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The mystical Nick Adams: A consideration of the positive nature of Nick's retreat in "Indian Camp".

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THE MYSTICAL NICK ADAMS:
A CONSIDERATION OF THE POSITIVE
NATURE OF NICK'S RETREAT IN "INDIAN CAMP"

by

Richard Joseph Metzger

A Thesis

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of Lehigh University
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Master of Arts

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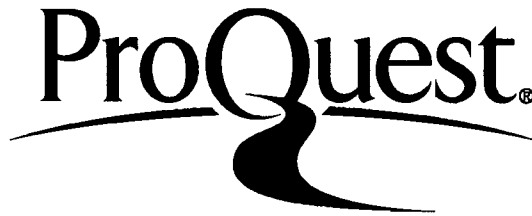
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This Thesis is accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

December 13, 1976
(date)

Professor in Charge

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Abstract

Critical consideration of Nick Adams' initiation in "Indian Camp" has been one dimensional: Nick's response is negative, an understandable if somewhat absurd rejection of his world. Such a consideration of Nick's response stems from the tendency to view Nick in "Indian Camp" as a younger version of the Nick in "Big Two-Hearted River," a character who has learned Hemingway's rational response--ritual--to his world. However, if one reconsiders "Indian Camp" without this perspective, paying particular attention to Hemingway's multiple use of irony, the initiation of Nick presents another, more mystical dimension. In this dimension, Nick's response is positive, a less understandable, if somehow more satisfying acceptance of his world.

By his ironic treatment of Nick's father, Hemingway demonstrates that such a reconsideration is needed. He sarcastically condemns Dr. Adams' false pride in his ability to control--through his coded behavior--the situation at the camp. Consequently, though Nick later learns the benefits that ritualistic action provides for one attempting to "live in it," he also learns that such ritual cannot control life. His father is destroyed. However, as Jackson Benson demonstrates, overuses irony in his treatment of Dr. Adams. He is overly bitter towards Nick's father, and consequently the reader tends to view Dr. Adams with pity, rather than contempt.

The more sympathetic view of Dr. Adams leads the way to a favorable view of Nick's response, and the mythic structure-- "Indian Camp" follows the classic pattern of the initiation tale--points the direction that his new view is to take. Nick becomes less the typical Hemingway hero, and more "the perfected, unspecific, universal man" of mythic tradition described by Joseph Campbell. His reaction to the experience is less a rejection than a retreat to a universal consciousness, one that can allow Nick to feel his own immortality. The "happy ending," therefore, is not a contradiction but a "transcendence of the universal tragedy of man."

Hemingway reinforces this mythic reading with his style. "Indian Camp" illustrates what Michael Friedberg calls Hemingway's chief aesthetic achievement, a juxtaposition of controlled style and chaotic universe. Through this juxtaposition, Hemingway merges the material world with the spiritual, allowing Nick to transcend the material and experience a moment of "special illumination," a moment of "quasi-immortality."

Thus, though Hemingway initiates Nick into a cruel world and a rational means of coping, he also initiates him into a mystical experience that allows him to feel he will never die.

As the stature of Hemingway as a writer has grown, so has the recognition of the complexity of his vision. Malcolm Cowley, in his introduction to The Portable Hemingway, points out that Hemingway's work places him in the tradition of such American writers as Poe, Hawthorn, and Melville,¹ a tradition noted for its examination of the inner workings of man's mind and soul. That Hemingway's depth of vision exists as much in his short stories as it does in his novels seems a point almost too obvious to make. Sheldon Grebstein makes no distinction between the short and longer work when he states, in the introduction to his book on Hemingway's craft - a book which treats both the short stories and the novels - that Hemingway's "depiction of a vivid and tangible surface reality, of physical action and sensation...often merges inextricably with a deep symbolic understructure."² Considering Hemingway's own analogy of his work to an iceberg, one must see Grebstein's analogy as quite accurate: "The water is so clear it seems shallow to some, but when one dives in, one can go down and down and often never touch bottom."³

¹Malcolm Cowley, "Nightmare and Ritual in Hemingway," Introduction to Viking Portable Hemingway: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1962), pp. VII-XXIV, specifically p. XXIII.

²Sheldon Grebstein, Hemingway's Craft (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern University Press, 1973), p. 15 of the Introduction.

³Grebstein, p. 15 of Introduction.

Besides reflecting Hemingway's penetrating vision, the short stories are also clear demonstrations of Hemingway's artistry. Again certainly including all of Hemingway's work, Grebstein states that "pertinent and memorable as are Hemingway's themes and worldview to the readers of this tormented age, he will last primarily because of his art not his ideas."⁴ And it is specifically of the short stories that Jackson Benson writes when he states, "The real mastery of the Hemingway stories lies in a delicacy of touch, a subtlety of minute shadings."⁵ Benson points out that, though Hemingway's work might be grouped with the work of writers "of our literary Renaissance," when one considers thematic content, "In texture they [short stories] can be more profitably compared to the stories of Henry James."⁶ Hemingway is a "master of rhythm and of structure" who "works as an architect, carefully constructing a classic arch, moving from a finely wrought definite center to suggest dimensions operating in all directions to the 'outside.'"⁷

⁴Grebstein, p. 15 of Introduction.

⁵Jackson J. Benson, "Ernest Hemingway As Short Story Writer," The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway: Critical Essays, ed. Jackson J. Benson (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1975), p. 272.

⁶Benson, "Ernest Hemingway As Short Story Writer," p. 272.

⁷Ibid., p. 272.

Such a conception of Hemingway as a great craftsman whose ideas possess depth and complexity has challenged readers to reconsider Hemingway as an artist. Admitting that Hemingway is at least capable of being more than the surface would at first indicate, readers, I think, have been rewarded by a reconsideration of the stories. I think, too, that the deeper one looks into Hemingway's work, the more ready he is to classify Hemingway as a writer of the first order.

Of particular interest to anyone who approaches Hemingway's shorter fiction are the Nick Adams stories, and it is the purpose of this paper to consider the character of Nick Adams, specifically as it is created in "Indian Camp," but making references, when comparisons are in order, to other stories which portray Nick. Much of the interest in these particular stories can be traced to the work of Philip Young. Though the relationship between the stories with the common protagonist may have been noted by many, it was Young who demanded that the stories be seen as a whole, a unified development of one of Hemingway's most important characters, and collected the stories under one title. Young's own interest in Nick Adams stems from his conviction that the character of Nick Adams is crucial to the entire Hemingway canon. He finds that the Nick Adams

series develops a very definite pattern:

Here is a boy, and after that a man, who both in his early environment and later out on his own has been coming in contact with "life" in our time. Each of these contacts has been in some way violent, evil, or unsettling in that no ready answers are available. The effect of these episodes is equally apparent. They have complicated and damaged the man....⁸

The result of this pattern is the character of Nick Adams, a "sensitive, humorless, honest, rather passive male."⁹ Moreover, this sensitive passive male occupies, according to Young, a position of importance beyond the Nick Adams series. For Young, Nick " is the Hemingway hero, the first one....; the experiences of childhood, adolescence and young manhood which shape Nick Adams shaped as well Lt. Henry, Jake Barnes, Col. Cantwell, and several other heroes."¹⁰ As long as it is remembered that the character of Nick Adams represents more than a common background for the heroes of the novels, that he is an individual who possesses his own characteristics, I think one is forced to agree with Young's analysis of Nick and the series. Nick

⁸Philip Young, Ernest Hemingway: A Reconsideration (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1966), p. 54.

⁹Young, Ernest Hemingway: A Reconsideration, p. 54.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 55.

Adams is the first Hemingway hero, and if one is to understand the other Hemingway heroes, Nick must be understood.

To consider this first Hemingway hero, it is crucial to start at the beginning, with "Indian Camp," and, as I have stated above, it is the purpose of this paper to examine the initial Nick Adams story. "Indian Camp" is important not only because it is first, but also because it introduces features of the Nick Adams personality, features that remain consistent, though more fully developed, in the later stories.

When it was first published, "Indian Camp" was included in In Our Time; consequently, it is, I think, tempting to view "Indian Camp" as another example of the violence and horror of Hemingway's post-World War I world. It seems to represent the horrible nature of the birth-to-death cycle. As Young indicates in his essay "Adventures of Nick Adams", it was not at first apparent that "Indian Camp," or any of the early Nick Adams stories, were about Nick at all.¹¹ Young goes on to place the focus of the story clearly on Nick and describes "Indian Camp" as a "typical Nick Adams story," that is, "an initiation... the telling of an event which is violent or evil, or both, or

¹¹ Philip Young, "Adventures of Nick Adams," Ernest Hemingway (New York: Rinehart, 1952), reprinted in Robert P. Weeks, ed., Hemingway: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1962), p. 96.

at the very least is the description of an incident which brings the boy into contact with something that is perplexing and unpleasant."¹²

Thus "Indian Camp" becomes the first demonstration of the pattern - designed by Hemingway to illustrate Nick's character - that Young exhibits in his Reconsideration. It seems obvious that Young reached his conclusion that "Indian Camp" is a Nick Adams story through a consideration of the events at the camp, since certainly these events match Young's definition of the "typical" Nick Adams story. However, the events of the story are not the only indication that "Indian Camp" is Nick's story. Recent criticism also shows that from a narrative and structural point of view the story has Nick as the focal point.

Carl Ficken, in his essay "Point of View in the Nick Adams Stories," points out that Hemingway made a conscious effort to keep the reader's eye on Nick: "The focus of the story is kept on Nick - despite the fact that the Author-Observer allows fleeting gazes into the doctor's thoughts too - by having his

¹²Young, "Adventures of Nick Adams," p. 96.

name begin the third sentence of the story and by identifying the other two main characters through their relationship to Nick: 'Uncle George' and 'Nick's father'."¹³ More important than the specific references that Hemingway uses to keep Nick at the center of the story is the general narrative pattern of the story, for this pattern not only emphasizes Nick as the central character, but also emphasizes the central action of the story and, therefore, demonstrates the perspective from which the story must be considered.

Ficken sees four major narrative patterns that Hemingway works with in his short stories; these range from the "Effaced Narrator"-- "one who merely observes the action but cannot enter the minds of the characters"-- to "Narrator-Agent"-- "first person narrator telling his own story."¹⁴ "Indian Camp" is told through the "Author-Observer"-- "omniscient author in that he may know what is in the mind of more than one character at

¹³ Carl Ficken, "Point of View in the Nick Adams Stories," Fitzgerald/Hemingway Annual, 1971, Matthew J. Bruccoli and C. E. Frazer Clark, Jr. eds. (Washington, D. C.: N. C. R. Microcard Editions, 1971), reprinted in Jackson J. Benson, ed., The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway: Critical Essays (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1975), p. 100.

¹⁴ Ficken, p. 96.

any given time, but he is a mere observer in that he reports only what is immediately before him."¹⁵ However, "Indian Camp" is somewhat of a special case. Though the Author-Observer is capable of making intrusions into the minds of the characters, he makes only one major intrusion, that is, into Nick's mind in the last sentence. Ficken states that "Up to that last sentence, the Author-Observer tells only what any person watching the action could assume."¹⁶ All of the brief flashes that reveal more than just action, such as the doctor's loss of "post-operative exhilaration,"¹⁷ could, as Ficken goes on to state, "be reasonable guess by any observer."¹⁸ However, Ficken makes it clear that the last sentence-- "In the early morning on the lake sitting in the stern of the boat with his father rowing, he felt quite sure that he would never die" (95)-- "is more than a guess; it represents Nick's own thoughts, his reaction to what he has seen."¹⁹ The last sentence "not only

¹⁵Ficken, p. 96.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 100.

¹⁷Ernest Hemingway, The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway (New York: Scribner's, 1966), p. 94.
(Subsequent quotes from this volume will be indicated within the body of the paper itself by parenthesis containing only page reference.)

¹⁸Ficken, p. 100.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 100.

attaches this story to Nick Adams, but also has thematic significance for the whole series of stories."²⁰

Thus, a consideration of narrative technique clearly centers the story on Nick, but it does more as well: it hints at the theme of "Indian Camp" and the "whole series" of Nick Adams stories. Ficken never specifically describes the thematic significance of this solitary revelation of Nick's thoughts; however, a look at some of the conclusions Ficken reaches at the end of his study indicates just what he thinks Hemingway was trying to do. Ficken seems to agree with Philip Young in seeing Nick Adams as a very special Hemingway hero, a mask for Hemingway himself. Consequently, the character of Nick had to be treated with very special care. Hemingway, as Ficken points out, had to walk a tight rope between objectivity and subjectivity in his creation of Nick Adams. He "needed to establish some distance between himself and his hero; he needed to steer clear of any intimation of self-pity."²¹ However, Ficken further concludes that Hemingway also "wanted to get as far into the mind of Nick as he could... he wanted to write what he felt to be true and that meant burrowing deep into himself."²² To

²⁰Ficken, p. 100.

²¹Ibid., p. 110.

²²Ibid., p. 110.

achieve this middle ground, Hemingway used variations of omniscient narrator and Center of Consciousness, that is, he had to reach the objectivity of a third-person narrator but allow himself the ability to enter the consciousness of his main character, Nick.

One final pattern that Ficken observes through the stories involves the increasing use of the Center of Consciousness as the character of Nick matures.²³ The insights into Nick's mind come more often, and the Narrator-Agent (essentially the first-person narration) is used in some of the later stories. Thus, the whole Nick Adams series seems to be a movement toward more frequent and deeper penetration into the mind of Hemingway's special hero. If this is the plan that Hemingway adopted, then any penetration into Nick's mind in the early stories must be seen as extremely important, for, though Hemingway may have intended that more and more of Nick's inner thoughts and feelings emerge as the series progressed, he gave up the objectivity with seeming reluctance. Were it not for that final sentence in "Indian Camp," the first Nick story may have qualified as an "Effaced" narration. According to Grebstein, the Effaced Narrator-- though Grebstein does not use the term-- was the

²³Ficken, p. 111.

point of narration most often employed by Hemingway; in fact Hemingway strove to achieve it:

...Hemingway almost always avoids direct exposition of theme, didactic description or discussion of character, and authorial commentary upon action and motive. Thus, Hemingway's stories show rather than tell... Indeed, Hemingway's method can perhaps best be inferred from Chekhov's dictum that in both scene and character the selection of significant details, grouped so as to convey an image, is the vital thing. Above all, Chekhov warned against the depiction of mental states except through action.²⁴

The sole insight into Nick's thoughts and feelings in the last sentence becomes even more significant when the structure of the story is considered. Grebstein points out that Hemingway's short stories may be seen to illustrate one of three basic patterns-- outside-inside; toward-away; toward-"there"-away-- though any story may incorporate more than one pattern.²⁵

"Indian Camp," as Grebstein goes on to state, fits very neatly into the three-part pattern.²⁶ An initial reading of the story clearly supports this point: from the opening image of the waiting rowboat to the entry into the hut constitutes the "toward" section; from the scream of the mother-to-be to the discovery of the dead husband make up the "there" or central-experience section; and the final scene in the rowboat is the

²⁴Grebstein, p. 2.

²⁵Grebstein, pp. 10-26 contain Grebstein's discussion of the three basic structural patterns.

²⁶Ibid., p. 16.

third part, the "away" of the pattern.

As already stated, the importance of this structural pattern lies in its reflection of Hemingway's narrative technique. It is crucial to the understanding of the story to remember that Hemingway's only penetration into the mind of Nick occurs in the "away" section of his pattern. Since Hemingway rarely, at least in the early Nick Adams stories, broke from his objective point of view, one must assume that he did so selectively and for the purpose of particular emphasis. Therefore, the conclusion that must be reached is that Hemingway emphasized not the experience at the camp, but the movement away from that experience, the avoidance of that experience. When the thoughts and feelings that Nick reveals are considered-- which must be the ultimate approach to the story, since the narrative and structural patterns can serve only to point to these thoughts and feelings-- in the light of what has just happened at the camp, this conclusion becomes stronger. Nick's belief that he will never die certainly indicates some type of removal from what has happened. And so it is Hemingway's artistry that leads to the inner thought of Nick and the motif that seems to dominate "Indian Camp".

Within this structural scheme for the story, Hemingway has included a strong example of foreshadowing, that is, the death of the Indian husband-father, to point emphatically to Nick's final conviction. Because "Indian Camp" was first published in In Our Time, the tendency among readers has been to see the death of the Indian as the completion of the violent life cycle initiated by the painful labor and difficult birth. However, despite the implication that death, like its counterpart birth, is violent, evil, and perplexing, the reader must remember that the Indian husband-father's death is caused by suicide and as such is not natural, and therefore should not be used as a symbol of the completion of the life cycle. More important than the act's terrible nature is the Indian's reason for taking his life. When Nick asks his father why the Indian killed himself, his father answers, "'He couldn't stand things, I guess'" (p. 95). More specifically, he could not stand the screams of his wife during labor; more symbolically, he could not stand the pain of birth, the pain of life. Thus, his death is an avoidance of life, an escape from its pain. Since his death is definitely a focal point in the story, the avoidance motif should also be considered important and further explored. It is my contention that in "Indian Camp" Nick is

not only initiated (in the sense of being shown) into a world that is violent, evil, unpleasant, but that he is also presented with means of coping with this kind of world as well as escaping from it. Furthermore, Nick's initiation is not one of learning about and understanding the world "in our time," for no such knowledge or understanding is possible; only coping is possible. In "Indian Camp" Nick is shown two ways to cope: the more active method of masking the cruel and unfathomable reality by making it conform to self-imposed rules, and the more passive method of rejecting it entirely. Though Nick learns both methods, it is the latter he seems to make his own.

Both Arthur Waldhorn and Joseph Defalco see possibilities for some kind of understanding of reality in Nick's trip to the Indian camp. Both see within the structure of "Indian Camp" the basic outline of the mythological initiation tale. Waldhorn states that "Indian Camp" "starts as an idyl or rite of passage, father and young son journeying by canoe to an Indian settlement in the forest."²⁷ Defalco points out that the "classical parallel" between the trip to the Indian camp and a trip to Hades "Is too obvious to overlook."²⁸ However, both

²⁷ Arthur Waldhorn, A Reader's Guide to Ernest Hemingway (New York: Farrer, Straus and Giroux, 1973), p. 54.

²⁸ Joseph Defalco, The Hero In Hemingway's Short Stories (Pittsburg, Pa.: University of Pittsburg Press, 1963), p. 29.

are quick to discern that no real understanding does take place. Waldhorn points out that "the boy does not return from the forest 'idyl' initiated into manhood. A caul of innocence protects him from more than partially comprehending the tragedy he has witnessed."²⁹ Defalco agrees, warning that for such understanding to take place, Nick "must be prepared to accept the knowledge it can give him."³⁰ Defalco goes on to state that "Nick is incapable of accepting the events he has witnessed, and the initial preview of the realities of the world is abortive."³¹

Nick's closing statement that he will never die seems to support the common conclusion of Waldhorn and Defalco. However, a particular point of importance must be mentioned here. For Nick to have successfully completed-- in the eyes of Waldhorn and Defalco-- his initiation, he would have had to possess some comprehension of the event he has witnessed; that is, he would have had to reach some sort of intellectual reckoning about what he has seen and the consequences these events have for him. Such a success is an impossibility for Nick. He is a young boy whose realm of experience does not encompass Caesarian births and suicides. The shock of the horrors at the camp

²⁹ Waldhorn, p. 54.

³⁰ Defalco, p. 28.

³¹ Ibid., p. 28.

does not allow him a rational response. But the intellect is not only filter through which our experiences pass and by which we come to know our world. There is a more basic channel-- perhaps the heart, or the soul, or the gut-- for our experiences and for coming to terms with them. Were we to measure Nick's success by the latter criteria, we might not find his initiation abortive, for he does learn something, but perhaps that knowledge is not of the intellect. It is noteworthy that Nick "feels", rather than "thinks", he will never die.

The acceptance of these two means of coming to terms with our experience of living is vital to understanding the story, for it establishes the two levels upon which the story exists: the intellectual and-- for lack of a more concrete term-- the beyond-intellectual. These terms may be translated into terms that I have previously mentioned: The active and the passive methods of coping with the world. Though Hemingway does not openly advocate the passive, it seems clear that there will be no rational comprehension of the events at the camp.

From the very beginning Hemingway has undercut the entire story with heavy irony, so that nothing is as it should be, and therefore, comprehension of, and in turn defense against, the situation is impossible. The narrator points, as though Nick were observing it, that, despite the fact that "The Indian who was rowing them was working very hard," the other boat

"moved further ahead in the mist all the time" (p. 91). It is also ironic that when Nick, his father, and uncle George reach the logging road that leads into the Indian camp, the young Indian with them stops and blows out the lantern since they all perceive that it is "much lighter" (p. 91). In actuality it is much darker at the Indian camp than it was on the river, and their perceptions are much duller; Dr. Adams has not even thought to bring the proper equipment. Also, no one sees the Indian husband commit suicide, nor does anyone perceive that he might do so, or understand completely why he has done it. In accord with his dulled vision, Dr. Adams's statement that the screams of the woman "'are not important'" (p. 92) becomes obviously ironic, since these screams cause, if they do not explain, the husband's killing himself. Another blatantly ironic statement is George's comment to Nick's father when Dr. Adams boast of "' Doing a Caesarian with a jack-knife and sewing it up with nine-foot, tapered gut leaders'" (p. 94). George answers this boast with, "'Oh, you're a great man, all right'" (p. 94). But George's ironic statement is slightly different. Although no more bitter, since both statements center around the bitter joke of the unknown suicide that develops because of a painful birth. George's ironic statement is more caustic because it is intentional. In the dulled

perceptions of the Indian camp he sees and understands more clearly than Dr. Adams, and his answer has the intention of letting Nick's father know this. George's comment is very similar in tone to the irony Hemingway used so well in the descriptive passages of A Farewell to Arms, such as, "At the end of winter came the permanent rain and with the rain came the cholera. But it was checked and in the end only seven thousand died of it in the army."³²

Though not quite so obvious, situational irony is present in the circumstances of the birth itself. Like the entire experience at the Indian camp, the baby is turned the wrong way; thus, events do not proceed as they should. And, too, there is the irony that Nick himself brings to the rational level of the story with his final thoughts. That Nick could feel "quite sure that he would never die" (p. 95) indicates how little rational understanding is to be derived from his experience.

What gives each of these examples of irony its power is the realization that it is united in one encompassing irony of situation, that is, the mythical initiation scheme that Hemingway creates in the story. It is ironic that Hemingway

³²Ernest Hemingway, A Farewell To Arms (New York: Scribners', 1969), p. 4.
(Subsequent quotes from A Farewell To Arms will be indicated within the body of the paper by parenthesis containing the initials FIA and the page reference.)

creates the characteristics of a mythical journey with, as Defalco points out, two Indians who "function in a Charon-like fashion in transporting Nick, his father, and his uncle from their own sophisticated world of the white man into the dark and primitive world of the camp;"³³ and with the basic initiation structure of "toward-there-away." Hemingway presents a situation from which an understanding should ensue, and yet there is no such understanding. Moreover, the events at the Indian camp are not the events of some mythical islands across a river of mist; they are the experience of our world "in our time." This realization makes Nick's thoughts and feelings at the end of the story all the more poignant, all the more serious. His seeming rejection at the end is a rejection of his own world.

That Hemingway should choose and develop an ironic tone throughout "Indian Camp" is most natural. As E. M. Halliday points out in his essay "Hemingway's Ambiguity: Symbolism and Irony," "irony as a literary device is singularly suited to the view of life which Hemingway has consistently dramatized now for a quarter of a century."³⁴ Halliday goes on to state why

³³Defalco, p. 29.

³⁴E. M. Halliday, "Hemingway's Ambiguity: Symbolism and Irony," American Literature, 28 (March, 1956), rpt. in Robert Weeks, ed., Hemingway: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1962), p. 64.

irony is so "singularly suited" to Hemingway's view of life:

The ironic gap between expectation and fulfillment, pretense and fact, intention and action, the message sent and the message received, the way things are thought or ought to be and the way things are-- this has been Hemingway's great theme from the beginning; and it has called for an ironic method to do it artistic justice. All of his work thus far published deserves study with special attention to this method.³⁵

Jackson J. Benson, in Hemingway: The Writer's Art of Self-Defense, also points to the vital role irony plays in Hemingway's work; he states that "It [irony] affects his sense of the comic, his use of allusions, and his employment of verbal wit, and it leads him to various associated modes of satire and parody."³⁶ John Friedberg says, "The ironic mode... is the ultimate response of the Hemingway hero to his alien universe."³⁷

Lionel Trilling, in his essay "Hemingway and His Critics," explains another reason why irony is so prevalent in Hemingway's

³⁵Halliday, p. 65.

³⁶Jackson J. Benson, Hemingway: The Writer's Art of Self-Defense (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1969), p. 25.

³⁷John Friedberg, "Hemingway and the Modern Metaphysical Tradition," Hemingway: In Our Time, eds. Richard and Benson (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1974), p. 186.

works: "What Hemingway wanted first to do was to get rid of the feelings, the comfortable liberal humanitarian feelings; and to replace them with the truth," and from this desire sprang "the trick of understatement,"³⁸ Waldhorn, too, sees the stylistic necessity for irony: "When Hemingway wishes to control his response to the gap between the world as it is and as he would wish it to be, his expressive mode is often irony."³⁹

Applied to "Indian Camp," these general expressions about Hemingway's ironic method become manifest. In "Indian Camp" Hemingway has juxtaposed the expected and the real, the hoped-for and the truth, and the result seems to be the elimination of "the comfortable liberal humanitarian feelings." Hemingway has created a situation which forces Nick into a position demanding that he come to terms with what he has seen, but Nick does not, at least not to rational terms. However, the irony in "Indian Camp" is slightly more complex than a simple method of isolating Nick and pointing an accusing finger at his attempt

³⁸Lionel Trilling, "Hemingway and His Critics," Partisan Review, 6 (Winter 1939), rpt. in Carlos Baker, ed., Hemingway and His Critics, American Century Series (New York: Hill and Wang, 1961), p. 65.

³⁹Waldhorn, p. 30.

to remain innocent in the cruel world. The irony seems to turn in on itself again, with the implication that no rational understanding of life is possible; the expected does not happen. Besides, as I have already pointed out, Nick does learn something: he learns that, when he trails his hand in it, the water feels, "warm in the sharp chill of the morning" (p. 95). And perhaps this warmth is all Nick can learn; and perhaps he should be satisfied with learning it; perhaps even, there is satisfaction-- satisfaction for all, not just Nick-- in that warmth. After all, Hemingway's heroes are not expected to understand; they are only to attempt to live and cope with the lack of understanding. Jake Barnes can be seen as a spokesman for all of Hemingway's heroes when he says, "I did not care what it was all about. All I wanted to know was how to live in it."⁴⁰ Comprehension is meaningless for Jake, or it might as well be since it seems unattainable, yet the living goes on.

⁴⁰Ernest Hemingway, The Sun Also Rises (New York: Scribner's, 1970), p. 148.

(Subsequent quotes from The Sun Also Rises will be indicated within the body of the paper itself by parenthesis containing the initials SAR and the page reference.)

Like Jake, Nick is trying to "live in it", and like him, he seems to be groping beyond understanding, beyond the intellectual. However, Nick is not usually viewed so positively. Waldhorn and Defalco indicated that no rational learning takes place because Nick is an unwilling initiate. Nick is observed to be rejecting any part he might have in the experience he has just gone through; he is turning his back on reality. Consequently, Nick has been more closely aligned with the philosophy expounded to Frederic Henry by a nameless British major: " ' We were all cooked. The thing was not to recognize it.' " (FTA, p. 134).

Still, I think a case can be made against such an alignment and for a positive view of Nick's response to the events of the Indian camp. But in order for Nick's reaction to be considered positive, it must be examined on the second level of the story, that level beyond the intellectual. Before the more positive nature of Nick's reaction is dealt with, more consideration should be given to the first level on which the story exists. Though Hemingway's irony undercuts the notion that any rational comprehension of the events is possible, he does present a way of coping with life on the first level. This method combines the philosophy of the British major with that of Jake Barnes in

that it promotes the ignoring of the harsh realities of life-- through strict codified behavior or ritual (what I have previously mentioned as the mask of self-imposed rules)-- in order to keep functioning within such reality. Both Nick's father and the Indian father illustrate such behavior in their attempts to cope with reality. More than merely present such examples, Hemingway indicates that the implementation of this philosophy can-- at least partially-- be a successful way of "living in it."

Nick's father is a study of avoidance. Through what Defalco describes as the playing of roles-- that of a father-protector and doctor-scientist-- Dr. Adams attempts to remain aloof from the violence and unpleasantness of the Indian camp.⁴¹ In the father-protector role it is Dr. Adams' function to protect Nick from any harmful experience the young boy might encounter.⁴² When asked by Nick where they are going, Dr. Adams does not give Nick all the information; he merely tells Nick that they are going " 'to the Indian camp. There is an Indian lady very sick' " (p. 91). Thus, Nick has no idea what to expect and

⁴¹Defalco, p. 39-40.

⁴²One might refer to a later published Nick Adams story, "Three Shots," for a possible explanation for Nick's presence at the Indian camp.

his simple " 'Oh' " (p. 91) for an answer indicates this ignorance. In a further attempt to shield Nick, Dr. Adams tells his brother, " 'Take Nick out of the shanty' " (p. 94) after the suicide is discovered. In a continuation of this role Nick's father apologizes for what Nick has observed: " 'I'm terribly sorry I brought you along, Nickie;... It was an awful mess to put you through' " (p. 94). Also, his attempts to comfort Nick by telling Nick that " 'Not very many' " men commit suicide and " 'Hardly ever' " do women, and by telling him " 'it's pretty easy' " (p. 95) to die, demonstrates Nick's father's wish to carry his role out. By playing this role of protector, Nick's father tries to protect himself as well. This role allows him to view the experience at the Indian camp in the manner of a man who should not be destroyed by what he sees; thus, he creates a perspective, however weak it might be, from which he perceives reality objectively.

Dr. Adams' second role, that of the doctor-scientist, is a much more powerful weapon with which to avoid reality. Unlike the role of the father-protector, which must be constantly modified to meet the needs of a maturing son, the role of doctor-scientist has a ritual incorporated into it which is designed

to keep fear and dread and pain at a safe distance. There is a procedure to be followed when dealing with a Caesarian birth that, when followed, should maintain the objective distance.

Upon arriving at the camp, Nick's father slips easily into his second role. There is a definite tonal quality in his voice to indicate that he is in charge. He is authoritative. When Nick tells his father he (Nick) knows the lady is going to have a baby, his father answers, " 'You don't know... listen to me' " (p. 92). This authoritative tone continues in Dr. Adams' instructions to boil the instruments, and in his request to George, " 'Pull back that quilt, will you George?... I'd rather not touch it myself' " (p. 93).

Besides the tone, there is the procedure itself to follow, and Dr. Adams does so with precision. He examines the mother, washes his hands, sterilizes the instrument, performs the operation, slaps the baby, sews up the incision, and relaxes after a job well done. Dr. Adams augments this ritualistic performance with continuous explanation, presumably for Nick's benefit, of exactly what he is doing. He explains to Nick that he does not hear the screams of the mother " 'because they are not important' " (p. 92). He instructs Nick about how babies are supposed to be born. He informs his son that the baby is a boy and then asks, " 'How do you like being an interne?' " (p. 93). This question is important because it reveals an

attitude on the part of Dr. Adams which has aided him in remaining aloof during the operation. He has treated Nick as an interne during the operation, and the Caesarian section has thus become nothing more than an explanation of a diagram, a demonstration that has nothing to do with screams, or pain or bloody afterbirth. The constant talk has removed Dr. Adams one step further from the fact. He ends this verbal aspect of the ritual with the good-natured bragging that is so commonplace in the dressing rooms, locker rooms, or washrooms after any performance. He tells George that the operation is " 'one for the medical journal' " (p. 94).

Functioning in the role of doctor-scientist, Nick's father acts very neatly, clinically, and precisely; and the manner of his behavior, therefore, clearly marks him as the Dr. Adams Nick describes in "Fathers and Sons." The Dr. Adams of "Indian Camp" is the man who could be a great shot, because there was a ritual in shooting that had to be followed and an objectivity that had to be attained. Equally, he is the father who could sum up the "entire matter" of sex by stating that "masturbation produced blindness, insanity, and death, while a man who went with prostitutes would contact hideous venereal diseases and that the thing to do was to keep your hands off of people" (p. 491).

It can be clearly seen that the doctor of "Indian Camp" could be threatened by sex, since sex might infringe-- though the relationship between Nick's father and mother might force one to question this-- on his objectivity. Dr. Adams' ritual does not allow him to come into contact with the more primitive-- violent, emotional, evil-- aspects of life; his procedure demands that he refuses to touch that dirty quilt.

Thus, the ritualistic performance of some action is a means of dealing with the violence, evil, and unpleasantness of life. It is a way of coping, of existing. The idea of "living in it" through some ritualistic discipline runs throughout Hemingway, and Nick's father is only one of many characters who function with the aid of such behavior. Malcolm Cowley, in "Nightmare and Ritual in Hemingway," states that Hemingway's heroes "live in a world that is like a hostile forest, full of unseen dangers, not to mention the nightmares that haunt sleep" and that "their only chance of safety lies in the faithful observance of customs they invent for themselves."⁴³ John Griffith, in "Rectitude In Hemingway's Fiction: How Rite Makes Right," makes the point

⁴³Cowley, p. 48.

more emphatic: "there is clearly a motive of self-defense in many of Hemingway's heroes. Frequently his characters use their rituals to avoid thinking about the terror that lurks just beyond their consciousness."⁴⁴ After stating that though these rituals may be different "they all have the same basic elements," Griffith outlines these elements:

There is first of all the ascetic purity; even the ceremonies of sex and drinking are austere, bare and abstract-- anything but riotous and libertine. There is the element of absolute clarity and conscious attention to detail-- every particular etched, meticulously considered. There is the presence of death in one of its literal or figurative forms-- the actual physical death of the ritualist or his adversary, or a kind of totemic death of a fish or animal with which he sometimes identifies..., the sexual death of orgasm, the psychic death of nervous collapse, or a brutal beating, or a drunken oblivion, or merely sleep. And there is some clearly established, even conventional method for dealing with death: the refined techniques of cape, or rifle, or fishing tackle, or one's fists, or even brandy-drinking or radio-listening.⁴⁵

In his attempt to avoid the reality of his life in Paris and his relationship with Brett, Jake Barnes goes off with Bill and follows the ritual of fishing at Burguete. In a further

⁴⁴ John Griffith, "Rectitude In Hemingway's Fiction: How Rite Makes Right," Hemingway: In Our Time, eds. Richard and Benson (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1974), p. 168.

⁴⁵ John Griffith, p. 169.

attempt to remove himself from the reality of life, Jake enters into the customs of the fiesta of Pamplona. And finally, when the end of the fiesta leaves him feeling "like hell" (SAR, p. 223), he tries to cleanse himself in the ritual of swimming at San Sebastian, where his actions read as though they were steps in an operation or similarly mechanical performance. In like fashion, Papa Hem in Green Hills of Africa reaches for that impersonal state of objectivity where everything else is shut out, forgotten, and he becomes one with his rifle and performs like a machine himself. This is the ritual of shooting, and he explains his attempt to reach objectivity when he is hunting rhino: "I was watching, freezing myself deliberately inside, stopping the excitement as you close a valve, going into that impersonal state you shoot from."⁴⁶ There is also evidence of an attempt to avoid the pain, evil, and unpleasantness through ritual in A Farewell to Arms. When Catherine is trying to give birth (a situation which, because it deals with a Caesarian section, pain, and death, is very much like the one created in "Indian Camp") and the possibility of her dying increases with each new development, Frederic Henry attempts to shield himself from this

⁴⁶ Ernest Hemingway, Green Hills of Africa (New York: Scribners, 1963), p. 76. (Subsequent notes from the Green Hills of Africa will be indicated within the body of the paper itself by parenthesis containing the initials GHA and the page reference.)

possibility. Like Dr. Adams he shelters himself in the medical ritual. During an interior dialogue, when Frederic is being bothered by the repetitious question, "Yes, but what if she should die," he tries to avoid the reality of this question by answering it with the very professional, ritualistic, "The initial labor is usually protracted" and later with, "It's only the first labor, which is almost always protracted" (FTA, p. 320). His manner of speech when delivering these answers almost implies that Frederic does not even know what protracted means, but he does know it is professional and that, as such, it might help him. Similar examples abound in Hemingway's fiction. If irony is Hemingway's way of dealing with the universe, ritual is that of his characters.

The Indian husband, whom Nick also observes, reinforces the theme of avoidance through ritual. Defalco indicates that the Indian kills himself because, as an Indian, he is incapable of creating a role: "The Indian as a primitive has no effective method of dealing with the terror created by the screaming wife."⁴⁷ If ritual is the rational means of coping with life, then one is tempted to agree with Defalco. Yet to agree with Defalco one would have to ignore two important points: the almost established fact that all known cultures perform rituals,

⁴⁷Defalco, p. 31.

and the contrary evidence that exists in the story. That the Indian is a "primitive" does not mean that he functions purely on an instinctual level. The Indian does not commit suicide because he has no ritual; rather, he commits suicide because he is removed from his ritual. Since he is wounded, he cannot join the other tribal males who have "moved off up the road to sit in the dark and smoke out of range of the noise she made" (p. 92). He can not enter the waiting ritual. His attempt to do so by smoking his pipe in the shanty is not strong enough. Since he is cut off from his ritual and can not face reality without it, he avoids reality in the most drastic way.

Nick's Uncle George, on the other hand, serves as a counterpart to Dr. Adams and, to a certain extent, to the Indian husband. Although from the world of Nick and his father, George almost immediately becomes identified with the Indians and the primitive life-forces of the Indian camp. Though he is discussing Dick Boulton from "The Doctor and The Doctor's Wife," Defalco may have easily been speaking about Nick's Uncle George when he states that he "incorporates the features and powers of both the white and Indian, symbolically the light and the dark, the known and the unknown;" he "has available knowledge that is denied those who are committed to one or the other of the opposing regions. Through him Hemingway creates a tension of

opposites. Boulton [George] is the exemplar who stands in rebellion against the authority of Nick's father."⁴⁸

Dick Boulton is thus seen by Defalco to be a positive character in that he possesses knowledge of both worlds, but George's position-- slightly different as it is-- seems to possess both positive and negative aspects. Apparently, George has no protective ritual, at least not one from the other side of the river. While Dr. Adams remains completely above and unaffected by the experience of the birth, George is bitten by the Indian mother. However, although George is angry about being bitten, he seems to have willingly given up his association with the white world. His offering of cigars is reminiscent of the ancient communal smoking rite which signifies brotherhood and unity. But, because of the circumstances of the story-- the birth of a child-- the action of George's passing out cigars has the implication that perhaps George, through fathering the child, is responsible for Nick and his father's being at the camp. This implication is strengthened by the fact that George is allowed, at least to some extent, to join the smoking ritual of the tribal males, while the husband is not. The validity of such an implication could also explain Dr. Adams' reluctance to explain more fully just why they are going to the Indian camp.

⁴⁸Defalco, p. 34.

George definitely seems to fall into the category of Hemingway's iceberg characters. He brings a hint of evil to "Indian Camp" because of his mysterious kinship to the forces at the Indian camp. That there is some value to having a bond of some sort to the primitive elements is obvious. Hemingway gives George a definite superiority over Nick's father when he has him utter the highly ironic, " 'Oh, you're a great man, all right' " (p. 94). Also, as Defalco points out, George is much more open and honest.⁴⁹ He reacts naturally to being bitten by the Indian. On the other hand, George's ties to the white world are advantageous. They allow him to survive the ordeal of the camp when the husband cannot, despite the fact that George, like the husband, is cut off from the ritual he participated in--smoking.

However, being somewhere between both worlds, George, despite his supreme knowledge, is of neither, and his superiority demands some compensation. Whether he reacts naturally or not, George is still bitten; he is not protected. And too, it is George who must touch the quilt. Moreover, George remains at the camp, and though I have indicated the camp is not a Hades, it is representative of a certain facet of our world, that of evil, violence, perplexity, and unpleasantness. That George must remain

⁴⁹Defalco, p. 31.

indicates some kind of destruction. When Nick asks his father, " 'Where did Uncle George go?' " his father answers, " 'He'll turn up all right' " (p. 95). The judgment is quite clear on the part of Dr. Adams that George is at present not all right. Of course the source of this judgment must be taken into account. The superficial and aloof Dr. Adams seems a poor observer of human nature, but he does perform a good Caesarian and he does leave the camp, and that is more that can be said of George. Strongly bound in neither world, George is not able to establish, or at least has not established, a ritual to ward off reality. He is left unprotected.

That Nick learns from these examples of removal from the harsh reality of the world through the performance of ritual is quite obvious if one considers "Big Two-Hearted River." In one of Hemingway's most important short stories Nick struggles to reach that impersonal state of objectivity that Papa Hem sought in Green Hills of Africa, and he attempts to do so by following the ritual of the good camper, the ritual that takes so much out of him and insures that he can "choke" his mind when it starts thinking too much. Like Jake Barnes' swimming in San Sebastian, "Big Two-Hearted River" reads like a procedure to follow, and like Jake's procedure, it is an attempt to reach a state of non-thinking activity.

Richard Hasbany, in "The Shock of Vision: An Imagist Reading of In Our Time," states that his "activities serve to keep Nick from thinking-- to keep him like the trout, steady in the stream."⁵⁰ Elizabeth Wells, in "A Statistical Analysis of the Prose Style of Ernest Hemingway: 'Big Two-Hearted River,'" points out that Nick is "consciously putting himself through a ritual that will keep him from thinking."⁵¹ Young, in A Reconsideration, agrees and, giving much credit to Malcolm Cowley for perceiving that this story should be read as the description of a ritual, says that fishing for Nick is "a kind of rite, an incantation."⁵²

⁵⁰Richard Hasbany, "The Shock of Vision: An Imagist reading of In Our Time," in Ernest Hemingway: Five Decades of Criticism, ed. Linda Welshimer Wager (Michigan University Press, 1974), p. 236.

⁵¹Elizabeth Wells, "A Statistical Analysis of The Prose Style of Ernest Hemingway: 'Big Two-Hearted River,'" a revised version of part of "A Comparative Statistical Analysis of the Prose Styles of F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway," Fitzgerald Hemingway Annual (1969), rpt. in Jackson J. Benson, ed., The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway: Critical Essays (Durham, N. C.: Duke Univeristy Press, 1975), p. 131.

⁵²Young, A Reconsideration, p. 43.

Young elaborates his statement, indicating what the rite consists of and why it is used. He speaks of Part I:

Nick is clearly in escape from something... Each step of the process-- smoothing the ground, arranging the blankets, cutting the tent pegs and raising the canvas-- is related in a regular and monotonous sequence unrelieved by even a phrase of comment or a break in the rhythm... Nick goes through the motions now in a dead-pan, one-two-three-four routine... which suggests much less that he is a mindless primitive the Hemingway hero was so often thought to be than that he is desperately protecting his mind against whatever it is that he is escaping.⁵³

Part II consists of the same "chronologically ordered, mechanical, deliberate movements" which, as Young states, "begin to wear on one's nervous system."⁵⁴ But for Nick the actions have an opposite effect: they calm his nerves, much the same way "a woman who all alone busies herself with a thorough house-cleaning on the morning after the sudden death of her husband."⁵⁵

Within "Indian Camp" itself there is evidence to indicate that Nick has learned the importance of the ritual. After hearing the Indian woman scream, Nick pays strict attention to what

⁵³Young, A Reconsideration, p. 44-45.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 45.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 41.

his father says and does. The narrative points out that "Nick watched his father's hands scrubbing each other with the soap" (p. 93). It is as if Nick were attempting to join his father in the ritual of the operation. Like Jake Barnes, who tries to enter the ritual of Romero when Romero is in the bull ring, or Frederic Henry, who seeks to enter the ritual of the doctor when he asks if he might regulate the anesthetic for Catherine, Nick seeks the protection of his father's ritual. The fact that he "held the basin for his father" (p. 93) shows Nick's attempt to join the procedure of the operation.

If Nick learns that the observance of some ritual creates a barrier between a person and the harsher reality of our world, he also becomes aware that the ritual must be one's own if it is to be at all effective. Despite his efforts, Nick can not become a part of the role of doctor-scientist. One reason for this inability is the fact that Nick's father, like Romero, the bullfighter, is performing "all for himself inside" (SAR, p. 216). There is nothing left for Nick to grasp. When his father asks him how he likes " 'being an interne,' " Nick answers, " 'All right'," but the narrator indicates just the opposite, for coupled with this reply the narrator points out that Nick "was looking away so as not to see what his father was doing" (p. 93). And when Nick's father puts the afterbirth

In the basin Nick is holding, the narrator states, "Nick didn't look at it" (p. 93). Finally Nick refuses to watch his father sew up the incision, and the narrator again makes clear Nick's inability to cope through his father's ritual: "His [Nick's] curiosity had been gone for a long time" (p. 93).

The knowledge that his attempts to escape the pain and misery of the Caesarian birth, by joining his father's ritual, are futile is not easy for Nick to accept. However, Nick learns something that must be even more painful, that is, that even when one has perfected a ritual, as Nick's father apparently has, since he can assume the role of doctor-scientist even in the surroundings of the Indian camp and even without his proper instruments, there is no guarantee that it will protect him from the realities of the world. As Hemingway's irony in this story points out, the events of existence are too complicated and unpredictable to be controlled by any formula, no matter how elaborate. Ritual is good, and a man can function well with it-- Dr. Adams performs the operation successfully-- but it can not control what is uncontrollable. Eventually all rituals break down. As Griffith makes clear, "Hemingway never implies that the ritual staves off death. In fact it frequently gets the ritualist killed... It can not manipulate the external forces arrayed against a man."⁵⁶ Benston states the simple truth

⁵⁶Griffith, p. 169-70.

that explains the ineffectual nature of the ritual: "The same [any order imposed by man, hence any ritual] is logical, man-imposed, man-created; the circumstances of life are not."⁵⁷

Jake has to feel "like hell" after the fiesta at Pamplona, just as he has to receive Brett's telegram calling him to Madrid after his swimming at San Sebastian. Despite Papa Hem's attempt to reach that impersonal state, he can not always achieve it, and he gut-shoots the sable. And, to Lt. Henry's attempt to avoid reality of Catherine's death through the doctor ritual, like so many other things in that novel-- the hospital Frederic is taken to when wounded, the pistol he can not fire, the anesthetic for Catherine-- is useless. Benson's statement that, "By having Catherine die, Hemingway has simply created a more unified way of dealing with the truth....," though specifically referring to A Farewell To Arms, demonstrates the reason why all rituals eventually collapse.⁵⁸ The "circumstances of life" - "the truth" - will not be controlled by any man-- imposed order.

Like the above failures, Dr. Adams' ritual also fails. It can not prevent the suicide of the Indian husband. To make this statement clear, Hemingway has again turned to the ironic technique. That the Indian husband should have tolerated the pain of his wife and her screams for two days and then killed

⁵⁷ Benson, The Writer's Art of Self-Defense, p. 102.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p.102.

himself when the means of alleviating that pain arrives could be considered ludicrous were the reality not so brutal. The violent death of the Indian certainly makes Dr. Adams' role as doctor-scientist seem absurd. Hemingway intensifies this absurdity through Dr. Adams' approach to the suicide. Still proud and elated about his success in performing the operation, Dr. Adams moves toward the Indian husband with the confidence of a man who knows he is in control. When Dr. Adams tells George, " 'Ought to have a look at the proud father, They're usually the worst suffers in these little affairs' " (p. 94), he does so with the same bravado he displays when boasting about having a description of the operation in the medical journal. And yet when the reality within which the doctor's attitude exists is discovered, one can understand how bitter Hemingway's irony can be. After the suicide is discovered, Dr. Adams' previous statement, " 'I must say he took it all pretty quietly' " (p. 94), is perceived to be so ignorantly naive that the reader can almost hear Hemingway laughing at Nick's father.

Hemingway has further intensified the absurdity of the situation by making the discovery of the suicide parallel in structure to an earlier event. When Nick asks his father to stop the screams of the woman, his father answers with the same

ridiculously ironic confidence that he displays when going to see how the father is feeling after the birth. He tells Nick that the screams " 'are not important' " (p. 92). But the screams are important. Immediately after Nick's father makes his first statement of confidence, the narrator points out that "The husband in the upper bunk rolled over against the wall" (p. 92). This movement, when considered symbolically, parallels the discovered suicide and as such emphasizes the absurdity of Dr. Adams' confidence.

That the turn toward the wall has to be considered symbolically seems only natural when Hemingway's symbolic technique is looked at briefly. Of Hemingway's use of symbols, Waldhorn has stated, "His images and symbols are organic, interior, naturalistic; almost always they come out of the fictional context."⁵⁹ Carlos Baker concurs and points out that "the remarkable union of the naturalistic and symbolic" is perhaps Hemingway's "central triumph in the realm of practical esthetics."⁶⁰ Certainly the move toward the wall is natural; it is a perfectly normal reaction to pain, that is, turning away from it. However, like Ole

⁵⁹Waldhorn, p. 38.

⁶⁰Carlos Baker, Hemingway: The Writer As Artist (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 123.

Andreson's move toward the wall in "The Killers" (p. 281), the move is much more than a natural reaction. The move is the Indian's, as it is Ole Andreson's attempt to escape the violence and pain of the world. Thus, it parallels Dr. Adams' ritual in that both are attempts to avoid reality.

More important than the movement, however, is the wall itself. Trying to escape life, the Indian is confronted with an insurmountable object; he can not escape; he is trapped. In a similar way, the discovery of the suicide is Dr. Adams' wall, his insurmountable obstacle. And just as the Indian is destroyed by this realization, so Nick's father's ritual is ended after he finds the Indian dead. The narrator makes painfully clear the devastation Dr. Adams experiences. No longer in control and no longer able to treat Nick as the intern, Dr. Adams retreats to the role of father-protector, the role he plays with less confidence. He apologizes to Nick, saying, " 'I'm terribly sorry I brought you along, Nickie' " (p. 94). Just as the word "interne" is important to Dr. Adams' ritual as doctor, so too the calling of Nick "Nickie" is important to indicate Dr. Adams' defeat in the face of reality. Dr. Adams has called his son "Nick" throughout the story, but he changes when he apologizes.

The implication in this change is that while Nick's father felt confident, he was willing to draw Nick into his confidence and to treat him as though he should grow up and be willing to face the screams and the operation, but now, when Nick's father is no longer comfortable, he no longer wants Nick to be a questioning grown-up boy. Calling Nick "Nickie" seems to be Dr. Adams' attempt to move back to a simpler time, a time when he did not have to be so conscious of how he conducted himself in front of his boy. More important than the appellation "Nickie" as an indication of the defeat of Dr. Adams is the tone of voice he uses in his apology. The narrator points out that Nick's father made this apology with "all his post-operative exhilaration gone" (p. 92). The ritual of doctor-scientist is over; Nick's father is overwhelmed by reality.

Nick's father's being overwhelmed by reality is further emphasized when another aspect of the Indian's turning against the wall is considered as a preliminary to the discovery of the suicide. When the Indian attempts to escape reality, not only does he discover an insurmountable obstacle, but he also encounters Hemingway's Nada. Facing the wall, he is faced with nothing and so he commits suicide. Therefore, the moment he turns to the wall is the moment of his death; for all practical purposes

he is dead at that moment. The timing of the death is important, for it changes the focus, when the suicide is discovered, from the death to the reaction of Nick's father. The movement toward the wall makes the knowledge of the suicide anticlimactic. However, from the point of view of the father, the time-lapse and the discovery become crucial. If the reader can anticipate Hemingway and perceive that the Indian is already dead-- this becomes easier on successive readings--, then he can see all of Dr. Adams' attempts to avoid reality that much more a sham and view his coming to know of the death as all the more devastating. Thus, through these parallel scenes, Hemingway has given the reader a hint of the reality of the Indian camp, a hint Nick's father can not detect.

Despite the fact that Dr. Adams has, as Nick points out in "Fathers and Sons," great eyes, he can not see. On the rational level Nick's father becomes the comic character in Hemingway's bitter joke about the violence and pain of life and man's attempt to avoid them. And when he is forced to see, the reality is overwhelming, and he, like the Indian, is left defenseless.

Naturally the inability of Nick's father's ritual to completely sustain Dr. Adams through the reality of the camp has a tremendous effect on Nick. Nick himself has viewed the horrors of the camp, and he is forced to comprehend his once-confident father with "all his post-operative exhilaration gone" (p. 94).

Confronted with the image of the one and the person of the other, Nick, in the "away" section of the story, withdraws completely from reality.

The tendency has been, I think, to view Nick's withdrawal negatively, as an absurdity after what has just occurred at the camp. Though Defalco admits that the failure of Dr. Adams causes an "intense inner conflict within the immature hero," he describes Nick's withdrawal as a reversion "to infantile fantasy" and a "denial of the learning experience."⁶¹ Though such a view of Nick's withdrawal is justified, it is justified only on the intellectual level of the story, and, as I have stated repeatedly, the intellectual level is not the only level on which the story exists. A consideration of the story on the second level produces different results. It is Nick's father, specifically Hemingway's ironic treatment of him, that gives the first hint that the story must be approached on the beyond-intellectual level.

Jackson Benson's study of Hemingway's irony in Hemingway: The Writers' Art of Self-Defense presents the idea that Hemingway arouses two types of emotions through his use of irony, emotions "we traditionally attach to tragedy and to satire."⁶² Benson

⁶¹Defalco, p. 24, 32.

⁶²Benson, The Writer's Art of Self-Defense, p. 119.

states that "The tragic emotions are associated with the ironies inherent in Hemingway's 'world picture', "⁶³ which might be simplistically defined as a view of man's being certainly less than the center of the universe, rather a very small entity subject to enormous forces which are often capricious and never understandable. He goes on to state that "the satiric emotions are associated with those ironies that result from the contrast of Hemingway's view of man and his place in the world with the sentimental view of man and his place in the world"; these emotions are produced when Hemingway "contrasts his value system, or game, with sentimental or ego-centered value systems."⁶⁴

That both the irony of tragedy and the irony of satire exist in "Indian Camp" is fairly evident; I have already discussed each. Hemingway's establishment of a mythological learning situation with the clear indication that no rational understanding is possible creates the sense of the tragic, while Dr. Adams' ego-centered belief, or at least the demonstration of the belief, that he is in control of the situation at the camp constitutes the satiric element. It is with regards to this satiric irony

⁶³Benson, The Writer's Art of Self-Defense, p. 119.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 119-120.

that Benson's study becomes extremely interesting. He points out that the irony of satire and the irony of tragedy are very similar, differing only in that "the tragic emotions are evoked by necessary circumstances" and the satiric by man-made, unnecessary circumstances, and yet each produces a different response in the reader; the tragic eliciting pity, the ironic indignation.⁶⁵ On occasion Hemingway will use both types of irony in the same work to elicit a sympathetic response from the reader. He might create a tragic situation and make the reader feel pity for the protagonist caught in such a situation, but at the same time Hemingway might introduce a character who, through ignorance or a foolish sense of superiority to the circumstances, does not comprehend the tragedy of the situation and therefore calls for our indignation. If (Benson indicates that occasionally such is the case) this character somehow opposes the protagonist as a foil or an actual contributor to the unbearable circumstances, then our hostility towards him increases, but at the same time our sympathy for the protagonist increases because of the increased hostility. Benson points out that Hemingway sometimes goes overboard with this double use of irony to create an emotional response: "On such occasions irony is brought into an already ironic situation. As a result, the

⁶⁵Benson, The Writer's Art of Self-Defense, p. 120.

emotional value of the situation is increased out of proportion to the dramatic context... it is made less generic and intellectual and more personal and emotional, losing its tragic context and becoming exaggerated and sentimental."⁶⁶ This double use of irony is a weakness in Hemingway's writing, somewhat of an unneeded insurance policy guaranteeing that his heroes be seen favorably. This weakness, as Benson indicates, stems from Hemingway's "own great personal hostility to human unawareness" and his sympathy "for the man who courageously and alone might fight a losing battle."⁶⁷

Benson's consideration is directed towards several of Hemingway's favored protagonists, at least those Benson thinks favored, specifically Robert Jordan, Santiago, and the old waiter in "A Clean, Well-lighted Place." In each case the satiric irony is directed at some other character within the work. However, with some modification, Benson's study can be applied to Nick's father, a character who seems to be closer in nature to one who arouses indignation rather than sympathy. As I have already stated, Nick's father appears to be the butt of Hemingway's

⁶⁶Benson, The Writer's Art of Self-Defense, p. 122.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 122.

cruel humor in one of his most bitter jokes. But it must be remembered that Nick's father is a victim of the tragic situation of the experience at the camp. Though I have gone on at some length to demonstrate that Hemingway made a conscious effort, both structurally and narratively, to focus on Nick in the final section of the story, the presence of Dr. Adams is still quite apparent, and his presence is not one the satirist can relish; the reader can not gloat over Nick's father. Chaman Nahal states that, despite the fact that Nick's father is "a seasoned practitioner, accustomed to the fact of death... he is overpowered by what has happened... Even he realizes that there are mysteries that his ability and his mastery of factual knowledge cannot encompass."⁶⁸ Certainly there is no bravado evidenced in Dr. Adams; his "post-operative exhilaration" is gone. There is no attempt on the part of Nick's father to bluff through some kind of explanation for what happened. Nahal points to Nick's father's answer to Nick's question, " 'Why did he kill himself, Daddy?' " as a proof of the effect the experience at the camp has had: " 'I don't know, Nick. He couldn't stand things, I guess' "(p. 95). The admission of his lack of understanding does show that Nick's father has been overpowered. As such, he evokes more pity than indignation.

⁶⁸Chaman Nahal, The Narrative Pattern in Ernest Hemingway (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickenson University Press, 1971), p. 89.

Besides being portrayed as a defeated, but perhaps wiser and certainly more humble, victim of the tragedy of the Indian camp, Dr. Adams may also gain a sympathetic response from the reader by being a victim of what Benson describes as Hemingway's double irony, but in "Indian Camp" the overuse of irony works in reverse. Benson's idea is that Hemingway creates an overly sympathetic, sentimental response from the reader by adding unnecessary satiric irony to an already tragically ironic situation. In "Indian Camp" Hemingway seems to be overly satiric in his treatment of Nick's father, thereby eliciting just the opposite response, that is sympathy rather than hostility. His treatment seems somewhat like the cold-blooded killing of the villain of a melodrama after he has made a noble suit for mercy. Such an action leaves the audience with the awkward situation of having hoped for the villain's downfall from the first, but feeling not quite right about his cruel demise, and it makes the audience feel sorrow rather than righteousness about the end of the villain.

One could argue that Hemingway wanted to leave no doubt in the reader's mind that he himself felt only scorn for Nick's father, and therefore, in an attempt to build him up that he might fall all the harder, had him state that the woman's screams are " 'not important' " and think that his operation is " 'one for the medical journal' ". But I do not think it is necessary to

have Dr. Adams exhibit his "exalted" and "talkative" nature with such a line as that fathers are " 'usually the worst sufferers in these little affairs,' " and certainly Hemingway is heavy-handed when he has Nick's father follow the previous remark with the comment that this particular father " 'took it all pretty quietly' " (p. 94). Such comments force the reader to feel too much indignation, and forcing anything upon the reader is far removed from the objectivity that Hemingway strove for so consciously. Moreover, I think Hemingway attempted with the last two statements made by Nick's father before the discovery of the suicide to indicate that the indignation against Dr. Adams was not to be completely justified. He has incorporated in each the lowest form of verbal wit, the pun. Spoken by a fool at court, these lines might be worthy of Shakespeare, and Hemingway uses them in much the same way as the playwright; they are silly lines which hold a truth. Nick's father is right, because he, too, is one, when he states that fathers are " 'the worst sufferers in these little affairs' ". And how else, considering the circumstances, should the Indian father have taken the " 'little affair' " but " 'pretty quietly' "? Hemingway makes it difficult to feel genuine hostility for Nick's father as the speaker of these words. Finally, Hemingway's over-satiric treatment of Dr. Adams might explain another reason for Uncle George's

presence in the story: he may be introduced to add the satiric element of sarcasm to an already heavy-handed portrayal of Nick's father. George's comment about the greatness of Nick's father is perhaps overly harsh.

If one takes in consideration Young's theory that the Nick Adams series emerged from Hemingway's own experience, a reason for Hemingway's treatment of Dr. Adams presents itself. Though Nick's father may not actually be Hemingway's, the special relationship between Nick and his author also exists between Hemingway and Dr. Adams. Therefore, Nick's father had to be treated with the greatest care. Always striving for objectivity, Hemingway may simply have tried too hard to avoid sentimentality, and consequently portrayed him as a character to be pitied.

To see Nick's father as a sympathetic character is a more consistent view in the light of the characterization of Dr. Adams in the later stories. Such a Dr. Adams is more closely aligned to the man who is bullied by Dick Boulton in "The Doctor and The Doctor's Wife," more closely aligned to the man who is dominated by his wife in the above story and in "Now I Lay Me," in which Nick reveals he burned his father's most prized possessions, "things that were not to be moved" (p. 365). He can be seen as more consistent with the man Nick says " 'missed a lot' " (p. 120) in "Three-Day Blow." And, again granting validity to Young's

theory, the bitterly satiric treatment of Nick's father in "Indian Camp" also seems consistent with the relationship between Hemingway and his father as it is presented, albeit with fictional imagination, through Nick and his father. Perhaps the ambiguous nature of this relationship is best illustrated in "Fathers and Sons" when the narrator states, "Nick loved his father but hated the smell of him..." (p. 496). Nick loves him as a father, but there is something more basic to his father's nature that he can not love. Nick can prefer his father to his mother, as he does in "The Doctor and The Doctor's Wife." He can look with sorrow and regret at this father's life, as he does in "Three-Day Blow" and "Now I lay Me." He can love his father for giving him his own life sustaining love of fishing and hunting. But he can also, perhaps deservedly, implicitly hate him for the way he seems to gloat over the details of finding Trudy and Frank Washburn " 'thrashing around'" (p. 335) in the bushes in "Ten Indians," and explicitly think that he (Nick) can "blow him [his father] to hell" (p. 496) for whipping him because he threw away the underwear that was his father's and which his father forced him to wear. In "Fathers and Sons" Nick comes to his most comprehensive and probably truest understanding of his father; the

narrator states:

Like all men with a faculty that surpasses human requirements [Dr. Adam's great eyesight], his father was very nervous. Then, too, he was sentimental, and, like most sentimental people, he was both cruel and abused. Also, he had much bad luck, and it was not all of it his own. He had died in a trap that he had helped only a little to set, and they had all betrayed him in their various ways before he died. (p. 489, 490).

The importance of this reconsideration and subsequent re-evaluation of Nick's father lies in its leading the way to a reconsideration of Nick himself, specifically of his withdrawal at the end of the story. The withdrawal has been viewed as a negation, Defalco's regression to "infantil fantasy." In fact, Defalco indicates that Nick begins his withdrawal before the actual discovery of the suicide. He cites Nick's use of the word " 'Daddy'," rather than "Dad" in Nick's appeal, " 'Oh, Daddy, can't you give her something to make her stop screaming?' " as the beginning of Nick's "denial of the learning experience."⁶⁹ Defalco points out that the word Daddy indicates an attempt to become a much younger boy, one not required to come to terms with what has happened. It seems, therefore, that Defalco considers the entire story as a refusal of reality, harsh as that reality is to accept. There are two basic reasons for Nick's withdrawal being viewed so negatively: the tendency to think of Nick Adams

⁶⁹Defalco, p. 32.

as one of the many Hemingway heroes, and the tendency to give "Indian Camp" an overly retrospective reading.

I indicated earlier that I thought there was some truth to Young's comment that Nick Adams is the first Hemingway hero and his experience as a youth is the experience of many of Hemingway's later heroes. However, I cautioned that Nick is not any one of these heroes; he is an individual who might represent the common background of the later heroes, but he is also an individual who does not have to emerge from the common experience of youth the same adult as Jake Barnes or Frederic Henry. As a typical Hemingway hero, Nick would have to be judged by the standards of these heroes, and according to these standards the Nick Adams of "Indian Camp" fails rather miserably. As Defalco points out, for the individual to succeed, he must be "willing to accept the lessons of experience and adapt himself to contingencies over which he has little control," and if he can do this, "He can arrive ultimately at the goal of individuation."⁷⁰ I don't think that this idea of individuation is anywhere in Hemingway criticism more clearly defined than it is in John Killinger's Hemingway and The Dead Gods: A Study in Existentialism: "To face death and face it often; to renounce the more comfortable way of the complicated

⁷⁰Defalco, p. 24.

life in a world without God and defy the whim-willed setebos of fate; and to live with a self-imposed morality and the religious hope of the ages..."⁷¹ The individual must become an existentialist; he must kick himself free from all "collective movements." Killinger states, "All gods are dead, and man is thrown back upon himself with the responsibility of forging his self out of a private ethics and a private aesthetic."⁷² Killinger makes almost this exact remark earlier in his work by citing the writing of Erich Fromm in Man for Himself: "'to face the truth, to acknowledge his fundamental aloneness and solitude in a universe indifferent to his fate... Man must accept the responsibility for himself and the fact that only by using his own powers can he give meaning to his life.'"⁷³ Such total freedom is not easy to live with; rather man is "condemned to be free," but he must choose "this freedom that appears to him in the moment of anguish or dread" if he is to live "sincerely and authentically."⁷⁴

⁷¹John Killinger, Hemingway and the Dead Gods: A Study in Existentialism (University of Kentucky Press, 1960), p. 82.

⁷²Killinger, p. 80.

⁷³Erich Fromm, Man for Himself (New York: Rinehart, 1947), p. 44-45. Here quoted from Killinger, 64, 65.

⁷⁴Killinger, p. 34.

More disturbing still, for man to live authentically his life must be "set over against death: for life to continue to have meaning, the death experience must be repeated again and again."⁷⁵ It is only in the presence of death, the experience which makes all the great comforters-- religion, country, honor, etc.-- truly appealing, that man can genuinely free himself from these comforts. And Killinger points out that Hemingway "sought the presence of violent death with a passion even more meaningful than that of Poe. He saw it as simple, fundamental, uncomplicated-- and as a revealer of freedom."⁷⁶ It is clear that Hemingway incorporated this vision into his work, and that living authentically became the criteria by which to judge his heroes. It is also clear that Nick Adams in "Indian Camp" removes himself from the authentic life; he forsakes the freedom for the comfort. What is not clear is just why Nick must be judged by this criteria, when he cannot be the exception rather than the rule. The reconsideration of Nick's father in this paper indicates that Hemingway's treatment of a character does not have to be what it appears. A look at the second reason^{for} the negative view of Nick's withdrawal may help explain why Nick has been judge by the criteria set forth in Killinger's work, since this second reason is very closely associated with the first.

⁷⁵Killinger, p. 25.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 28.

A glance through almost any recent bibliography of the criticism of Hemingway's shorter fiction will reveal that, excepting, "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place," "Big Two-Hearted River" has received more consideration than any other of Hemingway's shorter works. It leads all other Nick Adams stories in critical examination. Its' receiving more attention than any other Nick Adams story seems natural when one considers its place, chronologically, in the series. Since the Nick Adams series depicts a boy growing to manhood, "Big Two-Hearted River" is important because it presents the first clear picture of the young man Nick has grown up to be. In "Big Two-Hearted River" we meet the young man who has experienced youth in our time. He has been initiated at a very early age to the pain and violence of his world. He has come to understand that his father is not quite the man he hoped him to be. He has experienced his first love, had his first sexual encounter, and suffered his first heartbreak. He has gone out into the world and met prostitutes, maniacs, and hired killers. He has been to war. And from all of this emerges the Nick Adams of "Big Two-Hearted River," the young man who has attained enough control over himself to "choke it" (p. 218). I mentioned "Big Two-Hearted River" earlier, as an example of Nick's having learned a ritual, and such is the case. Killinger

points out that in the world without God, ritual has passed "from the church to the great outdoors and the whole of secular life," but it is still important for it gives "form to the mysterious," and therefore can aid living authentically.⁷⁷ Thus, if "Big Two-Hearted River" is viewed as a culmination in the Nick Adams series, it clearly points to a Nick Adams who is traveling the Hemingway road to individuation. The stories which follow "Big Two-Hearted River" reinforce this observation, for they show a Nick Adams who has drawn hard rules for "living in it." (I am using the chronological order established by Philip Young in his collected The Nick Adams Stories.) Nick at one point in "Summer People," feels sorry for Odgar because Odgar "could never get it and it meant everything in the world to him."⁷⁸ Odgar's problem is that he has confused love and sex; he "thought just love would do it," but Nick knows better:

It was liking, and liking the body, and introducing the body, and persuading, and taking chances, and never frightening, and accusing about the thing, and always taking never asking, and gentleness and liking, and making liking and happiness, and joking and making people not afraid. And making it all right afterwards. It wasn't loving. Loving the frightening. He, Nicholas Adams, could have what he wanted because of something in him. (NAS p. 198)

⁷⁷Killinger, p. 75.

⁷⁸Ernest Hemingway, The Nick Adams Stories (New York: Bantam, 1973), p. 198. (Subsequent quotes from The Nick Adams Stories will be indicated within the body of the paper itself by parenthesis containing the initials NAS and the page reference.)

Nick further outlines his earned knowledge and the code (ritual) this knowledge is formulating within himself in "On Writing":

The movies ruined everything. Like talking about something good. That was what had made the war unreal. Too much talking.

Talking about anything was bad. Writing about anything actual was bad. It always killed it. (NAS p. 217)

Nick has also come to know, as he tells George in "Cross-Country Snow," " 'There isn't any good in promising' " (NAS, p. 233).

In the final Nick Adams story, "Fathers and Sons", Nick has moved on to formulate another ritual to allow him to exist, the ritual of writing, one that seems particularly effective: "If he wrote it he could get rid of it. He had gotten rid of many things by writing them" (NAS, p. 237).

This last look at Nick is particularly interesting, if one is considering the later Nick Adams stories as evidence for viewing Nick as a man who has learned to live through ritualistic behavior. Writing, perhaps excepting stream-of-consciousness writing and automatic writing, is the epitome of conscious and intellectual response to experience. We therefore view Nick as one who approaches existence in a very disciplined manner; he is the final product of that slightly younger man who methodically acted in "Big Two-Hearted River." Seen as such, he is very easily grouped with the other Hemingway heroes, and it

becomes natural to view the entire series from this final product and thus see the early stories as those first faltering steps toward this goal. This retrospective vision must consider "Indian Camp" as the most faltering step of all.

Yet, the most often studied of the Nick Adams stories also provides evidence of a Nick Adams who is very different from the disciplined individual above. Nick's first spoonful of hot beans and spaghetti is still slightly too hot when Nick tries it and he says, " 'Chrise... Geezus Chrise...' " (p. 216). The response is spontaneous, natural. A similar event exists in Part II when Nick hooks his first big trout:

That was a trout. He had been solidly hooked. Solid as a rock. He felt like rock, too, before he started off. By God, he was a big one. By God, he was the biggest one I ever heard of. (p. 227).

Again Nick receives a direct sensual stimulus and responds immediately, naturally. Though the entire story has related sense impression after sense impression, there is something special about these two experiences. Removed from Nick's deliberated actions, they reveal a more elemental nature in his character. Nick is aware of the difference. When he crawls into his tent, an action that also creates one of these special

sensual moments, the narrator states:

It smelled pleasantly of canvas. Already there was something mysterious and homelike. Nick was happy as he crawled inside the tent. He had not been unhappy all day. This was different though. (p. 215)

These special moments transport Nick from the conscious existence of his ritual as a camper and fisher to another level of existence, a level of consciousness that is vast and a little frightening in its power. Hooking the big trout causes Nick's hand to shake; the thrill is "too much", and Nick feels "vaguely, a little sick, as though it would be better to sit down..." (p. 226). He has to get out of the water because he does not "want to rush his sensations any" (p. 227). Nonetheless, this level of existence is a positive level. When Nick is in the tent, he is "there in the good place. He was in his home where he had made it" (p. 215). Hemingway is quite clear on the positive nature of these moments. Nick's exclamation after tasting the hot beans is made "happily" (p. 216). Also, in one of Hemingway's seeming contradictions, the narrator points out that, when Nick crawls out of the tent, "It was quite dark outside. It was lighter in the tent" (p. 215). Inside the tent Nick is psychologically and spiritually at ease, "lighter".

The Nick Adams who can reach, through the experience of these special sensual moments, this level of **existence** beyond the conscious is positive also. As Richard Hasbany points out, "By living at a purely sensuous level, he [Nick] is able to make a kind of peace with the world. He is able to live richly in a way-- to affirm."⁷⁹ Hasbany, in his "The Shock of Vision: An Imagist Reading of In Our Time," points out the paradox I think is basic to the entire series, the "affirmative dimension to Nick's evasive actions": "So in the lengthy catalogue-like presentation of concrete action and objects, Hemingway is creating a complex image of a man who is running from the threats of civilization and of his present experiences, but who is simultaneously confronting himself and recognizing his inability to face the swamp as yet."⁸⁰ Though Hasbany indicates that the affirmative dimension of the story is achieved through Nick's "evasive yet loving revelry of the senses and processes,"⁸¹ and thus does not distinguish between Nick's ritual and sensuous experiences as comparatively effective means to affirmation, he does seem to favor the sensuous experience. I think that the

⁷⁹Hasbany, p. 236.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 236, 237.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 236.

distinction can be made in favor of the sensuous experience, especially those certain moments of pure sensuality. Nick's "processes" are positive, but are so only because they allow Nick to survive, to continue existing. His sensual experiences allow him to live on a level beyond that of mere day-to-day existence. They allow him to come into contact with the elemental nature of himself and the world around him. Hemingway goes so far as to indicate that at times the ritualistic is subservient to the sensual and serves only to bring Nick to a point of departure where he might encounter pure sensuality. The departure is perhaps dependent upon the ritual, but, as Nick says, it is "different though" (p. 215). Nick can enjoy the difference and the goodness of being in his tent because "Now things were done, There had been this to do. Now it was done. It had been a hard trip. He was very tired. That was done. He had made his camp. He was settled." (p. 215). Nick has observed the rules of the good camper and now receives his reward; "Nothing could touch him" (p. 215).

To make this rather long discussion of "Big Two-Hearted River" pertinent to the objective of this paper one has only to take another look at the ending of "Indian Camp," for there is a marked similarity between the Nick Adams who can reach the second level of existence and the Nick Adams of "Indian Camp." When Nick trails his hand in the water along the side of the boat

while the sun is coming up, he is experiencing his first special moment. At That instant he is living at the purely sensual level, beyond conscious existence. And at that instant Nick really does feel that he will never die. Nick's awareness of himself and his immortality is not a rational awareness; he is beyond rationality, and we are aware of such a natural firmness in his conviction that we cannot help thinking that Hemingway wanted us to believe Nick. Nick's statement constitutes another of Hemingway's paradoxically affirmative evasions. Nick's hand in the water creates for the first time his "good place," where "Nothing can touch him." When Nick trails his hand in the water, the story itself moves from the conscious level of the pain and the suicide with its conscious method of coping, the ritual, to that level beyond the intellect, of pure sensation, pure experience, with its insulation from all pain, even that of death.

For a full understanding of "Indian Camp" on this second level and its affirmative ending, Nick must be looked at with criteria other than those established by Killinger. Richard Lehan's treatment of the Hemingway hero is much more in tune with the Nick Adams who exists on the second level of "Indian Camp". Though Lehan agrees with Killinger in viewing the Hemingway hero as one striving for the uncomplicated, and therefore unencumbered, life of the existentialist, Lehan sees him as anti-intellectual, someone returning to "elemental values." He states

that the Hemingway hero is "often mindless. In his desire for the elemental he lives on an intellectual plane not much beyond the animals. He is sensitive to good food and drink, appreciates the comforts of life, and takes great pride in his skill as hunter and fisherman."⁸² To create such a hero, Hemingway turned "to an idea of pre-history-- to a belief in residual, primitive values that are inextricable from the rhythms of life and death and the land."⁸³

However, I think Lehan has gone too far in indicating that Hemingway's turning to primitive values necessitated a rejection of the mythic imagination. It seems that it is to just such an imagination that Hemingway went when Nick Adams was born. "Indian Camp" exhibits definite mythological elements. Both Waldhorn and Defalco have noted these elements; however, they have never accepted a pure mythological reading, remaining on the intellectual level alone, and therefore have judged Nick's withdrawal as a negation. Approached on the second level, Nick's retreat is mirrored quite accurately in Joseph Campbell's description of

⁸²Richard Lehan, "Hemingway Among The Moderns," in Hemingway: In Our Time, ed. Jackson J. Benson (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1974), p. 211.

⁸³Lehan, p. 196-197.

the mythic hero's initial step toward understanding:

In a word, the first work of the hero is to retreat from the world scene of secondary effects to those casual zones of psyche where the difficulties really reside, and there to clarify the difficulties, eradicate them in his own case... and break through to the undistorted, direct experience and assimilation of what C. G. Jung has called "the archetypal images."⁸⁴

Nick's moment of pure sensuality allows him to break through, to gain access to "visions, ideas, and inspirations... from the primary springs of human life" which are "not of the present, disintegrating society and psyche, but of the unquenched source through which society is reborn."⁸⁵ Experiencing such, Nick becomes the "perfected, unspecified, universal man-- he has been reborn."⁸⁶ The ending of "Indian Camp" should not be seen with the vision so dominant in modern fiction, a vision that Campbell calls an "open-eyed observation of the sickeningly broken figurations that abound before us, around us, and within."⁸⁷ Rather it should be considered in the tradition of the "fairy tale of happiness ever after," as the end of a "divine comedy of redemption":

⁸⁴ Joseph Campbell, The Hero With A thousand Faces (New York, N. Y.: Pantheon Books, 1949), third printing, 1961, p. 17, 18. Included: C. G. Jung, Psychology and Religion (Yale University Press, 1938) p. 63.

⁸⁵ Campbell, p. 20.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 20.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 27.

The happy ending of the fairy tale, the myth, and the divine comedy of the soul, is to be read, not as a contradiction, but as a transcendence of the universal tragedy of man. The objective world remains what it was, but, because of a shift of emphasis within the subject, is beheld as though transformed. Where formerly life and death contended, now enduring being is made manifest.⁸⁸

Nick's withdrawal, then, must be viewed not as a retreat from the realities of the conscious world, but as a retreat to a more universal consciousness, one that can allow Nick to feel his own immortality in the face of the experience he has just witnessed. The temptation to see Hemingway as a writer who presents the vision Campbell has attributed to most modern writers is very strong. Certainly, Hemingway's work seems to be filled with the "sickeningly broken fragments" that Campbell mentions. Yet when the ending of "Indian Camp" is read on the second level with its mythical characteristics, Hemingway's vision belongs to what John Friedberg calls the mystical tradition. Through "Indian Camp" runs the trend of this tradition, a trend of "pessimism and negation seen in the present human condition and optimism and affirmation in the future spiritual condition."⁸⁹

This distinction in Hemingway's vision is demonstrable structurally; according to Chaman Nahal, "the weight in the

⁸⁸ Campbell, p. 28.

⁸⁹ Friedberg, p.

structure of a Hemingway novel emphasizes more the presentation of the emotive effects of a particular action than the action itself."⁹⁰ Thus, while Hemingway presents the harsh realities of our world, his real intent is to go beyond them: "The strength of the story, rather, lies in those pages which take us beyond the physical action to a point of stillness."⁹¹ Nahal's discussion coincides with the earlier discussion and conclusion concerning the structure of "Indian Camp", that is, that through the structure Hemingway focuses the readers' attention on Nick, specifically on his withdrawal. However, Nahal goes further, concerning himself less with divisional sections in Hemingway's work and more with the overall vision Hemingway tried to present. Thus, for Nahal there is only one basic structural pattern in Hemingway's work, a pattern created by the division of "two modes of actions: the systolic, the active action, and the diastolic, the passive action."⁹² Hemingway's longer works may consist of a rhythmic series of the pattern while the shorter may be built on only one cycle, but the purpose is always the same: Hemingway works toward and therefore emphasizes the diastolic, the passive

⁹⁰Nahal, p. 22 of Introduction.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 22 of Introduction.

⁹²Ibid., p. 25-26 of Introduction.

best, for it is during this period that "the individual returns to a deep mystery within himself through passivity and makes himself ready for the next systolic surge."²³

To understand Nabal's discussion in terms of "Indian Camp" it is necessary only to superimpose the pattern he observes in Hemingway's work on the structural pattern already noted-- Grabstein's three-point division of "Indian Camp"-- and draw a line to separate the "away" section from the "toward" and "there" sections. I have already pointed out how Hemingway's narrative technique singles out this final section; however, it is also quite clear that the nature of the ending sets it off by itself. The discovery of the suicide, the action that signals the end of the active period and the beginning of the passive period, is one of the most powerful and effective of Hemingway's surprises. If the ironic treatment of Nick's father immediately before the discovery of the suicide seems an overuse of satiric irony, the suicide seems an overuse of the tragic. But the suicide seems so only because we have not understood the scope of the story. A screaming Caesarian we think quite enough for a young boy to experience, and, that over we want only an indication of its impact on Nick. However, Hemingway has intended to deal with the universals of both life and death, and the Caesarian is

²³Nabal, p. 26 of Introduction.

therefore only half the story; so we are made to suffer a second brutality. Our own innocence is brought painfully before us.

Hemingway increases the shock value of the suicide through his method of presenting the discovery. Though the bravado of Dr. Adams will ultimately be viewed as ironic, it is not immediately perceived to be so. Rather it serves as an indication that the ordeal is over. Like Nick's father and Nick himself we can relax. By allowing this moment of relaxation, Hemingway can bring us to his second truth in the same way he brings Nick to it, over Dr. Adams' shoulder and, more important, innocent. By the time we become aware of what we have just seen, it is for us, as it is for Nick, too late. We've already had "a good view" and seen as Dr. Adams "tipped the Indian's head back" (p. 94). The revelation is a remarkable bit of writing.

Even more remarkable is the abrupt change in tone and mood immediately after the suicide is discovered. Before we have a chance to recover, Hemingway has moved to the passive part of the story. The one-sentence transitional paragraph separating the two sections points to the completeness of the change. The alteration of the points of location and direction indicates the total movement away from the experience of the camp. The return of daylight means the resurgence of the forces of light over those

of the night and darkness. Though the very next sentence contains Nick's father's apology to Nick for the "awful mess," and thus reminds us of the events at the camp, it does not bring back those events. Rather, the apology seems meaningless; Nick's father could not have prevented what happened. His sorrow is like the sorrow expressed by mourners to the close relatives of the person who has died. They do not apologize for their own responsibility in the death but for the fact of death itself. The apology, then, becomes a recognition of the ultimate end and implies an acceptance of, a resignation to that ultimate end.

Despite the fact that nearly the entire "away" section of the story, the passive period, is comprised of dialogue, a sense of quiet pervades it. The lack of accompanying authorial comment gives no indication of the time-lapse that occurs as the dialogue runs its course, but the impression conveyed is that the questions are slow, well-spaced, and quiet. The questions and answers themselves indicate that there is a change in this final section. Waldhorn points out the superficial nature of the questions, stating that they are "sensitive but, predictably, childlike, curious rather than searching."⁹⁴ The questions are superficial; however, I think they are so because they occupy only the surface

⁹⁴Waldhorn, p. 54-55.

consciousness of Nick. His deeper energies are already drawn into experiencing one of his special moments, a moment, as Nahal describes it, "when the individual is in touch with the rhythm of total life, the dark mystery that surrounds man all the time and of which he can only occasionally become aware."⁹⁵

Nick's emergence into "the dark mystery that surrounds man" is made complete in the sensation of the final paragraphs. The events at the camp become, like the jumping of the bass, moments frozen in time, but they create, as does the bass, ever-widening circles. These circles eventually encompass all of life with all its consequences and therefore constitute a harmony. When Nick trails his hand in the water, he comes into contact with the totality that results from the events of the camp, and he affirms, paradoxically, his part in the immortality of the total life. Thus, one of the basic tenets of Nahal's study can be accepted:

What we have in his character [least in the case of Nick Adams] is a certain "acceptance"-- an acceptance of the inevitable-- and it is only by stretching the meaning of the word that we can think of this acceptance as pessimism. It is passivity, certainly, but it is creative passivity and is far removed from pessimism. For his characters come to realize that in the scheme of things their own contribution is but a limited one. And while the play of life lasts, their part in it is glorious.⁹⁶

⁹⁵Nahal, p. 26 of Introduction.

⁹⁶Nahal, p. 93.

The distinction that Hemingway's vision in "Indian Camp" is closer to that of a mystic than to that of a modern and that the story exists on two levels is further emphasized by his style. Michael Friedberg points out that "the most significant feature of Hemingway's style is the evocation of a poignant sense of objective reality."⁹⁷ Though certainly this is not a novel observation, Friedberg sees in this style possibilities that are not obvious. He indicates that Hemingway's objectivity allows him to impart "to the narrative a feeling of immediacy which interpenetrates the perception of the hero with that of the reader."⁹⁸ To demonstrate "The simple syntax, the bare description, and the unreflective mood" that achieves for Hemingway the interpenetration, Friedberg cites the paragraph from "Indian Camp" that reveals the suicide. I have already indicated how the structure of this discovery brings the reader closer. Friedberg points out that the "essential, undistracting details" and the "cinematic" effect also force the reader to "assume the viewpoint of the protagonist."⁹⁹ This restricted style continues through to the end of the story, and we are drawn closer to Nick's perception of the events. Hemingway, in the final section, provides no direction for understanding what has happened. Thus

⁹⁷Friedberg, p. 187.

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 187.

⁹⁹Ibid., p. 187.

we, like Nick, are forced to grope for some kind of understanding, but there is none on the conscious level. We, too, are limited to feeling, and therefore, as Friedberg points out, one of Hemingway's most famous practices is very much evidenced; Hemingway left out certain bits of information to " 'strengthen the story and make people feel something more than they understand.' "100

The second possibility that Friedberg sees in Hemingway's style is that it allows him at certain times to "define a new reality-- a reality of transcendence."¹⁰¹ Friedberg's study indicates that the controlled, clear nature of Hemingway's style, like the ritual, is an attempt to demonstrate control over the forces of the cosmos. The controlled style is artificial and, so, well-suited for Hemingway's irony, because it juxtaposes its own "logical consistency" with the chaos of the universe.¹⁰² However, it also permits a merging of the "objective, finite, and material" with the "cosmic, infinite, and spiritual," and a transcendence from the "material-objective world" to the "spiritual-subjective world."¹⁰³ The last two paragraphs of

¹⁰⁰Friedberg, p. 187.

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 186.

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 186.

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 186.

"Indian Camp" present the perfect example of just such a merger with just such a result:

They were seated in the boat, Nick in the stern, his father rowing. The sun was coming up over the hills. A bass jumped, making a circle in the water. Nick trailed his hand in the water. It felt warm in the sharp chill of the morning.

In the early morning on the lake sitting in the stern of the boat with his father rowing, he felt quite that he would never die. (p. 95)

Clearly Hemingway has juxtaposed the forces that Nick's father cannot explain with the precise painting of the image in the first of the above paragraphs. Additionally, Nick's feeling in the final paragraph is set against these same forces. However, by the second paragraph Nick, through the merging of the material world with the spiritual, is already transported; he is experiencing one of what Friedberg calls "moments of special illumination" in which a "quasi-immortality" is to be found; he is basking in a "state of metaphysical grace."¹⁰⁴ The deliberate repetition of information indicates that while the material setting is the same, a drastic change has occurred between paragraphs. This change is further emphasized by the length and complexity of the final sentence compared to the simple, shorter sentences of the first paragraph above. Though these paragraphs were not used as examples, Friedberg might easily have chosen them to illustrate his statement that, reading such lines, "one feels as if some-

¹⁰⁴ Friedberg, p. 187-189.

thing extraordinary has just happened to him. The impressions are etched in the mind as with a hot needle and for a short breath the reader is transported out of horological time into the abiding aesthetic world of the narrative."¹⁰⁵ Through Hemingway's style we are both drawn into the narrative and transported with Nick to the spiritual realm. His style captures "the state of grace that occurs when, leaving the realms of time and space, man glimpses a vision of the infinite goodness of God."¹⁰⁶

If one considers these elements of Hemingway's style and structure, as well as its mythical elements "Indian Camp" becomes a somewhat different story, at least a more complex story. It is still an initiation, but includes not only Nick's coming to know the real world with its violence and pain but also his awareness of another level of existence that has something to do with the wonderful sensation he feels. Nick is presented not only with a conscious method (ritual) of coping with the harsh reality, but also with a means (pure sensual experience) of retreating temporarily from the world of pain to a more comfortable, if not fully understood, mystical world. And he learns from both. I have already pointed out that the mature Nick Adams is possessor and user of ritual, but the Nick Adams series also

¹⁰⁵Friedberg, p. 188.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 189.

contains moments of retreat. The "wind in the hemlock trees" and "the waves of the lake" allow Nick to forget all about Prudence in "Ten Indians" (p. 336). The problem with Marjorie seemed solved in "The Three-Day Blow" when "the wind blew it out of his head" (p. 125). Nick also retreats in "Summer People" when he wishes he could put his entire body in the spring that feels so good on his hand: "Nick thought, I wish I could put all of myself in there. I bet that would fix me." (NAS, p. 197).

Typically, these moments involve nature, some physical sensation caused by nature, but many of them specifically involve water. The water seems to have the baptismal and transfigurational qualities that Leslie Fiedler discusses in "The American Hero and the Evasion of Love."¹⁰⁷ Many critics have singled out Nick's fascination with the trout "keeping themselves steady in the current" (p. 209) in "Big Two-Hearted River" as a sign that Nick himself is attempting to keep steady, but there is also the desire to be under the water. Nick wants to live in that underwater conditions of suspended animation he finds so comfortable in "Summer People":

He took a deep breath, took hold of his ankles with his hands, his knees under his chin, and sank slowly

¹⁰⁷ Leslie Fiedler, "The American Hero and the Evasion of Love," from Love and Death in the American Novel (Stein and Day Publishers, 1966), rpt. in D. M. Kartiganer and M. A. Griffith, eds., Theories of American Literature (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1972), p. 263.

down into the water. It was warm at the top but he dropped quickly into cool, then cold. As he reached the bottom it was quite cold. Nick floated down gently against the bottom. It was warly and his toes hated it as he uncurled and shoved hard against it to come up to the air. (NAS, p. 200).

Between the warly aspects of life and the necessity of facing them is where Nick wants to stay, and he learns how in "Indian Camp". Water seems to express the cleansing quality of Nick's special moments. To "lose" his father's hand-me-down underwear, Nick places "it under two stones in the creek" (p. 496); the water may remove the smell of his father and any ultimate relationship between him and Nick. Water also expresses Nick's capacity to regain objective life in his experience of total life. Like the trout Nick catches and kills in "Big Two-Hearted River," re-immersed in water Nick seems alive. (p. 231).

However, there are some bad aspects in the water. If water becomes a means of attaining those special moments of pure sensuality, pure existence, and even a symbol of the total consciousness Nick comes into contact with, then there are realms within this spiritual cosmos that are frightening. Nick refuses to fish the very deep waters and the swamp, but his refusal is for only one day. He knows "There were plenty of days coming when he could fish the swamp" (p. 232). The retreat from the

harsh realities is not a denial of them. Nick can transcend the "objective material world," but that world remains, like the swamp, and Nick will fish those waters. I do not think his promise is a self-delusion; Nick will enter the swamp, just as he will visit the grave of his father, and just as he will live forever. If one takes to its extreme limit the idea that Nick Adams is a mask for Hemingway and sees Nick's father as Hemingway's father, it is interesting to note that of the four, Nick alone survives. Within Hemingway's own work, Nick is very much alive; he is doing what Hemingway could not. And too, if Hemingway's one-time definition of life as an "occasional temporary avoidance" of death is taken into consideration,¹⁰⁸ Nick becomes a successful character. His retreats to the mystical world allow him to survive in the objective world. Certainly Hemingway must have wanted Nick's response to be viewed as superior to the response of the Indian. Nick avoids death in order to live; the Indian avoids life through death.

Nick's response to the experience at the camp must also be viewed as superior to that of his father, but not because Nick's father's response is valueless. The ritual is a valid method of coping; Nick himself uses it. Nick's father's fault lies in his

¹⁰⁸ Ernest Hemingway in Harvey Breit, "Talk with Mr. Hemingway," The New York Times Book Review (Sept. 17, 1950), p. 14. Taken here from Waldhorn's Readers' Guide, p. 21.

belief that he can gain some kind of ultimate control. The superiority of Nick's response lies, rather, in the beauty of the experience that exists for Nick and for anyone else who comes into contact with that level of existence. In the previous novel, God in Winter, the narrator's effort to reach a goal demands a great deal of effort. The purely personal moments are easier and sweeter. As the narrator in A Farewell to Arms points out in one of Hemingway's naturalistic symbolic passages:

Sometimes we went off the road and on a path through the pine forest. The floor of the forest was soft to walk on; the frost did not harden it as it did the road. But we did not mind the hardness of the road because we had nails in the soles and heels of our boots and the heel nails bit on the frozen ruts and with nailed boots it was good walking on the road and invigorating. But it was lovely walking in the wood. (FTA, p. 290).

If one has the right equipment, a ritual perhaps, one can make it through the reality of our world, but how much nicer it is "walking in the woods"! Nick prefers the "woods":

He did not go all the way down but straightened out and swam along and up through the cool, keeping just below the warm surface water. It was funny how much fun it was to swim underwater and little real fun there was in plain swimming (NAS, p. 200).

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Vita

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