completely alone and so he has no one to judge him or influence his decisions but himself. This story will test Nick’s self-guided authority, his ability to survive on his own and at the same time, cope with his past trauma.

When Nick departs from the train, he enters a post-apocalyptic world where not even remnants of civilization persist. The description of this ghost town is another aspect of the opening passage that echoes earlier Nick stories.

There was no town, nothing but the rails and burned-over country. The thirteen saloons that had lined the one street of Seney had not left a trace. The foundations of the Mansion House hotel stuck up above the ground. The stone was chipped and split by the fire. It was all that was left of the town of Seney. Even the surface had been burned off the ground. (177)

This description of a desolated, abandoned town reminds us of the opening of a much earlier story, “The End of Something,” which opens with a description of Hortons Bay where “one year there were no more logs to make lumber” and “Ten years later there was nothing of the mill left except the broken white limestone of its foundations showing through the swampy second growth” (35-36). The contrast between the past and present life of Hortons Bay is echoed by the description of Seney. The only remnants of civilization left in either town are the “broken white limestone” (36) of the mill and the “foundations of the Mansion House hotel” (177). In both cases, stone remnants of man-made artifice are the only survivors in either city. The absolute nothingness of either town speaks to the fragility of organized society. Hortons Bay relied on lumber and once society was no longer able to strip away resources from nature, it could not support itself and civilization was wiped out completely. Similarly, the “thirteen saloons that had the one street of Seney” (177) conveys an excessive and commercial lifestyle that the town could not sustain. In the end, nature conquers man’s gluttony and we see the environment slowly return to its natural state. In Hortons Bay life takes the form of the “swampy second growth” and in Seney it comes in the form of the river that was still there after the fire. These openings assert the power of nature over modern society and, in doing so, provide an alternative to the absolute destruction and omnipotence of modern life, and war, that plagued the early 20th century.

The presence of “Big Two-Hearted River” connects this story to “The Battler” where water plays a crucial healing role for Nick. In this story, the only sign of life, outside of Nick, is in the river and thus, the importance of water expands from healing

Nick's physical wounds, to sustaining life in an otherwise post-apocalyptic environment. Nick notices "the trout keeping themselves steady in the current with wavering fins" (177). He observes the trout closely for a long time, "they changed their positions by quick angles, on to hold steady in the fast water again. Nick watched them a long time...many trout in deep, fast moving water, slightly distorted...its surface pushing and swelling smooth against the resistance" (177-8). The language here is focused on movement and physicality and is reminiscent of Nick's observation of skiing. The free-flowing aspect of the water contrasts with the icy-hardness of snowy mountains, but connects to the physical liberation that Nick associates with skiing in "Cross Country Snow". These passages are connected through their beautifully eruptive language that is used to describe the movements of both man and nature. Throughout "Big Two-Hearted River," the narrator's introduction of this language and Nick's unique attention to detail conveys his attempt to achieve a harmonious union between man and nature. Moreover, his intense focus on the trout in these final stories shows his attempt to erase his "self" and the implications of trauma that inevitably comes with it.

The detail of the trout swimming in the river call to mind the story, "Out of Season" where the protagonist, Peduzzi, sets up for a big fishing trip, but in the end is revealed to be too drunk and irresponsible to manage it. The way Nick interacts with the trout in this story shows a maturity that Peduzzi in "Out of Season" lacks. Furthermore, Peduzzi's unhealthy relationship with alcohol connects him to antiquated masculine ideals and authority figures that Nick moves away from and no longer contribute to his

present sense of a masculine authority. Through Nick's respect for nature he comes closer to achieving his desired union, a harmony between man and nature.

Nick observes the fish closely, appreciating their movement and withholds, for some time, his desire to fish.

A kingfisher flew up the stream. It was a long time since Nick had looked into a stream and seen a trout. They were very satisfactory. As the shadow of the kingfisher moved up the stream, a big trout shot upstream in a long angle, only his shadow marking the angle, then lost his shadow as he came through the surface, his shadow seemed to float down the stream with the current, unresisting, to his post under the bridge where he tightened facing up into the current. (178).

Nick's observation of the trout is communicated in a unique way that stands out from Hemingway's typical style. The first three sentences exemplify his matter-of-fact style; these sentences are declarative and action based, rather than image-based. Each sentence is composed of just one clause. However, the style of the fourth sentence shifts. This sentence takes up the bulk of the passage and is comprised of six separate clauses. The sentence is descriptive and highly imagistic as it traces the movement of the trout that "shot upstream in a long angle" and his shadow that "seemed to float down the stream with the current, unresisting". Though the commas make the reader move quickly through the sentence, each clause actually slows down time to observe and appreciate a specific instance of the trout's movements. This sentence communicates a focused observation on a specific moment and allows the reader to enter into the world of the narrative.

The elaborative details establish clarity in this world that is a sharp shift from Hemingway's usual resort to short and concise sentences with very little attention paid to



imagistic details. Rather than holding the reader at bay, the narrator invites the reader in to view and experience this world with Nick. The writing style conveys admiration for the natural world and natural beauty. Nick's shift in focus from men to nature suggests the termination of Nick's human relationships in exchange for a deeper relationship with the natural world. Moreover, in this new environment, Nick tries to erase any connection to modern society as a means of erasing the trauma that he experienced as a result of it.

The shut-off and uncommunicative Nick in this story has fallen quite far from the narrator in "Smyrna," whose first-person story at least demonstrates effort to share his experiences and hope that someone from the outside world will understand. Chapter I shows that from a young age, men are encouraged to repress their trauma, which makes it more difficult for them to confront it in their adult life. Chapter II shows how society in general is averse to discussing trauma, causing the traumatized individual to suffer more and seek out restorative alternatives. At the end of Chapter III, we are presented with a protagonist whose repeated exposure to violence results in a ruptured sense of self and the loss of faith in community's ability to restore a sense of self. With nowhere else to turn, Nick looks to nature, which, from his perspective, provides a blank slate for re-birth.

Through Nick's new and independent position within nature he has the power to carve this world and his relationship with it however he sees fit. Nick's personal autonomy is amplified by the fact that his environment is completely devoid of other humans or traces of human existence. By choosing this environment as his new home, Nick is able to reject social conventions and elements of a conventional social existence. For example, he decides not to speak (187). By choosing to communicate with the world

solely through action he denies language, one of the most fundamental and differentiating elements of humans. He also places himself closer to the physical world, where sex and war exist, two human experiences that defy language. When memories of old friends and an old life creep into his consciousness, he refutes these memories from “a long time ago” (191), and confines them to a past life, a past self. It is interesting that Nick’s choices in this world bring him closer to violent experiences that have been associated with pain and trauma for him in the past. Rather than a way of coping with his past, Nick tries to reclaim his masculinity by subjecting himself fully to the physical world. By restricting modern social conventions or machinery, Nick tries to foster a relationship between himself and the world that returns to its “natural balance.”

One way that Nick maintains this balance is through his disciplined and strategic approach to his daily tasks. The precision and order with which he approaches each task, while necessary for his survival, is reminiscent of military organization. Vernon also reads his behavior as “the language of a soldier carrying out the physical tasks of soldiering, of getting down to his business”<sup>12</sup> (Vernon, 34) as Nick goes through the basic actions required for survival in the wilderness. As he sets up his base camp and prepares his dinner we confront a very different Nick from the dependent and uncertain young boy of the earlier stories. This Nick has extensive knowledge and experience of what it takes to live alone and subsist solely off the land. This Nick seems assertive and manly. Though he rejects society and its conceptualization of masculinity, Nick is able to create

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<sup>12</sup> Vernon, Alex. "War, Gender, and Ernest Hemingway." *The Hemingway Review* 22.1 (2002): 34-55. Web.

his own version of masculinity through his independence from society and interdependence with nature.

It is interesting that in this new world Nick creates, he does not eradicate violence entirely. In fact, in many moments violence seems necessary for Nick's survival. In "Big Two-Hearted River Part II" Nick starts his morning by "catch[ing] grasshoppers for bait before the sun dried the grass" (195). Nick is methodical in the way he goes about catching grasshoppers. He recognizes that he needs to catch grasshoppers early to avoid a violent scene, "without dew in the grass it would take him all day to catch a bottle of good grasshoppers and he would have to crush many of them, slamming them with his hat" (196). However, the imagistic description of the would-be violent scene is shocking because it fetishizes the violence, like the imagined battle in "Smyrna". Although Nick takes precautions to harm as few grasshoppers as possible, the way he communicates how "he would *have* to crush many of them" and the added visual detail of "slamming them with his hat" seems like he almost wishes he could do these things. Although moments of violence are more restrained in these final stories, there are moments where it seems that Nick takes pleasure from killing and from knowing that he has the power to kill.

In the final scene of Part I, Nick kills a mosquito by lighting a match to it. In general, killing a mosquito in the tent seems like a rational move. However, the way the scene is described adds a layer of malicious intent. The killing is premeditated because Nick does not just slap the mosquito with his hands. He lights a match and waits, locating the mosquito "over his head" (191). He then "moved the match quickly up to [the mosquito]" and subsequently, "The mosquito made a satisfactory hiss in the flame"

(192). The way that this event is drawn out and dramatized emphasizes the violence, and the satisfaction that the violence brings, to a greater degree than one might expect for an act so simple as killing a bug. Although the violent act is a comparatively small action, we start to see a side of Nick that is dangerous and potentially finds pleasure in others' pain. We question whether Nick's intention to create harmonious balance between man and nature is as pure as it once seemed. Rather, through Nick's absolute immersion in nature he is able to express his need for control and his desire for violence in a completely unrestrained environment.

Evidence for Nick's unhealthy relationship with violence becomes more prominent in Part II in the scene when Nick fishes. In this scene, the battle between man and nature reaches its climax as Nick becomes more greedy and tests his power over nature. The first test is when Nick chooses to search for big trout, even though "he was certain he could catch small trout in the shallows, but he did not want them" (202). Nick does not go for the small trout because catching them would be too easy and there would not be as great a satisfaction. Instead, as he tries to capture a big fish, the scene is described like a moment of war,

There was a long tug. Nick struck and the rod came alive and dangerous, bent double, the line tightening, coming out of water, tightening, all in a heavy, dangerous, steady pull. Nick felt the moment when the leader would break if the strain increased and let the line go. (203)

The first thing we notice in this passage is the dramatic language that creates a wildly detailed scene emphasizing physical action and beauty. The language here connects it to previous passages in which language is similarly used to communicate the transcendence

of specific physical moments or encounters. The relatively short moment is dramatized into a second-by-second play-by-play. We get the full image of the line “tightening, coming out of the water, tightening” again. The specificity of the movement creates a beautiful description; however, the beauty pertains to the battle between these two opposing forces. The reader gets sucked into the violence, forced to become a spectator and thus, relish in the display of violence alongside Nick. The focus on violence in this passage suggests that instead of using sport or sex for release, Nick now uses violence to achieve his liberation. Our premature conclusion about Nick’s relationship with nature as a means to accomplish a harmony/unity between man and nature is completely defunct here.

As the intensity of the struggle increases, Nick’s “heart feeling stopped with the excitement” (203) and again we are wary of the fact that his satisfaction is tied to the violence and domination of nature, rather than a harmonious relationship with it. Furthermore, his movements seem practiced and precise and resemble the preparation of a soldier going into war. Once “the leader had broken” (203), Nick finds “his mouth dry, his heart down” (203). We want to believe that Nick feels upset with himself for being so careless and harming the fish, however, the text suggests something different. It is revealed that “Nick’s hand was shaky...The thrill had been too much” (204) and Nick’s response seems more like excitement over the thrill of the battle than a remorse for the fish. Instead he reminisces over how big the trout was and how “he had been solidly hooked. Solid as a rock” (204), emphasizing his pride in his domination over the fish rather than sympathy for it. The thrill of Nick’s near-conquest is emphasized again when

he says, “It went away slowly, the feeling of disappointment that came sharply after the thrill that made his shoulders ache” (205). Because Nick’s disappointment comes “sharply after the thrill” of almost having caught the fish, we can interpret his disappointment to be in himself for not ultimately succeeding.

It is not clear whether Nick is drawn to or taken aback by the violence and we might infer that it is not clear to him either. The bottom line is that Nick’s relationship with violence is not as stable or as healthy as the story initially leads us to believe. Rather than Nick becoming the master of his destiny, his obsession with violence is what controls him. Furthermore, his rejection of society leads him further into, rather than away from, violence. Without the pressure of society’s authority, Nick has no one to judge his behavior but himself. In this story, Nick becomes the violent authority that replaces all other authority. However, as we saw in Chapter II, violence as an authority only leads to more violence and chaos. By refuting language, he refutes the means through which this judgement can be applied and falls further deeper into the trend of repressing trauma that we have witnessed across the entire book. The only possible outcome of Nick’s anti-authority and anti-language approach to his trauma is greater violence and more trauma. Despite the independence that Nick forges in this story he does not succeed in finding more sustainable means of approaching violence and managing his trauma.

If we have learned anything from these varied stories it is that each character in some shape or form has encountered violence in his life and has been changed because of it. Many of the characters appear to suffer from PTSD. The traumatic war story that

opens the book suggests this as the cause for the PTSD. However, the opening story of Nick's childhood also suggests that trauma and exposure to violence can be the result of any person's lived experience. The fact that the book takes place around the time of the Great War, and offers a variety of perspectives on individuals/communities involved with it or surrounded by it suggests that and regardless of the immediacy of their contact with the war, all of society is affected by the war in some way.

As we have observed across various stories, society does not know how to deal with trauma victims or guide them back to "normalcy." If society does not have the answers, the next logical step is to leave society and look for the answers elsewhere. "Big Two-Hearted River" shows that rejecting society is not a solution either because of the inherent damage that has been done to the individual. Over the course of the book Nick develops from having an aversion to violence, to ignoring it altogether, to suffering from it and finally, to depending upon it as a way of life. He brings his emotional baggage with him into his new life and we can infer that his unresolved issues will only cause more trouble for him here. *In Our Time* might not provide a clear answer as to how to best cope with trauma, but it does highlight the extensive effects that trauma has, both on an individual and a greater societal level. Overall, the book speaks to the immediate need for the recognition of trauma as an initial step and its extended impact on individuals involved directly, indirectly and their communities.

## CONCLUSION

The short-story, “On the Quai at Smyrna,” was not initially included in Hemingway’s first published edition<sup>13</sup> of this book. *In Our Time* was first published in Paris in 1924 and it was not until 1930 that Hemingway decided to add “On the Quai at Smyrna” as an “introduction” to the later editions. Thinking of “Smyrna” as an introduction, added after the original publication, is interesting because it speaks to a number of different things. Firstly, it speaks to the man-made aspect of this book. Our understanding of the story is dependent on someone else’s ability to structure and influence how we read that story. Our experience of the book parallels in some way, the experience of modern warfare. We, as readers, have no control over the narrative, while the writer has absolute control. We are the spectators and the writer is simultaneously the creator and destroyer. In modern warfare, soldiers became the spectators of war, due to the introduction of massive automatic weapons that no man, no matter how strong, could overcome. The difference between creator/destroyer and spectator depends only on which side of the field you were on, just as the difference in fiction depends on which side of the pen/page you are on. By calling attention to *In Our time* as a constructed piece of fiction, susceptible to modification at any time, we are also reminded of the ephemerality of human life and of human-constructed power balances, both of which became dramatically more apparent after the introduction of mechanized warfare in the 20th century.

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<sup>13</sup> Biblio.com Staff. "In Our Time." *Biblio - Uncommonly good books found here*. Three Mountains Press, 01 Jan. 1970. Web. 21 Apr. 2017.



The late introduction of “Smyrna” also calls attention to Hemingway’s desire to make the war context of the book more apparent. The experience of reading *In Our Time* without that first introductory story would be a very different one. As discussed in Chapter I, “Smyrna” is crucial for establishing the book’s post-war/post-trauma perspective by introducing a post-war setting and a post-war first-person narrator directly into the narrative. Without this elaborate post-war story, the war vignettes would seem more random, less pointed without the specific person and place of reference that “Smyrna” gives to these stories. We might read the issues of violence and authority prevalent in “Indian Camp” as unique to Nick or Nick’s community and we would miss the book’s greater message about universality, or at least it would be less overt.

This essay has discussed again and again Hemingway’s tendency towards extreme subtlety and brevity. When Hemingway steps out this style of writing, it is important to acknowledge and pay attention to these specific details. Without “Smyrna” a post-trauma reading of the book would be much more subtle, but Hemingway’s decision to go back and include “Smyrna” and label it an introduction makes the post-war context explicit. While the array of stories and settings in *In Our Time* suggest a more generous reading of the universality of trauma, the placement of “Smyrna” confirms the writer’s intention for the reading to be focused on that critical moment when the very essence of life changed after the Great War in the 20th century.

The decision to place the most recent “mini-narrative” at the beginning of the book is revalidation of the claim that “In Our Time” is interested in the process of “re-,” reclaiming narratives and re-constructing memories in order to re-discover the self. The

book's structure introduces another theme which is that of cyclicity. The post-WWI story which opens the book places the end at the beginning. The book then jumps back in time to "Indian Camp" and works through various pre-WWI stories until it approaches the moment of war itself. The book stays in the war only momentarily with "A very short story" and then returns to a post-WWI context. However this post-WWI context does not return to "Smyrna," but rather explores new settings, with "Soldier's Home", "Cross Country Snow," and "Big Two-Hearted River." While the temporal structure of the book suggests cyclicity, it is difficult to connect the narrator of "Smyrna" to any of the post-WWI stories. The fact that the first-person narrator from "Smyrna" does not return in the novel directly, and yet that traces of him can be seen in other stories, suggests a simultaneous cyclicity and finality. The simultaneous presence of a cyclical and final narrative is another way in which *In Our Time* parallels the human experience; life in general continues, though certain lives are lost along the way.

The title of the final story, "Big Two-Hearted River" also speaks to this simultaneous unity and disunity. On a literal level, the title suggests the image of a single river that splits off into two. The title can also be read as a metaphor for a split sense of self and/or society. The split sense of self reminds us of the narrator from "Smyrna" and the real possibility that "You" he addresses in the story is actually an imagined "other" and the only person with whom he is able to share his story. Thus, by re-introducing the idea of the split self in the last story, Hemingway draws a connection and a divide between the protagonists of "Big Two-Hearted River" and "Smyrna." While the narrator of "Smyrna" is still deeply engaged with the war setting, Nick in the final story has cut

himself off from society entirely. The implication here is that Nick and the narrator from “Smyrna” represent two related, but divergent paths for a post-war existence. In “Smyrna,” the narrator cannot escape the war and instead continues to re-live it by committing himself to a path of violence. Meanwhile, Nick refutes the existence of war and violence altogether by removing himself from society. These stories represent two opposite extremes and the extreme nature of either path is a suggestion that neither one will provide the ultimate answer towards a pre-war self re-discovery.

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