


Spring 2018

# The Significance of the Game of Pool in Ernest Hemingway's "Soldier's Home"

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GAME OF POOL IN ERNEST HEMINGWAY'S  
"SOLDIER'S HOME"

by

Molly J. Donehoo

(Under the Direction of Olivia Carr Edenfield)

ABSTRACT

In his 1929 *A Farewell to Arms*, American Author Ernest Hemingway provides the thesis for all of American Modernism when he writes, "the world breaks everyone and afterward many are strong at the broken places" (216). If the world breaks everyone Hemingway's focus becomes not in the breaking but in the solutions for becoming strong at the broken places. Throughout his canon Hemingway presents the healing rituals and therapeutic patterns that govern sports and game as a solution to becoming strong at the broken places. While critics have closely analyzed and scrutinized some of his most recognized short-stories, stories such as "Cross-Country Snow" or "Big Two-Hearted River," many scholars have neglected to focus on the equally significant game of pool in "Soldier's Home." "Soldier's Home," appearing in his 1925 short-story cycle *In Our Time*, depicts WWI veteran Harold Krebs as he returns home from the war traumatized and broken. In turning to the rituals, routines, patterns, and motions of the game of pool Krebs is made strong at the broken places.

INDEX WORDS: Ernest Hemingway, "Soldier's Home," *In Our Time*, World War I, Sports, Games, Healing, Patterns, Pool, Billiards, American short story, *A Farewell to Arms*, American literature, Modernism.

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B.A., Georgia Southern University, 2016

M.A., Georgia Southern University, 2018

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

STATESBORO, GEORGIA

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Electronic Version Approved:  
May 2018

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge everyone that helped me throughout this entire process of writing my thesis. More specifically, I would like to thank Dr. Brad Edwards for always taking the time to discuss Hemingway with me, whether at the American Literature Association Short Story Symposium in Savannah or in passing on campus. His knowledge and love of Ernest Hemingway has been so helpful and wonderful throughout this entire process. I would also like to thank Dr. Florczyk for all of his help throughout this process. Not only did I have the pleasure of presenting with Dr. Florczyk on a Hemingway panel in Boston where he gave me advice and feedback, but he also set time aside to meet with me and discuss all of my ideas early on. Also, without his book, Hemingway, *The Red Cross*, and *The Great War* my thesis would not have been the same. Lastly, to Dr. Olivia Carr Edenfield – if I had never taken your American Literature class where you assigned *A Farewell to Arms* this thesis would have never happened. Thank you so much for your countless hours of advice, your large plethora of knowledge, your hard work, and your love of Ernest Hemingway. I am so lucky to have you.

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GAME OF POOL IN ERNEST HEMINGWAY'S  
"SOLDIER'S HOME"

*"The world breaks everyone and afterward many are strong at the broken places."* ~ Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms*

*"In the fall the war was always there, but we did not go to it any more."* ~ Ernest Hemingway, "In Another Country"

HEMINGWAY AND WORLD WAR I

Ernest Hemingway began his junior year of high school in Oak Park, Illinois, in the fall of 1915. Hemingway biographer Michael Reynolds recalls that at this point in his life, the young Hemingway's inventory of personal property included, "a box of fish hooks, a jack knife, several books, a chronic case of piles, and knowledge of woodcraft, hunting, fishing, lumbering and farming," and that his expenses for September of 1915 "totaled \$3.25, including 50 cents for a baseball ticket and 50 cents for Caesar's *Gallic Wars*" (*Young Hemingway* 13). Across the Atlantic Ocean, World War I had been raging on for nearly 14 months, but for the young boy growing up in a suburb outside of Chicago, life was seemingly simple. Reynolds reflects that the following year, in 1916, presidential candidate Woodrow Wilson would run for reelection under the slogan, "He Kept Us Out of War," and Hemingway, a member of the Oak Park High School Junior Debates team, would argue that "the United States government should provide for a citizen army patterned after that of Switzerland" (*Young Hemingway* 14). While America had not yet entered the war, it was clear that for Hemingway, war, and what he could do to help the cause, was fresh on his mind. One year later, in April of 1917, America entered the war. As his fellow classmates and many boys he knew from Oak Park began volunteering for service, Hemingway felt eager to serve his country. Hemingway biographer Carlos Baker recalls this desire in the young Hemingway: "Apart from his determination to learn how to write, the chief subject of Ernest's conversations was war and how he could get into it" (*A Life Story* 36). While



Reynolds also expresses this sense of eagerness by claiming that Hemingway “had to get to the front,” in April of 1917, the 17-year-old boy was still a year shy of being of age to volunteer (*Young Hemingway* 15). Steven Florczyk reiterates this fact as he asserts of the young Hemingway that “he was too young to join an armed force without parental consent, which his father and mother were unwilling to provide” (3). Aside from being too young to enlist, Hemingway’s myopia caused him to fail the physical exam required to enlist. Baker recalls a statement by Hemingway: “But I’ll make it to Europe some way in spite of this optic. I can’t let a show like this go on without getting into it” (*A Life Story* 36). However, due to his young age, lack of parental consent, and what Florczyk refers to as his “defective vision,” Hemingway, “ineligible for enlistment according to army regulations,” could not get in on the “show” and instead took a job at the *Kansas City Star* in the fall of 1917 (3).

However, beginning work at a newspaper only six months after America entered the war did not deter Hemingway’s eagerness to serve, but instead intensified it. For Hemingway, news of the war was unavoidable. Florczyk situates Hemingway’s first weeks at the *Star* in the context of the war as he states, “at the same time he began his assignment as a cub reporter for the *Kansas City Star* in October,” that, “front-page headlines reported the disastrous outcome of the Battle of Caporetto that led to the need for a new corps of ambulance drivers on the Italian front.” Florczyk continues, claiming that on October 24, 1917, only “a week after Hemingway arrived for work at the *Kansas City Star*, the changing conditions in Italy commanded the world’s attention” (3). The war had certainly caught the young reporter’s attention, and in a letter to his sister Marcelline, written on November 6, 1917, only three weeks after starting work at the *Star*, Hemingway admitted, “Honest kid I cant stay out much longer” (59). However, Hemingway, more obsessed with entering the war than ever, still faced the problem of his

myopia. John Fenstermaker recalls, “These problems found resolution in Theodore Brumback, a new friend in the newsroom and a person in Kansas City who supported the recruiters for the Red Cross who were seeking individuals unable to pass the army physical but willing to drive ambulances on the Italian front” (16)<sup>1</sup>. Three months later, on February 22, the *Kansas City Star* published an article titled “Red Cross Calls Men” that announced, “experienced business men not of draft age or who are physically exempt from army duty, and women without relatives in the American army are called by the American Red Cross to volunteer for immediate service in France and Italy” (3). Hemingway, under the influence of both Brumback and the article, could not resist the call and submitted his application to the American Red Cross the next day.

Despite completing his application for the American Red Cross in February of 1918, Hemingway, according to Florczyk, “did not enter Italy until June 7, 1918” (xv). However, on July, 8, 1918, one month and one day after arriving in Milan, Hemingway was wounded at the front, not while driving an ambulance but instead while volunteering in the canteen service. Baker explains that while “carrying a supply of cigarettes, chocolate, and postcards for the soldiers” a “canister” filled with “steel rod fragments and miscellaneous metal junk,” about “the size of a five-gallon tin” hurled across the river, exploding on contact, “scattering its contents at ground level,” and injuring the young Hemingway (*A Life Story* 44). Florczyk points out the irony in the fact that after telling his parents that “his period of active duty would begin ‘from the day we start driving’ and ‘probably carry us pretty well into the winter,’” instead, “his term as an ambulance driver lasted for only fifteen days” (43). In a letter to Hemingway’s parents, Clarence and Grace Hall Hemingway, dated July 14<sup>th</sup>, 1918, merely six days after his injury, Hemingway’s coworker from the *Star* and fellow ambulance driver, Brumback, explained the

extent of Hemingway's injuries in his first-hand account of the explosion. Upon visiting the wounded Hemingway in the American Red Cross hospital, Brumback recalls:

Well, things went along fine for six days. But about midnight on the seventh day an enormous trench mortar hit within a few feet of Ernest while he was giving out chocolate. The concussion of the explosion knocked him unconscious and buried him with earth. There was an Italian between Ernest and the shell. He was instantly killed while another, standing a few feet away, had both legs blown off. A third Italian was badly wounded and this one Ernest, after he had regained consciousness, picked up on his back and carried to the first aid dug-out. (*Letters* 115)

Brumback goes on to explain that, "although some two hundred pieces of shell" were lodged into Hemingway's leg, "none of them are above the hip joint" and "only a few of those pieces was large enough to cut deep" (115). Two days after Brumback's letter to the Hemingway family, on July 16, 1918, Hemingway himself penned a letter home: "Wounded in legs by trench mortar; not serious; will receive valor medal; will walk in about ten days" (117). However, the innocent optimism of the young and injured Hemingway regarding his situation would soon disappear, as he wrote to his family on August 7, 1918, nearly a month later, claiming: "I've been in bed a month tomorrow and it is getting pretty darn tiresome. However I ought to get out in a month now so as to be on crutches" (126).

After arriving at the American Red Cross hospital on July 14, 1918, Florczyk summarizes the remainder of Hemingway's time at war by noting that he "was released from the ambulance service on November 16 and boarded a steamship bound for New York on January 4, 1919, after having stayed in Italy to receive mechanical therapy treatments for his leg." Florczyk concludes that, "although it is true that Hemingway's active duty effectively ended after the wounding on

July 8, the totality of his Italian experience nonetheless turned out to be one of the most formative periods of his life.” For it is in this formative period, as many critics have established, that Hemingway found the inspiration for his 1929 novel *A Farewell to Arms*. Florczyk reinforces this idea as he points out that, “episodes from those six months suggest not only source material for *A Farewell to Arms* and other fiction about Italy but many of Hemingway’s themes related to subsequent wars as well” (xv).

While his experiences at war were “formative” in that they led to his writing of *A Farewell to Arms* and the creation of his semi-autobiographic character Frederic Henry, they were far more “formative” in the fact that they led Hemingway to an understanding of brokenness. For it is through his “formative” experiences during World War I that Hemingway was able to provide, and personally understand, the thesis for *A Farewell to Arms*, a thesis that perhaps serves as the thesis for all of American literary Modernism: “The world breaks every one and afterward many are strong at the broken places” (216). If the world -- or in the case of Hemingway and Lt. Frederic Henry, the war -- breaks everyone, then Hemingway’s focus is on the ability to become strong at the broken places. Throughout much of his work, Hemingway’s chief concern then becomes not with the problem of being broken but with the solution to becoming strong again. For Hemingway this solution is exhibited often times through his heroes, those who, despite their trauma, maintain grace under pressure, do things the right way, endure with dignity, and sustain order through ritual and routine. It is through this sense of ritual and routine that Hemingway so often intertwines the world of war with the world of sport, and it is through the healing rituals that govern sports in which he is able to provide restorative solutions. Perhaps no story embodies this theme better than his 1925 short story “Soldier’s Home.”

### HEMINGWAY'S HOMECOMING

Despite being injured in July of 1918, Hemingway did not return to the United States until January of 1919. While Hemingway's war-time injuries and experiences are reflected through characters such as Frederic Henry in *A Farewell to Arms* or the narrator of "In Another Country," Hemingway's homecoming from the war more closely parallels characters such as Nick Adams in "Big Two-Hearted River" or most notably Harold Krebs in "Soldier's Home." In fact, Michael Reynolds suggests that while "none of Hemingway's fictional characters grew up in Oak Park," the story "of the returning veteran," Harold Krebs in "Soldier's Home," "uses some of his own experience but he moved the locale to Oklahoma (*The Young Hemingway* 52). Leo Gurko furthers this notion as he asserts that Hemingway, like many soldiers returning home, "was at loose ends, finding it difficult to get back to civilian life after the end of the war," before stating that "Hemingway's particularly bad case of postwar jitters was described with special delicacy and insight in his story 'Soldier's Home'" (13). Carlos Baker emphasizes the similarities between Hemingway and Krebs by discussing Hemingway's immense state of loneliness and depression upon returning home from Milan in 1919. After recalling a claim made by Hemingway's older sister, in which she said Hemingway resembled someone "put in a box with the cover nailed down," Baker notes that he was "lonely indeed" (*A Life Story* 57). That sense of loneliness which Baker describes in Hemingway, Hemingway later illustrates through Krebs, as Krebs too appears "lonely indeed."

Semi-autobiographical details reflective of Hemingway's return home for the war run throughout "Soldier's Home," the fictional account of Harold Krebs' return home. For instance, Reynolds provides an interesting account of Hemingway's post-war lies, or more so his omission

of the truth, in regard to details of his wartime experiences. Discussing the stories of Navy pilots returning home from the war around the same time as Hemingway, Reynolds writes:

Still, they told interesting stories. Hemingway had learned something from listening and from telling. He tried out his stories of Mount Grappa and the Arditi shock troops. He told them about his wounding, showed them the scars. If they thought he had served with the Italian army, Hemingway said nothing to dissuade them. That had been his first lie. Not a lie exactly. The Red Cross rolling canteen under Jim Gamble was assigned to the Italian army... it was not exactly a lie to say that he had been with the Italian army, but it was difficult to explain why ... He did not tell them he was a Red Cross man handing out chocolate and cigarettes, blown up in a forward observation post where he had no business to be. He would never see them again anyway. (*Young Hemingway* 17-18)

This notion is directly reflected in Krebs in the opening paragraphs of "Soldier's Home," as Hemingway writes:

Later he felt the need to talk but no one wanted to hear about it. His town had heard too many atrocity stories to be thrilled by actualities. Krebs found that to be listened to at all he had to lie, and after he had done this twice he too, had a reaction against the war and against talking about it. A distaste for everything that had happened to him in the war set in because of the lies he told. All of the times that had been able to make him feel cool and clear inside himself when he thought of them; the times so long back when he had done the one thing, the only thing for a man to do, easily and naturally, when he might have done something else, now lost their cool, valuable quality and were then lost themselves. His lies were quite unimportant lies and consisted in attributing to himself

things other men had seen, done or heard of, and stating as facts, certain apocryphal incidents familiar to all soldiers. (145-46)

Both Hemingway and Krebs return home from the war to lie about, exaggerate, or sensationalize their war-time experiences. However, the parallel between these two scenes is further emphasized in a letter that Hemingway wrote to James Gamble, the same “Jim Gamble” referred to in Reynolds’ account, in April of 1919: “It was very simple while the war was on. Then there was only one thing for a man to do” (185). This line directly parallels the line in “Soldier’s Home,” which reads, “...the times so long back when he had done the one thing, the only thing for a man to do, so, easily and naturally, when he might have done something else...” (145-46). This “one thing,” referred to by both Hemingway and Krebs, is to kill. Killing becomes the only option when faced with life and death at war.

Max Westbrook looks more specifically at the familial relations of both men upon their return home from war, concluding that the strained relationship between Krebs and his mother seen in “Soldier’s Home” closely reflects Hemingway’s strained relationship with his mother upon arriving home from the war. While Westbrook points out the differences between Harold Krebs’ mother and Grace Hemingway, specifically noting that Grace “sang opera and painted pictures,” he also comments on the idea that both women fit the stereotypical representations of mothers in the World War I era. Westbrook asserts that because “Soldier’s Home” is “in part the story of a young man who wants to reject the life his parents have chosen for him,” it describes the “situation that Mrs. Hemingway, Mrs. Krebs, and millions of other similar and dissimilar parents have found themselves in” as their children return home from war (98). Reynolds furthers this idea as he points out that Krebs’ mother’s “Christian piety, untouched by the horrors of the western front, is similar to Grace Hemingway’s religious positivism that her son found so

irrelevant after being blown up at Fossalta” (190 *The Paris Years*). In essence, the sense of stress that Krebs feels from his mother upon returning home was not only reflective of pressure Hemingway felt from his own mother, but would have been a common pressure felt by the nearly 2 million American soldiers returning home from WWI.

Another small similarity between Krebs’ return and Hemingway’s return lies in the actual timeline. In the opening paragraph of “Soldier’s Home,” Hemingway writes that Krebs “did not return to the United States until the second division returned from the Rhine in the summer of 1919” (145). Krebs, like Hemingway, returns from the war in 1919, months after the war has ended. In fact, Gurko examines Krebs’ return home and points out, “the analogies with Hemingway’s own position when, at nineteen, he returned to Oak Park from the war are self-evident” (183). However, despite coming home from war in the same year and at the same age, Krebs, being an American Marine as opposed to a Red Cross ambulance driver on the Italian front, returns from the Rhine, not Italy, and not until summer, as opposed to Hemingway who returned in January.

While elements of Hemingway’s return home from war are reflected in Harold Krebs, there is an abundance of differences in each man’s homecoming. One interesting distinction between Krebs’ return and Hemingway’s is that in “Soldier’s Home,” the narrator explains, “By the time Krebs returned to his home town in Oklahoma the greeting of heroes was over. He came back much too late. The men from the town who had been drafted had all been welcomed elaborately on their return” (145). Unlike those that have come before, Krebs did not receive a hero’s welcome upon returning to the United States. Hemingway, however, in several accounts, did receive somewhat of a hero’s return, as he appeared on a lecture-circuit explaining his wartime experiences. According to Baker, on Friday March 14, 1919, the young Hemingway,



recently back from war, was invited to give a speech on his wartime experiences. Baker goes on to claim that Hemingway shocked the crowd with tales of mortar explosions and carrying fallen soldiers on his back (*A Life Story* 58). These accounts of Hemingway's story telling are drastically different from the tales Krebs tells upon his return.

Understanding the biographical similarities and differences between the wartime experiences and homecomings of both Harold Krebs and Ernest Hemingway is important in establishing the differences in how each man was broken by the war. While both had a serious case of what Gurko calls the "postwar jitters," establishing how each man was broken by the war is crucial in highlighting the similarities between how each man was "made strong in the broken places." For instance, Hemingway did not participate in any battles during World War I, but instead was blown up and physically injured in the war while delivering cigarettes and chocolate to the front. Krebs, however, was not physically injured in the war, but unlike Hemingway himself, Krebs "had been at Belleau Wood, Soissons, the Champagne, St. Mihiel and in the Argonne" (145). In selecting these battles, specifically battles with devastating American casualties and carnage, Hemingway begins to convey Krebs' brokenness as a result of immense emotional and psychological trauma. The Battle of Belleau Wood, the first large-scale battle fought by American troops in World War I, lasted over three weeks and recorded close to 10,000 American deaths. The Battle of Soissons, a victory for the Allied forces, resulted in nearly 12,000 American casualties. The Battle of Champagne, also known as the Second Battle of the Marne, was one of the most pivotal battles of World War I and resulted in almost 12,000 American dead and wounded. The Battle of St. Mihiel, the first US-led offensive in World War I, resulted in over 7,000 American deaths. The last of Krebs' battles, The Battle of the Argonne Forest, with over 26,000 Americans deaths, remains the deadliest battle in United States' history.

Reynolds highlights this contrast between Hemingway and Krebs as he writes: “Harold, we’re told, fought with the Marines at Belleau Wood, Soissons, the Champagne, St. Mihiel and in the Argonne – all major American battles from late in the war, and none of which Hemingway experienced” (189 *The Paris Years*). Not only had Krebs, unlike Hemingway, been engaged in contact, but he had participated in five of the war’s bloodiest battles. Thus in terms of Modernism and Hemingway’s famous line from *A Farewell to Arms*, that “the world breaks everyone,” Krebs and Hemingway come home from the war “broken” in two different ways.

Hemingway arrives home in 1919 physically “broken,” as he sustained damage to his knee and legs, whereas Harold Krebs, having fought in five of the most traumatizing battles, comes home far more emotionally “broken,” as he struggles to cope with what he has witnessed and done. There is no evidence in “Soldier’s Home” that Krebs has sustained any physical injuries. In fact, in referencing his actions such as “walking” downtown and playing pool, Hemingway seems to be emphasizing his lack of physical ailments or injuries. Despite the absence of physical brokenness, Baker provides a deeper insight into Krebs’ emotional instability as he admits that during his time with the *Co-Operative Commonwealth*, Hemingway had a friend and colleague named “Krebs Friend.” Baker states that this “Krebs,” like the fictionalized version, was a WWI “veteran who had seen action on the Western front in 1918 and suffered severe shell shock” (*A Life Story* 131). Reynolds later reiterates this idea as he claims that Hemingway names the protagonist of “Soldier’s Home” “Harold Krebs,” “using part of Krebs Friend, a badly shell-shocked vet he first knew in Chicago who had turned up later in Paris...Hemingway gave to his fictional Harold Krebs bits and pieces of other men’s wars” (189 *The Paris Years*). While Hemingway came back from the war in a state of “loneliness,” Harold

Krebs, like Hemingway's friend and colleague Krebs Friend, arrives back in Oklahoma in a state of shell shock, now termed post-traumatic stress disorder, or *PTSD*.

While there is an abundance of differences between Hemingway's and Krebs' returns to America post World War I, one similarity is clear and certain: both men turned to the healing rituals and rehabilitative patterns of sports and games as a coping mechanism for their "brokenness" after the war. Hemingway protagonists and code heroes turn to various rituals, routines, and patterns for a sense of rehabilitation and rejuvenation after the war, such as Frederic Henry's restorative action of writing, or scriptotherapy,<sup>2</sup> in *A Farewell to Arms*; or Jake Barnes' ultimate quest for Catholicism in *The Sun Also Rises*.<sup>3</sup> Similarly to Hemingway himself, Harold Krebs turns to the healing powers of sports and games, specifically the game of pool, as a coping mechanism after the war. For Hemingway, physically broken by the war, and Harold Krebs, emotionally broken by the war, sports and games become the solution to the problem of how to become strong at the broken places.

### HEMINGWAY'S SPORTS AND GAMES

As Hemingway biographers and critics have clearly established, sports and games were present and prominent in Hemingway's life and daily activities. Serving as not only his hobbies but more importantly his passions, sports and games provide a central theme and metaphor throughout much of Hemingway's literature, both his novels and his short stories. Sports, specifically hunting and fishing, became central to Hemingway's life from a very young age. In fact, Kevin Maier states that "Ernest Hemingway was a hunter from the earliest moments of his life," recalling that he "learned to shoot at age two," "hunted with his father at age three," "was given his own shotgun by the age of ten," and by the age of eleven, "was already imagining himself hunting lions in Africa like Teddy Roosevelt" (267). Similarly to hunting, Mark P. Ott asserts of fishing, that "Ernest Hemingway fished from the time he was a small boy; photos exist of a three-year-old Ernest, cane pole in hand, trying his luck off the shore of Walloon Lake." Ott continues that as he "grew into his young manhood, fishing became a dominant pastime for Hemingway," until ultimately he was transformed into a "world-class fisherman" (247). Hemingway's love and passion for fishing and hunting, beginning at a very young age, lasted his whole life.

As he grew older, Hemingway's passion for sports extended to games such as baseball and football. By the time he was in grade school, Hemingway became an avid baseball fan and card collector, an assertion previously suggested by Michael Reynolds. In fact, in 1912 the young Hemingway, responding to an ad in *Sporting News* for five-cent baseball "action pictures," wrote to the publisher, Mr. Charles C. Spink, stating, "Enclosed find \$.35 for which send me the following baseball action pictures," before listing a series of players (11). A few weeks later, the young Hemingway wrote to his father: "I looked up in my baseball schedule and

found that the New York Giants play Chicago Cubs for the championship on Sat. May 11 ... Lets see if we can't go it will be a dandy game the last of the Series" (12). Reynolds recalls that at Oak Park High School, Hemingway, "like so many of his generation," was "caught up by the lust for physical fitness" and that perhaps this lust led to the fact that "each fall he battered himself on the football field" (*Young Hemingway* 26). Hemingway, like so many of the young men around him, was deeply involved in athletics.

For Hemingway, this passion or "lust" toward sports and games was not only a product of his upbringing, implemented in him by his father, but also the product of the influences of American culture in the early 1900s. Reynolds argues that much of America's budding obsession with sports and physical fitness in the early 1900s came as a result of Theodore Roosevelt's presidency. Reynolds asserts that Roosevelt, "although he did not singlehandedly start the physical fitness craze which swept the nation early in this century," "certainly epitomized it" continuing that for "any boy born at the turn of the century," such as Hemingway, "Theodore Roosevelt was a living legend" (*Young Hemingway* 25). A big-game hunter, rancher, explorer, and hero, Roosevelt set a new standard of manhood, and with it came an American obsession with physical fitness, sports, and games. Maier furthers this notion, especially in terms of hunting, as he claims that "by the time of Hemingway's birth, hunting traditions were already integral to American culture," continuing that "while every American boy may not have had the same access to hunting as Hemingway, it would have been difficult for any American boy to escape the pervasiveness of the hunting culture in those early years of the twentieth century" (267). In large part Theodore Roosevelt, the very man whom the eleven-year-old Hemingway imagined himself as being, was responsible for the pervasiveness of this hunting culture in America at the turn of the century.

As a result of this pervasiveness, Americans, especially young boys such as Hemingway, were naturally passionate and seemingly obsessed with sports, games, and physical fitness. In fact, Reynolds concludes that during this time, “with the frontier gone, with the Indians tamed or buried, American games became the new proving ground” and that ultimately, “Hemingway’s generation came of age with a new definition of manhood: a man must excel in competitive sports” (*Young Hemingway* 26). Thus, Hemingway’s obsession with sports and games merely suggest that he was a product of his environment. In essence, not only his exposure and involvement in sports and games from a young age, but more so the American culture of the early 1900s that deemed physical fitness and competitive sports as a definition of manhood were paramount in shaping not only Hemingway the man but also Hemingway the writer.

Because sports and games were so integral to his life, it comes as no surprise that Hemingway so often, so naturally, and so effectively implements sports and games as a central theme throughout his canon. Hemingway’s works, both short stories and novels, include a broad spectrum of sports and games, varying from sports such as hunting, fishing, boxing, and bullfighting, to games such as baseball, football, tennis, bridge, and chess. For Hemingway, each and every reference to sports and games holds crucial meaning, each sport chosen for each story purposely and meticulously. Carlos Baker emphasizes this idea: “To say that Hemingway sometimes deals with sports like horse-racing, boxing, bullfighting, fishing, and skiing really tells very little even about the ‘sports-stories.’” Baker, noting that the importance of Hemingway’s “sports stories” is not in the sports themselves, but instead in what the sport reveals about the characters who play them, asserts that “Hemingway’s real interest” is not in “the athletic events,” but instead, “his interest is in the athletes, and not so much because they are athletes” but “because they are people” (*Writer as an Artist* 121). Therefore, each and every

reference to sports and games in Hemingway's works is significant for what it reveals about the respective character. While the use of sports and games in Hemingway's texts has come to suggest many ideas, their use works on many levels, and oftentimes reflects Hemingway's idea of the sportsman's code.

Hemingway scholar Earl Rovit provides an in-depth analysis of what he refers to as the "notorious sportsman's code," a code found throughout all of Hemingway's "sports-stories" (107). Rovit's breakdown of the sportsman's code not only calls on Baker's idea of the individual, or "athlete," who plays each sport, but also sets up Hemingway's ability to intertwine sports and games with war. On the most basic level, Rovit claims that this code, "in whatever violent or non-violent sport it covers," can be understood as a "system of arbitrary 'thou shalt not's' which comprises the rules which govern professional activity within the particular sport." For Rovit, these "rules" not only provide the sport, or game, with a purpose, which makes the game more interesting, but also imposes a sense of "order," which constitutes a challenge for the player. The key factors in Rovit's breakdown of Hemingway's sportsman's code are important in understanding how Hemingway, in much of his work, so masterfully links the world of war to the world of sports.

Among these takeaways is the emphasis of playing each and every sport the right way, by the rules. Rovit writes, "the sports code ... functions as a pragmatic program for prediction within the area defined by the rules." As a result, "the player knows in advance what is expected of him in the game he is to play." Finally, "through training and experience in his sport, he can learn a set of automatic (almost reflex) responses to the broad variety of differing challenges, although he must always bear in mind the uniqueness of every individual challenge" (108). Rovit concludes, "we have seen that life is imagined consistently in terms of a game for Hemingway,

but the game is like none that was ever played for sport. The rules are very simple: man the player is born; life the game will kill him” (109). Rovit’s conclusion that after man, the player, or athlete, is born, life, the game, will kill him reflects back to Hemingway’s lines in *A Farewell to Arms*: “The world breaks every one and afterward many are strong at the broken places. But those that will not break it kills” (216). Thus, Rovit’s explanation of the sportsman’s code suggests that perhaps playing by the rules of the game, playing the right way, helps the individual, player or athlete, become strong at the broken places. “Soldier’s Home” becomes perhaps Hemingway’s most perfect example of this.

Published in the 1925 edition of *In Our Time*, “Soldier’s Home” is not often addressed as one of his “sports-stories.” *In Our Time*, described by an anonymous critic as “athletic” in the October 18, 1925, *New York Times* Book Review, featured several of Hemingway’s so-called “sports-stories.”<sup>4</sup> Within the fourteen short stories of *In Our Time*, Hemingway presents sports such as hunting, fishing, boxing, skiing, and horse-racing as well as games such as baseball, pool, and even indoor baseball. “Soldier’s Home,” which features the game of pool and minor references to indoor baseball, is not considered by many critics to be a “sports-story.” However, Robert Lewis so perceptively points out that despite being “a story that is relatively unsporting,” “Soldier’s Home” “provides an excellent illustration, perhaps the best, of... Hemingway’s idea of sport, in part because it links the ‘real’ arenas of both war and social conflict with both images of sport and other such meaningless or irrelevant patterns.” Lewis elaborates on this idea of the “patterns” that sports and games, or in the case of “Soldier’s Home” the game of pool, offers as he states, “Sport is therapeutic because it can provide escape and at the same time the appearance of a meaningful pattern” (174). In understanding not only Rovit’s concept of the sportsman’s code and the rules that govern a sport or game, but also Lewis’ understanding of the therapeutic



patterns provided by sports, "Soldier's Home" becomes perhaps one of if not the best examples of Hemingway's effective ability to link together the world of sports and war, thus one of the best examples of a Hemingway "sports-story." If the "world," or even the war, "breaks every one," the therapeutic rituals, patterns, and rules that govern sports become a solution for healing.

### SPORTS AND GAMES: THERAPUTIC PATTERNS AND HEALING RITUALS

In order more effectively to understand Hemingway's presentation of the game of pool in "Soldier's Home" as a series of therapeutic patterns and ultimately as a healing ritual allowing Harold Krebs to become strong at the broken places, it is crucial first to understand the therapeutic patterns and healing rituals of sports that Hemingway turned to upon arriving home from the war wounded, or physically broken. Following his assertion that Hemingway, upon returning home from Milan in 1919, found himself in the immense state of loneliness, Carlos Baker also observes, that while Hemingway's "infirmities" from the war limited his participation in many of the sports and games that he loved, his injuries "did not deter him from fishing," and that by the time Hemingway was able to catch "six rainbow trout" that averaged "three pounds apiece," he was "bubbling with his usual enthusiasm" for the "first time" since his return home from the war (*A Life Story* 61). This observation supports the idea that it was only upon his being able to participate in one of his favorite sports that Hemingway began to heal, not only physically, but emotionally and mentally as well.

Baker recalls that during this time, Hemingway also resumed his "prewar habit of canoeing on the Des Plains River," most notably on dates with Kathryn Longwell, and that he was able to integrate himself back into society by going "to the YMCA swimming pool" and swimming with "some of the boys" (*A Life Story* 59). These sports -- fishing, canoeing, and swimming -- not only provided an activity that was accessible to Hemingway's injuries, but also, through prompting him to connect with other people, whether Kathryn Longwell or the "boys," he was forced out of his immense state of loneliness. Baker emphasizes this establishment of human connection through activities such as canoeing as he recalls a letter in which Longwell writes, "We'd paddle for miles ... and other times we would come to my home and read stories,

he had written, while eating little Italian cakes that he brought from the city” (*A Life Story* 59). Thus these sports for Hemingway become a solution to becoming strong at the broken places, both physically and emotionally.

Although Hemingway, according to Baker, turned to fishing as a form of rehabilitation for his war-time injuries upon arriving home in 1919, there was another activity to which he turned while recovering from his injuries in Italy, the game of pool. In the fall of 1918, a few months after his injury, Hemingway convalesced in Stresa, Italy, where he met and played pool with Count Giuseppe Greppi. In fact, Mark Collinson claims that in “September 1918, just two months after his injury, a 19 year old Ernest Hemingway was given a 10 day Convalesce-Pass and headed for Stresa, just an hour drive from Milan on Lake Maggiore” (15). Collinson notes that, “Hemingway spent 7 of his 10 day leave at the Grand Hotel Iles Borromée,” spending much of his time at the hotel “playing pool” with Count Greppi, “talking with the barman over a dry martini,” and “taking boating trips” (16). It is significant that during his “Convalescent-Pass,” a time devoted to the primary purpose of recovery and recuperation, in Hemingway’s case -- recovery and recuperation from his physical injuries -- Hemingway spent much of his time playing pool. Hemingway’s playing of pool while convalescing is significant because it establishes a connection, or association, between the game of pool and recovery or recuperation.<sup>5</sup>

Hemingway later discusses his time spent with Count Greppi at the Grand Hotel in a letter to the Hemingway family, dated September 29, 1918: “The second night that I was here the Old Count Grecco who will be 100 years old in March took charge of me and introduced me to about 150 people...He took me under his wing and gave me a great send off” (145). Michael Reynolds later points out that “Count Giuseppe Greppi, a chance acquaintance whom Hemingway met at Stresa in the fall of 1918, appears unchanged” in *A Farewell to Arms* “as

Count Greffi:" -- "throughout the manuscript" Hemingway left his name "spelled *Greppi*," until Scribner's later changed the name before publication (*First War* 166). Therefore, the billiard-scene in *A Farewell to Arms* between Count Greffi and Frederic Henry is based on the real-life interactions between Hemingway and Count Giuseppe Greppi.<sup>6</sup> Just as both Hemingway and Frederic Henry play pool, or more specifically billiards, while convalescing and recovering from their war-injuries, Harold Krebs also turns to the restorative rituals of pool as he arrives home from the war traumatized and broken.<sup>7</sup>

While the therapeutic patterns and healing rituals of fishing, swimming, canoeing, and playing pool helped Hemingway become strong at the broken places, he also used the rejuvenating power of sports and games throughout his works to suggest a relationship between sport and post-war healing. In "In Another Country," a short story focusing on injured soldiers in a Milan hospital during World War I, Hemingway is able to link the world of war with the healing qualities of sports and games, not only through specific sports such as football and fencing, but also through emphasizing the importance of establishing a daily routine or set of rituals after being broken in order to become strong at the broken places.

In the opening lines of "In Another Country," Hemingway links the healing qualities of sports to the destructiveness of war specifically through the game of football as he constructs a conversation between a young soldier physically wounded by the war and his doctor. As the soldier sits in a machine that attempts to bend his knee, the doctor asks, "What did you like best to do before the war? Did you practice a sport?" to which the young soldier responds, "Yes, football" (267). The doctor then responds, "You will be able to play football again better than ever .... You will play football again like a champion" (268). Not only does this passage suggest an abundance of biographical similarities between the young soldier and Hemingway himself, as

Hemingway, too, was a football player prior to the war and was also confined to a Milan hospital after injuring his knee in World War I, but more importantly, through using the term “practice,” Hemingway evokes the sense of ritual and routine that football provides while simultaneously evoking a sense of healing, emphasized by the fact that this conversation takes place as the doctor works to rehabilitate the soldier’s leg. It is through this use of the game of football that Hemingway is able to intertwine the traumatic effects of war with the restorative effects of the rituals of sport. Sports and games oftentimes in Hemingway’s texts are synonymous with healing.

In fact, after teaching “In Another Country” as a story “about the futility of cures” at Bradford College in Massachusetts for nearly eighteen years, American author and short-story writer Andre Dubus claimed that it was not until his own injury and brokenness that he truly understood Hemingway’s story (141). Dubus writes: “Two years after I retired from teaching... I was crippled in an instant when a car hit me, and I was in the hospital for nearly two months. I suffered with pain, and I thought very often of Ernest Hemingway, and how much physical pain he had suffered, and how well he had written about it” (145). Dubus, physically broken like Hemingway, recalls coming back to the story five years after his crippling to realize the story’s true meaning. Dubus recalls reading “In Another Country” for the first time since his injury to a group of young women from a woman’s shelter in the fall of 1991: “Then, because of my own five years of agony... I saw something I had never seen in the story ... and with passion and joy I looked up from the book, looked up at the girls’ faces and said: ‘this story is about healing too’” (147). Dubus continues:

“The major keeps going to the machines. And he doesn’t believe in them. But he gets out of his bed in the morning. He brushes his teeth. He shaves. He combs his hair. He puts on

his uniform. He leaves the place where he lives. He walks to the hospital, and sits at the machines. Every one of those actions is a movement away from suicide. Away from despair. Look at him. Three days after his wife has died, he is in motion. He is sad. He will not get over this. And he will get over this. His hand won't be cured but someday he will meet another woman. And he will love her. Because he is alive" (147).

For Andre Dubus, Hemingway's major, who has been broken not only physically by the injury to his hand, but more so mentally and emotionally by the random and unexpected death of his wife, is not made strong at the broken places due to the fact that he "had been a great fencer" before the war, or because he did not believe in the machines (270). For Dubus, the major is healing, or becoming strong at the broken places, through this everyday motion, this forward movement illustrated by the basic patterns and rituals within a daily routine. It is through these menial tasks, tasks such as brushing one's teeth or hair, or shaving, that one establishes a sense of routine, and through this routine comes forward momentum or progress that becomes crucial to becoming strong at the broken places.

Throughout his short stories, Hemingway incorporates sports and games to suggest this sense of forward movement toward healing. Thus sports and games in Hemingway's works are not always referenced for their rules or even the competitive nature that they provoke, but oftentimes for the sense of ritual, pattern, escape, and motion. In fact, throughout *In Our Time*, sports become synonymous with this forward progress and oftentimes suggest movement toward healing after an instance of conflict or "brokenness." This forward movement out into the world of healing, away from the inside world of conflict, can be seen through canoeing in "Indian Camp" and "The End of Something," hunting in "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife" and "The

Three-Day Blow,” skiing in “Cross-Country Snow,” fishing in “Big Two-Hearted River,” and ultimately pool in “Soldier’s Home.”

An activity that Hemingway himself turned to upon returning home from the war with physical ailments and injuries, rowing is first seen in “Indian Camp.” A young Nick Adams witnesses, for the first time in his life, the gruesomeness of childbirth while simultaneously witnessing the horrors of death through suicide. After experiencing this traumatic series of events, the young Nick and his father, Dr. Adams, escape this conflict by boat. This forward motion of the boat suggests not only the beginning of Nick’s life journey, but also his movement away from a conflicted and hard situation. As he moves away from the events that have transpired at the Indian Camp, Nick, “sitting in the stern of the boat with his father rowing...felt quite sure that he would never die” (95). Despite just witnessing death first hand, Nick, who is in motion away from despair, is not only healing from the horrific events within the shanty, but is confident that he will never die. In fact, Joseph DeFalco points out that, by sitting in “the stern,” it is implied that although his father is rowing, Nick is in control (32). Through the story’s final scene, Nick at a young age has learned the power of motion away from despair.

While much importance lies in the fact that Nick, through canoeing, is in motion, it is equally important to note that he is with his father. So often in Hemingway’s “sports-stories,” specifically those involving Nick Adams, the sport, whether rowing, fishing, or hunting, becomes a shared experienced between father and son. In sharing in the experiences, rituals, and patterns of sports with another, sports become healing in the sense that they provide a sense of community, or human-connection. Oftentimes, Hemingway’s characters, or “athletes,” who turn to the therapeutic patterns and healing rituals of sports do so with another, through that other.

Whether a protective father-figure or a friend, there is a sense of comradeship and connection that is essential to the healing process

In “The End of Something,” a somewhat older Nick Adams comes to the realization that his relationship with Marjorie “isn’t fun any more,” which leads to the young couple’s breakup (110). The act of rowing in “The End of Something,” while suggesting forward movement away from conflict and brokenness, becomes more of a metaphor for control and independence. After rowing together, as one, Nick and Marjorie break up. Marjorie, wounded and hurt by this experience, takes the rowboat and in an act of forward progress and movement towards healing, rows away, leaving Nick behind. In fact, Joseph Flora describes this scene, arguing that “she behaves with great dignity as she makes her departure,” almost as if a Hemingway Code Hero (29). Marjorie, broken, will not lose control of the situation, but instead, carries herself with dignity and grace in a difficult position. She is hurt by this seemingly random and unexpected breakup, just as the major from “In Another Country” is devastated by the random and unexpected death of his wife, but just as Dubus describes the major as in “motion,” Marjorie too is in motion. This motion is towards healing, which many other critics, like DeFalco, have pointed out is suggested by the “second-growth” of the surrounding trees, which were previously destroyed due to lumbering. Like these trees, Marjorie has been temporarily cut down and broken, but also like these trees, Marjorie will have her “second growth.” In motion, rowing away from despair, she will become strong at the broken places.

In “The Doctor and the Doctor’s Wife,” not one, but two conflicts are resolved at the conclusion of the story as the young Nick and his father, Dr. Adams, head off into the woods to go hunt squirrels together. Before journeying out into the woods with his son, Dr. Adams gets into a fight with Dick Boulton, an Ojibway American Indian, over stolen lumber, during which



Dr. Adams exclaims, “If you call me Doc once again, I’ll knock your eye teeth down your throat,” to which Dick responds, “Oh, no, you won’t, Doc” (101). Feeling wounded, embarrassed, deflated, and broken, Dr. Adams, goes inside, turning to the ritualistic act of cleaning his shotgun. However, going inside does not provide a solution or a sense of healing for Dr. Adams, but instead a second conflict. Upon entering his house, the “doctor’s wife,” Mrs. Adams, “from the room where she was lying with the blinds drawn,” asks her husband: “Aren’t you going back to work, dear?” (101). Mrs. Adams, making a jab at her husband, is referring to his medical journals, “still in their wrappers unopened” (101). This question only stirs up an argument between the two, leaving Dr. Adams once again feeling humiliated. However, the solution to this sense of brokenness comes in the story’s conclusion: “He walked in the heat out the gate and along the path into the hemlock woods. It was cool in the woods even on such a hot day” (103). After making this forward movement, leaving the dark and restricting bedroom and the conflict with his wife, Dr. Adams comes across the young Nick “sitting with his back against a tree, reading,” and tells his son, “Your mother wants you to come and see her.” Nick, perhaps recognizing his father’s broken state, responds, “I want to go with you,” leading the two men to head forward, out into the woods, to see “black squirrels” in preparation for a hunt (103). Not only is Dr. Adams in motion away from despair, but he is with his son, and they are about to experience the rituals and routines of hunting together. In fact, Paul Smith describes Nick and Dr. Adams in the story’s conclusion, “like two boyhood companions” heading “for the healing woods” (*Reader’s Guide* 63).

This image of two “boyhood companions” heading into the “healing woods” is later seen in the conclusion of “The Three-Day Blow” as well as “Cross-Country Snow.” Smith also sets the conclusion in opposition to the alternative option, which would be for Nick to “retreat into

the darkened bedroom,” illustrating backward movement (*Reader's Guide* 63). DeFalco explains that Nick rejects this retreat and instead his journey with his father is “towards experience,” as he and his father will go into the “healing” woods, for clarity and restoration. In fact, DeFalco writes, “it is into the woods that Nick is to lead the fallible father figure in order to restore him” (39). Thus through the story’s ending of father and son heading towards the “healing” and restorative woods, the story ends in recuperative motion, with Dr. Adams moving forward and away from despair.

Hunting as a healing and restorative action is also seen at the end of “The Three-Day Blow,” as Nick, after having an internal conflict while reflecting on his breakup with Marjorie, steps outside with his friend Bill to go find Bill’s father and hunt. In fact, through the story’s conclusion, “The Three-Day Blow” effectively combines Hemingway’s common use of sports and games, specifically baseball and hunting, with Dubus’ notion that movement away from despair and tragedy requires motion out of the house and that through this motion, healing is possible. Appearing directly after “The End of Something” the events in “The Three-Day Blow” take place directly after Nick and Marjorie’s breakup and illustrate Nick’s reactions and coming to terms with his severance from her. DeFalco claims that “The End of Something is “Essentially an adjustment story, it relates Nick’s coming to Bill’s cabin and talking of baseball, literature, and his affair with Marjorie” (44-45). As Nick struggles to adjust to life after his breakup, he turns to drinking and small talk, as he and Bill sit inside discussing baseball, “a game for louts,” and experiment with drinking (121).

For Nick, drinking does not work as a solution but instead further emphasizes his lonely and broken state. As Nick and Bill discuss Romantic literature such as *Forest Lovers* and *Fortitude*, Nick, becoming more and more drunk, cannot help but think about what went wrong

with Marjorie.<sup>8</sup> As the two intoxicated boys talk about love stories, Nick's feelings are brought to the forefront, as he begins to realize that his breaking up with Marjorie was out of character, a choice not made by himself but manipulated by Bill. Nick, getting water for the Scotch, "passed a mirror in the dining room and looked in it. His face looked strange....It was not his face but it didn't make any difference" (121). Nick, so affected by not only the alcohol consumption but also his breakup with Marjorie, no longer recognizes himself. This image of Nick struggling to know himself paired with the conversation between himself and Bill suggests Nick's internal struggle to come to terms with his breakup. In fact, this scene suggests that this young, drunk, and naïve Nick knows now that breaking up with Marjorie was unlike himself and was more Bill's solution than his own. Shortly after looking in the mirror, Nick, sitting in silence, listens to Bill discuss Marjorie and feels "alone." The story encapsulates Nick's internal conflict: "All he knew was that he had once had Marjorie and that he had lost her. She was gone and he had sent her away. That was all that mattered. He might never see her again. Probably he never would. It was all gone, finished." After coming to this internal realization, Nick says, "Let's have another drink" (123). In this moment, Nick is stuck in a state of despair, not moving away from the pain of his breakup with Marjorie, but instead remaining in a drunken stasis. DeFalco goes on to describe Nick and Bill's banter about baseball and literature as Nick's "turning to a number of escape mechanisms to compensate for the inner frustrations created by his severance from Marjorie" (46). The meaningless back and forth between Nick and Bill combined with the continuous drinking suggest that Nick has fallen into an unproductive cycle of brokenness and misery. Unlike the major from "In Another Country," Nick, in this moment, is not in motion. He is not moving away from despair but instead remaining motionless and stagnant.

However, shortly after Nick's episode of introspection, reflecting on his deep sense of despair over Marjorie, there is a shift. After conversation of Marjorie continues, Bill says, "Let's get really drunk." Nick, breaking the unproductive cycle of talking and drinking, replies, "Let's get really drunk and then go swimming" (124). For the first time in this story of despair, Nick is ready for movement. Although he still wants to "get really drunk," his suggestion of swimming not only implies a sense of movement through sport and activity, but more so a sense of cleansing and a new beginning. Nick is finally ready to get out of the house, move forward, away from despair, and let go of Marjorie. In essence, Nick is ready to be cleansed of Marjorie. Almost immediately after his suggestion to go swimming, Nick says, "Let's take the guns and go down to the point and look for your dad." Again, by suggesting movement outside, movement away from the drunken stasis occurring inside, Nick is prepared to begin the healing process. As opposed to sitting inside and talking about sports and games, such as baseball, Nick is ready to get up, get out, and participate in sports, specifically the sport of hunting. As Nick puts on "his Mackinaw coat and his shoes," fortifying and protecting himself from the outside world, he steps out of the house, away from despair and in motion, he reflects: "Outside now the Marge business was no longer so tragic. It was not even very important. The wind blew everything like that away" (125). It is not until Nick sets down his drink, picks up his gun, steps outside of this restrictive cabin, and sets out to hunt with Bill and Bill's father that he can break this unproductive cycle and begin the healing process. In fact, this image of Nick setting out to hunt with Bill and Bill's father is reflective of the ending of "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife," as Nick sets out into nature with the conflicted Dr. Adams. After feeling alone and isolated throughout the majority of the story, Nick is once again able to establish the sense of human connection through the sense of comradery that comes with hunting with a friend and father

figure. Not only is Nick reestablishing the sense of human connection that has been jolted from him through his breakup with Marjorie, but like the major, Nick is now in motion, moving away from despair, away from “the Marge business,” and away from the brokenness. Like so many of Hemingway’s “sports-stories,” the solution for becoming strong at the broken places is in the forward motion that sports and games can provide.

While rowing in “Indian Camp” and “The End of Something,” as well as hunting in “The Doctor and the Doctor’s Wife” and “The Three-Day Blow” serve as examples of Hemingway’s integration of sports as effective healing devices, one of his most effective implementations of sports providing forward motion is in his skiing story, “Cross-Country Snow.”<sup>9</sup> In the first story about Nick set after the war, “Cross-Country Snow,” a tale of two good friends, Nick and George, skiing together after the war, becomes a story about adaptation and maturation as Nick prepares to become a father. In fact, Flora describes “Cross-Country Snow” simply as a story about “Nick’s coming to terms with his wife’s pregnancy” (41). As the two friends ski, Nick reveals that he has been injured at war, as he tells George, “I can’t telemark with my leg” (184). However, despite being physically broken, everything in this story suggests not only motion and forward movement towards healing, but most notably Nick’s ability to adapt and mature in the face of adversity.

Because of his wartime injury, Nick is not able to “telemark,” a skiing technique in which one leg is bent at the knee and held slightly behind the other. Instead, Nick must adapt, and “Christy,” a skiing technique in which both skis are parallel to each other. Keeping in tune with Earl Rovit’s idea of the sportsman’s code, and the idea that sports, if done correctly, provide purpose and order, Nick not only adapts but masters this new technique. Olivia Carr Edenfield points out Nick’s adherence to the sportsman’s code as she asserts, “Though Nick has to modify

his moves, his form is still good, and he makes ‘a beauty’ of a stop (184), even in the deep snow that earlier had caused him to fall. Nick shows his resilience by modifying his actions to regain and maintain control” (143). Nick’s mastery of the Christy not only suggests Nick’s ability to adapt to his wartime injuries, his adherence to the sportsman’s code, and his resilience, but also holds deeper meaning as it suggests his ability to adapt to the fact that he has gotten Helen pregnant. In fact, similarly to how Marjorie demonstrates control over an unexpected situation as she takes the boat in “The End of Something,” Nick’s ability to adapt and conquer a new skiing technique demonstrates his control over Helen’s unexpected pregnancy. Edenfield supports this idea through her claim that “Nick will regain control of his life by accepting responsibility for the outcome of his desire,” Helen’s unexpected pregnancy, in the same way that he “regains control of his skis by accepting the limitations imposed by his knee” (143). Just as Nick demonstrates his ability to adapt to a new style of skiing, the new technique that he masters, the Christy, also implies that Nick has accepted the consequences of his passionate actions.

The parallel motion of the “Christy,” in which the two skis move side-by-side, is significant. The Christy, when paired with Hemingway’s description that Nick, “keeping his knees locked tight together and turning around to the right in a smother of snow brought his skis sharply around to the right in a smother of snow and slowed into a loss of speed parallel to the hillside and the wire fence,” suggests Nick’s new viewpoint on his relationship with Helen; he is now parallel to Helen, they will have equal responsibility in raising this child (184). Nick has not only modified his moves, but more importantly mastered a technique which reflects the unity of his relationship with Helen. Thus Nick’s transition from skiing a telemark to a Christy not only highlights his ability to adapt to his wartime injury through the motion of the sport of skiing, but

more importantly reflects his new, more mature viewpoint on life as well as his control over his future.

While Nick's maturation is reflected through his adapted skiing style, it is also made evident through George's lack of maturation and inability to adapt. While Nick has begun to envision his future with Helen, his role as a father, and his new family, George is stuck in the past, unable to accept the fact that his friend is growing up. After skiing, the two men come inside to eat, and George, after noticing the pregnant waitress, says, "Don't you wish we could just bum together? Take our skis and go on the train to where there was good running and then go on and put up at pubs .... and not give a damn about school or anything" (186). George, still immature and wanting a world in which he can resort to his boyish ways, does not want to give a damn about "anything," whereas Nick, preparing for the responsibility of fatherhood, gives a damn about a lot, specifically Helen and the baby. As George comes to the realization that their immature days of skiing and drinking are over, he confronts the situation, asking Nick, "Is Helen going to have a baby?" to which Nick responds, "Yes." George then asks Nick, "Are you glad?" to which Nick responds, "Yes. Now" (187). Nick's response, specifically the use of the word "now," once again suggests his ability to adapt to and adjust to adversity as Nick implies that there may have been a time when he was not "glad" about the pregnancy. Nick's response is natural. In fact, Flora states that at its root, "Cross-Country Snow" is "about responsibility," pointing out that "responsibility is not necessarily something every person accepts immediately," as seen through Nick's answer (42). However, while he may not have accepted responsibility immediately, Nick has adapted and ultimately accepted this responsibility. George's reaction, however, suggests the opposite as he once again reveals his immaturity by sitting in silence, looking at the "empty bottles and the empty glasses" before asking, "It's hell, isn't it?" (187).

Flora focuses on Hemingway's description of George, sitting in silence, looking at the empty vessels, and asserts, "For George, not Nick, the empty bottle is a measure of Nick's new life" (42). George, unable to adapt, adjust, or even accept the fact that his friend has matured and is moving on with his life, cannot imagine this life that Nick is so "glad" about. To George, life with a wife and a child would be "hell." Nick responds, "No. Not exactly," once again confirming his newfound maturity and acceptance of responsibility. In fact, in looking at Nick's response, Flora claims, "Nick specifically denies George's interpretation. Fatherhood is also something to look forward to. In looking at the empty bottle, George may begin to ponder the reality of his own life" (42). The reality of George's life and his interpretation of the empty bottle and glasses not only highlight his immaturity, but in contrast with Nick's views, further emphasize Nick's maturity.

At the conclusion, Nick, prepared to take on the tasks of adulthood, is ready to move forward: "Nick stood up. He buckled his wind jacket tight. He leaned over George and picked up the two ski poles from against the wall" (188). Bracing himself for the cold, and also for his new life filled with responsibilities, Nick is in motion, moving on, but more importantly moving forward. Despite being physically broken by the war, Nick has adapted and is in control of his life, his happiness, and his future. Flora discusses both the story's ending and Hemingway's masterful use of skiing as he states: "The final image is the skiing, not just for its exhilaration, but for the control that Hemingway has been careful to associate with it. Nick appears to have an impressive degree of control over his life as the story concludes" (43). Ultimately, the sport of skiing suggests not only a sense of healing through the rituals and routines that produce forward motion, but most notably Nick's transformation and maturation from the young boy who left Marjorie because it wasn't "fun" anymore to the grown man who has accepted the role of



fatherhood, embraced the responsibilities of having a family, and is in control of his future. In the final lines, as they “opened the door and went out,” heading back out to ski, these two boys, in two very different stages of life, are making forward progress; and similarly to the endings of “The Doctor and the Doctor’s Wife” and “The Three-Day Blow,” they are headed into the “healing” woods to participate in a sport together, this time skiing (188).

In the final story of *In Our Time*, “Big Two-Hearted River,” Hemingway’s use of sports and games comes full circle as he perfectly exhibits the healing and restorative qualities of sport through fishing. Returning home from the war, Nick is broken, both physically from his leg injury and psychologically from his experiences. In an attempt to become strong at the broken places, Nick turns to the therapeutic patterns and healing rituals that govern fishing. After returning from the chaotic world of war, Nick, keeping in tune with Rovit’s notion of the sportsman’s code, searches for order by embracing each and every detail of the fishing process, from the careful construction of his camp, to the meticulous manner in which he cooks his dinner, and ultimately through his ritualistic motions of the sport of fishing itself. Nick’s adherence to each and every one of these details reflects his attempt to regain the sense of control that the war has taken from him. Just as skiing will later provide Nick with a sense of direction through control, fishing provides a restoration of order upon his arrival home from war. In fact, Flora states, “‘Big Two-Hearted River’ is nothing if it is not a longing for, a search for order,” continuing that “Nick’s fishing, as readers have long noted, contains many elements of the ritualistic” (51). Each and every one of these rituals helps Nick attempt to become strong at the broken places.

While fishing, through its abundance of patterns and rituals, provides a sense of order and control for Nick, fishing is perhaps most important in Nick’s post-war recovery process because

it sets him in motion. Reflecting on Dubus' reading of "In Another Country," Nick's ability to get up each day and fish the right way is forward progress away from the despair and misery of war. Because he is in motion, he is healing. In fact, similarly to the younger Nick of "The Three-Day Blow," this outside activity of fishing, like hunting, provides an escape from the internal and psychological struggles and conflicts. In "The Three-Day Blow," Nick, drunk and stuck inside Bill's cabin, becomes frantic with thoughts of his breakup with Marjorie and the devastation and brokenness which it has caused. It is not until he steps outside, both literally as well as figuratively stepping outside of his own head, that Nick, in motion, is able to forget about the "Marge business" and move forward. Similarly, in "Big Two-Hearted River," when Nick is still, or even confined to his tent, he becomes frantic with thoughts of the tragic events of the war. Crawling into his tent, Nick begins to think: "This was different though. Now things were done. There had been this to do. Now it was done. It had been a hard trip. He was very tired. That was done. He had made his camp. He was settled. Nothing could touch him..." before crawling out of his tent (215). Through using short, choppy, sentences, Hemingway establishes not only Nick's frantic thoughts about the war and about the state of brokenness, but illustrates Nick's desperate attempt at minimizing and controlling these thoughts. It is not until Nick crawls out of the tent and begins going through the motions of making dinner that he is restored and able to move forward.

While many critics and readers have discussed the significance of the healing effects of fishing in "Big Two-Hearted River," equally significant, yet often ignored, are the healing effects of the game of pool in "Soldier's Home."<sup>10</sup> While "Soldier's Home" is often neglected as one of Hemingway's "sports-stories," it uses sports and games, specifically the game of pool, in the same way that so many of Hemingway's more recognizable "sports-stories," such as "Big Two-

Hearted River,” use sports and games. Pool in “Soldier’s Home,” like fishing in “Big Two-Hearted River,” is made routine and suggests motion. For Harold Krebs, the game of pool not only sets him in motion while simultaneously providing a restored sense of pattern and ritual after the war, but also provides him with an escape and a sense of community. Just as fishing in “Big Two-Hearted River” offers an abundance of therapeutic patterns and healing rituals, motion or movement away from despair, and a sense of order and control, so does pool in “Soldier’s Home.”

### THE GAME OF POOL IN "SOLDIER'S HOME"

In "Soldier's Home," Hemingway recounts the semi-autobiographic story of WWI soldier Harold Krebs as he returns home to Oklahoma after participating in some of the war's bloodiest and most devastating battles. Traumatized and broken by the war, Krebs attempts to regain the sense of order provided by the rituals, routines, and patterns that governed his life prior to the war. In attempting to reestablish these patterns and become strong at the broken places similarly to Nick Adams, who returns home from war in "Big Two-Hearted River" and turns to fishing, Krebs turns to the game of pool. Not only does Krebs visit the pool room each day, implementing it into the pattern of his daily routine, but also the pool room provides him with an escape, a safe environment detached from the horrors of the war. As well as providing him with a daily routine and a safe environment, the game of pool itself, filled with mathematical patterns and routines, suggests the healing rituals of sports and games. The game of pool then becomes a way in which Harold Krebs attempts to recreate the sense of structure, order, pattern, and routine central to his life before the war. In fact, Robert Lewis claims that Hemingway "did turn naturally and effectively to sport as a subject and then found in it both metaphor and ritual for a life and a world that had lost the old rituals" (171). For Krebs, the rituals and patterns that govern the game of pool, as well as the implementation of pool into his daily routine, provide a new sense of ritual in a world that has lost so many "old rituals." Understanding the abundance of pattern and structure in Krebs's life prior to the war highlights the importance of his desire to regain it after the war.

From the opening lines of "Soldier's Home," which read, "Krebs went to the war from a Methodist college in Kansas. There is a picture which shows him among his fraternity brothers, all of them wearing exactly the same height and style collar," the abundance of pattern and

structure in Krebs's life before the war becomes clear (145). In fact, Lewis notes that "even Krebs' former school, a *Methodist* college, connotes the order or pattern" in Krebs's life before enlisting in the Marines (175). Beginning the story with a reference not only to Krebs's former school, a Methodist college, but his involvement in a fraternity is crucial to setting up the pattern that was prominent in Krebs's life before the war. Interestingly, archival research reveals that in Hemingway's first two drafts of "Soldier's Home," the introduction held no mention of a Methodist college or a fraternity. In his third draft however, Hemingway began the story by writing, "Krebs had gone through high school and five years of college in a Methodist college when the United States declared war in April 1917," but then crossed out this line. Hemingway's multiple revisions to the introduction of "Soldier's Home" suggest the importance of the final draft's mention of both a Methodist college and a fraternity. Both of these carefully worded details hold major importance in understanding the "old rituals" in Krebs's life before going to war. Hemingway later emphasizes the importance of Krebs's need for pattern when he writes, "They were such a nice pattern. He liked the pattern. It was exciting" (148). However, Hemingway only added the line "It was exciting" in his final draft of the story. This addition of the line "It was exciting" further emphasizes the importance of pattern in Krebs' life not only before going to war, but more importantly upon his return home from war, for it is through his desperate search for patterns that Krebs begins to become strong at the broken places.

Lewis supports this claim when he asserts, "The war has wrenched him free from *methodism* of all kinds," illustrating Krebs's lack of pattern and order after returning home from the war (175). In fact, Paul Smith describes "Soldier's Home" as a "discursive portrait of the veteran Harold Krebs, recounting his service... but much more of his troubled attempts to return to the routines and values of life at home" (*The Trying-out* 39). Smith continues by stating that

Krebs's only "recourse" after the war "lies in his dispassionate observation of pattern," the same patterns found in "the photograph of himself 'among his fraternity brothers,'" but most importantly, in "those patterns that govern sports" (*The Trying-out* 40-41). While minor references to sports run throughout "Soldier's Home," such as Krebs' reading of the *Kansas City Star's* "sporting page," or his attendance of his younger sister Helen's indoor baseball game at the story's conclusion, pool becomes the central "sport" included in this "unsporting" story.

Through Hemingway's emphasis on the daily routines of soldiers after the war, "Soldier's Home," like "In Another Country," becomes a story about healing. Just as getting up each day, leaving his home, and partaking in menial tasks and daily routines has set the major from "In Another Country" "in motion" and therefore "away from despair," according to Andre Dubus, Krebs, through his newfound daily routines is also in motion away from despair. However, the effectiveness of "Soldier's Home," and perhaps what makes it one of the best examples of Hemingway's "sports-stories," is not only in the fact that Hemingway provides multiple descriptions of Harold Krebs' newfound daily routine, but more so in the fact that implemented into Krebs' this daily routine, Hemingway includes the therapeutic patterns and healing rituals of sports and games, both in Krebs' playing of pool each day and of his reading of the "sporting page" each morning.

Twice in "Soldier's Home," Hemingway lists elements of Krebs' daily routine, each time including a reference to sports. In his first description of Krebs' new habits upon returning home from the war, Hemingway writes:

During this time, it was late summer, he was sleeping late in bed, getting up to walk down town to the library to get a book, eating lunch at home, reading on the front porch

until he became bored and then walking down through the town to spend the hottest hours of the day in the cool dark of the pool room. He loved to play pool. (146)

Here, not only has Krebs established a daily routine, one which surpasses the menial tasks of washing and shaving as he, like the major, “leaves the place where he lives,” but he, like both Hemingway and Frederic Henry, engages in the game of pool after the war. This implementation of pool into Krebs’ day becomes a major factor in understanding how Hemingway uses the therapeutic patterns and healing rituals of sports and games, specifically the game of pool, as a solution to becoming strong at the broken places. Just as the major from “In Another Country” gets up each day and, “carrying himself straight and soldierly,” goes to the hospital in order to be healed not by the machines, but by the process of getting up each day and moving forward, Krebs, in getting up each day and going into town to connect with other people and play pool begins his healing process (272).

While his specific selection of the game of pool seemingly holds much significance, similarly to his multiple revisions to the story’s introduction, Hemingway also tinkered with the details of Krebs’ daily routine, including the emphasis on the game of pool. In his first draft of “Soldier’s Home,” Hemingway’s only mention of pool in Krebs’ daily activities was when he wrote that Krebs got up “to walk down town to the library to get a book, dropping in at the pool room.” By elaborating on the idea of pool as something that Krebs does each and every day, especially through the line “He loved to play pool,” Hemingway highlights the value that both pool and the pool room provide Krebs as he attempts to regain ritual and routine. Aside from being part of his daily routine, pool and his daily trip to the pool room provide Krebs with a place to go amidst the feeling of being alienated by his community.

In regards to his morning routine, Hemingway includes a second integration of sports and daily routines as he introduces a scene in which Krebs' mother calls him downstairs for breakfast. Krebs "could hear her frying something downstairs while he washed, shaved and dressed to go into the dining room for breakfast. While he was eating breakfast his sister brought in the mail." Like the major, Krebs, who is also broken by the war, gets out of bed each day, washes, shaves, gets dressed, and is in motion. As his sister "handed him *The Kansas City Star*," Hemingway writes that Krebs, "shucked off its brown paper wrapper and opened it to the sporting page. He folded *The Star* open and propped it against the water pitcher with his cereal dish to steady it, so he could read while he ate" (149). Here, not only does Krebs engage in the menial tasks that propel him to get out of bed and start his day, tasks which Dubus would describe as movements "away from despair," movements such as washing or shaving, but the ritualized manner in which Krebs specifically folds and props up the paper suggests a deeper and more intricate sense of routine. While there is significance in the fact that Krebs seems to have established a sense of ritual and routine, a major process in healing for both Hemingway and his broken characters, there is more significance in the fact that Krebs eagerly "shucks" off the paper and flips to the "sporting page." In automatically flipping to the sporting page, Krebs avoids current events, politics, and news of the war. By reading only the sporting page, Krebs maintains a sense of control over his life, control that he did not have while at war, by choosing not to read about chaotic and unpredictable world, or war, but instead to look at the stories, numbers, and statistics, on the sporting page. Ultimately, Krebs's choice to read the "sporting page" coincides with his desire for the pattern that sports and games provide as well as his desire for routine, as depicted in reading the morning paper at breakfast.



Ruben De Baerdemaeker points out that Krebs' "desire for regularity becomes apparent" through his pastimes. De Baerdemaeker claims, "For one thing, "He loved to play pool" —an activity harmless enough in its own right, but one that heavily relies on geometrical abstractions." De Baerdemaeker continues, stating, "Billiards demands the construction of an abstract mathematical pattern from the actual position of balls on the table" (62). De Baerdemaeker's analysis furthers the idea of pool as part of Krebs's daily routine yet also highlights the sense of pattern that the game provides, specifically through its mathematical patterns. In fact, according to Rovit's analysis of Hemingway's sportsman's code, Krebs' playing of pool each day brings forth a sense of order into his life, as Rovit claims that the rules which govern each particular sport not only provide the sport, or game, with a purpose and a challenge, but also a sense of order. Thus by playing the game of pool and following the rules of the game, Krebs is bringing a sense of order back into his life.

Interestingly, De Baerdemaeker continues his analysis, presenting the idea that the actual pool table itself works to suggest a safe environment for Krebs in which he is in control, where he does not have to lie or falsify tales from his experience at war. "The pool table may be seen as a symbol," noting that the game is "safely confined to a non-permeable frame (even quite literally); one ball causes another to move in a mathematically predictable direction, but its course will be stopped by the frame of the pool table and not prove of any consequence outside." Just as the pool table provides a safe space for the pool balls, the pool room itself works as a safe space for Krebs, free of the consequences, lies, and false tales of the outside world. De Baerdemaeker furthers this idea: "Krebs therefore resolves to stay away from intersubjectivity and chaos, and lives in a world of rational abstraction limited to predictable outcomes" (64). Lewis, in his analysis of Hemingway's therapeutic use of sports and games, supports this notion

as he claims, “The order and form of sports, then, could be a paradigm of what the other, ‘real’ world should be like, but the gap between the controlled, clean game and chaotic, dirty life is unspannable,” before concluding, “Thus, one alternative is to use sport as therapy, to turn to it as a haven when the chaos of life is unbearable” (174). Ultimately, the game of pool, then, provides a sense of control over the somewhat predictable outcome of striking a pool ball on a pool table, as well as a haven from the unbearable chaos of life.

While pool itself is a game of what De Baerdemaeker refers to as “mathematical patterns,” the game itself holds much more significance in terms of suggesting a sense of healing within Krebs. Pool, like war, can be chaotic. It is a strategic and also intimate game in which each move is not only unexpected, but changes the outcome of the next move. Every move affects each player, or “athlete,” playing the game. However, unlike war, pool allows for a sense of predictability. According to Rovit’s analysis of Hemingway’s sportsman’s code, the code “functions as a pragmatic program for prediction within the area defined by the rules.” As a result, “the player knows in advance what is expected of him in the game he is to play” (108). Unlike war, Krebs knows what to expect each day when he goes to the pool room. No matter how chaotic or intense the game may get, there are rules that not only confine the chaos, but also allow for a sense of predictability.

Similarly, within the game of pool, unlike the world of war, chaos is confined and controlled and occur only within the limits and perimeters of the pool-table. Similarly to how Krebs, in his morning routine turns not to the current events or world news in *The Star*, but instead to the “sporting page,” playing pool gives Krebs a sense of control. In fact, this is also suggested in Krebs’ post-war reading patterns:

He sat there on the porch reading a book on the war. It was a history and he was reading about all the engagements he had been in. It was the most interesting reading he had ever done. He wished there were more maps. He looked forward with a good feeling to reading the really good histories when they would come out with good detail maps. (148)

Maps not only provide the impression of a pattern, but also they bring a sense of order to the chaotic world of war. Like the pool-table itself, maps create borders and limitations to the madness and realities of what has occurred within those borders. Just as the conflict of pool-balls bouncing around a pool-table are confined and controlled by the physical parameters and borders of the table, the conflicts of war are confined and controlled by the physical parameters of maps. Krebs prefers the histories with “good detail maps” in the same way that he prefers to read the “sporting page,” because it provides him a sense of control over the horrifying atrocities that have broken him during the war.

Upon returning home, Krebs’s first attempt to cope with his tormented memories of the war is to talk about them. However, he found that no one listened or “wanted to talk about it,” further alienating Krebs from his community. Krebs, returning home in the summer of 1919 with the second division, had missed the hero’s welcome, and by the time he had returned home, ready to tell his tales, his community was no longer interested. Leo Gurko supports this claim: “Krebs returns from the war later than the other veterans, to discover that civilians are now fed up with war heroes” (181-182). Desperate for human connection, Krebs “found that to be listened to at all he had to lie” (145). However, despite his lies and his “attributing to himself things other men had seen, done or heard of,” some listeners were left unimpressed (146). In a desperate attempt to connect to his community, a community that has already heard of the horrors and tragedies of war, Krebs further alienates himself by lying. Robert Paul Lamb

discusses “Soldier’s Home,” it’s “theme of veteran’s alienation,” and Krebs’s urge to lie to his community by breaking the text down into a series of sections (99). Lamb claims that Krebs’s “wartime experiences, both good and bad... have in some way incapacitated him” by making him feel “alienated from the homefront” (95). Upon returning home Krebs’s community does not help to repair this sense of alienation but instead intensifies it.

In what he calls the “second section,” Lamb looks specifically at the community and suggests that “the townspeople’s failure to understand him produced this alienation,” which forces Krebs to “lie to the insensitive townspeople about his wartime experiences by attributing to himself the experiences of other soldiers” (99). Lying then further distances Krebs from his town. In further distancing himself through lies that make him physically nauseous, Krebs is further alienating himself from the community, or human connection. However, Hemingway writes, “even his lies were not sensational in the pool room” and that those listening to his lies in the pool room “were not thrilled by his stories” (146). Thus the first reference of pool in “Soldier’s Home” is in reference to the people who did not care to hear Krebs’s lies.

Smith suggests that “Krebs’s condition” upon returning home from war was “certainly not unusual,” but “rather, almost epidemic among those who came of cannon-fodder age in 1914, and in the generations since then” (*Reader’s Guide* 41). In essence, Krebs’s sense of alienation, as well as his quest for structure, pattern, and human connection would not have been unique to him, but instead common among many young soldiers returning home from the war at this time. Smith references Malcolm Cowley’s idea that Krebs’ generation had a “colossal indifference toward the social morality that valorized war” and that this indifference instilled what he says, “might be called the *spectatorial* attitude.” Smith responds to Cowley’s ideas by noting that, “*spectatorial*” is “the perfect term, for the common meaning of a ‘spectator’ is someone

watching a game” (*Reader’s Guide* 41). Because Krebs was a member of the generation that had been coined “indifferent,” or had what Cowley called a “*spectatorial* attitude,” he would have been expected to fall into the role of a spectator. However, in what Lamb refers to as “the third section,” which “focuses on Krebs’s daily activities,” Hemingway contradicts this as he portrays Krebs not as a spectator, but instead as a player. In describing Krebs’s daily routine, Hemingway writes, “he loved to play pool” (146). Krebs is not simply watching the game; therefore, he is not a spectator. By not only playing pool but also loving it, Krebs breaks down the stereotypical image of an indifferent spectator that was associated with his generation at the time. Despite seeming like an indifferent spectator in many other aspects of his life, pool provides Krebs with the opportunity to be a player.

The pool room, unlike the community outside of it, is not a place that requires Krebs to lie or to reflect on the awful memories from his time at war but instead a place to focus on the truth and to regain human connection. In fact, in becoming a safe place that promotes truth, the pool room separates itself from the outside community of insensitive townspeople who further alienate Krebs by promoting lies, and instead becomes a new community to which Krebs belongs. This new community then provides Krebs with a sense of belonging, structure, and pattern that he had prior to the war. This newfound sense of community reflects his attendance of a Methodist college, or what Lamb refers to as “a denominational educational institution,” as well as his involvement in a fraternity, or what Lamb calls a “male social organization” (94). For the first time since returning home from the war, Krebs gets a glimpse of the pattern that was central to his life before the war while simultaneously being included in a community-based structure similar to the types of communities he was a part of before the war.

Similarly to the pool table, the pool room itself provides a safe environment. Just as the borders of the pool table provide a barrier which ultimately confines the chaos that occurs within the table, the borders of the pool room itself place a barrier between Krebs and the chaos of the outside world, a world obsessed with the war. Similarly to De Baerdemaeker's assertion that within the pool table, the game is "safely confined to a non-permeable frame (even quite literally); one ball causes another to move in a mathematically predictable direction, but its course will be stopped by the frame of the pool table and not prove of any consequence outside," the same can be said about the pool room itself. The pool room becomes a safe-space for Krebs, free of the outside consequences of war. Within the pool room, abstractions are limited, and rules allow for a sense of predictability and dependability that Krebs is so desperately searching for. In allowing him once again to connect with people, the pool room becomes synonymous with healing. Interestingly enough, Hemingway's description that Krebs spent "the hottest hours of the day in the cool dark of the pool room" mirror his earlier description in "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife," in which Dr. Adams, heading into what Paul Smith refers to as the "healing woods" to hunt, reflects, "It was cool in the woods even on such a hot day" (103). In both instances, this "cool" place provides not only a sense of protection from the heat, but ultimately suggests a healing environment. In fact, the pool room, by definition, references the story's title as it becomes a "soldiers' home." According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the term "soldiers' home," by basic definition is "a place of stay for soldiers." However, the term's origin came from a letter from Elizabeth Gaskell, in which she describes a "soldiers' home" as a recreation room, where soldiers "can read, play games," and "write letters." Thus, not only does the room itself literally become a soldiers' home, but it also reflects a sense of healing as soldiers during and after the war would visit a "soldiers' home" in the same way they would visit a

hospital, for rest and rehabilitation. Thus, by playing games in a “soldiers’ home,” soldiers worked to rehabilitate themselves just as Krebs seeks to rehabilitate himself by playing pool in the pool room each day.

While the game of pool is seemingly unsporting, it fits into the traditional use of sports throughout the Hemingway canon in that it naturally and effectively links the world of war to the world of sport. In creating an established routine for the athlete who plays it -- in the case of “Soldier’s Home” Harold Krebs -- pool provides the meaningful patterns that are key for rediscovering new rituals in a world that has lost all the old rituals. When paired with the knowledge that Hemingway not only wrote stories in which the healing rituals of sports were restorative, but he himself turned to the rehabilitative qualities that sports provide, the game of pool in “Soldier’s Home” becomes much more significant. The game of pool and the community which the pool room provides, then becomes for the broken soldier back at the home front the solution to becoming strong at the broken places. In using the game of pool to help reveal a deeper insight into the life and condition of Harold Krebs, Hemingway cements “Soldier’s Home,” a seemingly unsporting story, as one of what Carols Baker calls his cathartic and thereby classic “sports stories.”

## CONCLUSION

“Soldier’s Home” concludes with Krebs’ family attempting, and failing, to provide a solution for him to become strong at the broken places. Krebs’ father does not understand what is wrong with his son and believes that Krebs, like other boys in town who have come home from the war, needs simply to get a job and get married. Krebs’ father’s inability to understand and connect with his son is illustrated through his absence, for each time Krebs’ father is referenced, it is through Krebs’ mother who is oftentimes speaking on behalf of her husband. In his only attempt to reach out to his son, and what he believes to be a solution for Krebs to return to the way he was before the war, Krebs’ father offers his son the use his car in the evenings. Krebs’ mother explains, “Your father has felt for some time that you should be able to take the car out in the evenings” (149). For Krebs’ father, taking the car out implies going on dates and meeting girls, two things that Krebs repeatedly claims are “not worth it” (148). Aside from meeting a nice girl, Krebs’ father believes that “taking the car out” is the solution to all of his problems, that if he were to take the car out in the evenings, perhaps he would be more like “Charley Simmons,” whom Krebs’ mother reminds him “is just your age, has a good job and is going to be married” (151). At no point in the story does Krebs’ father try to reach out to him, to connect with him, or to understand him, instead, Krebs’ mother, explains, “Your father is worried too .... He thinks you have lost your ambition, that you haven’t got a definite aim in life” (151). As opposed to talking to his son himself and working to understand his son’s trauma, Krebs’ father has his wife speak for him and offers useless solutions such as the keys to his car.

While Krebs’ mother desperately attempts to reach out to her son, she, like Krebs’ father, does not have an understanding of her son’s brokenness, and therefore, cannot provide an appropriate solution. Krebs’ mother lacks perspective, suggested as she takes off her glasses,



tools used to magnify and clarify, before reaching out to her son (150). She believes that the solution for Krebs is in his faith, as she reminds him that “We are all of us in His Kingdom.” Krebs, having been to war and having seen nothing reflecting “His Kingdom,” immediately rejects this solution, as Hemingway describes that “Krebs felt embarrassed and resentful” (151). Similarly to Krebs’ feeling of nausea when forced to talk or lie about the war to members of the community, Krebs cannot connect with his mother. Krebs does not want to feel resentment toward his mother or God, but the young veteran has seen and experienced so many horrors that his mother can never fathom, and he is unable to connect with her. Only in the pool room is Krebs able to establish an authentic sense of human connection through comradery and competition.

At the conclusion of the story, Krebs rejects the solutions offered by his mother and father. After his mother prays for him, he kisses her on the lips and then leaves the house, reflecting, “He had tried so hard to keep his life from being complicated” (152). His mother, who has encouraged him to turn to his faith, has only further complicated things by forcing him to lie, just like the community which has alienated him. Krebs, stepping out into the world, decides, “He would not go down to his father’s office. He would miss that one” (153). Rejecting his father, who has only offered his son keys to his car and suggestions of work and marriage, Krebs heads elsewhere, reflecting, “He wanted his life to go smoothly. It had just gotten going that way” (153). The fact that his life has just “gotten going” smoothly implies that Krebs has already begun to establish solutions to his problems, solutions such as going each day to the pool room to play that game that he loves.

While Krebs rejects the useless solutions provided by his parents, his final action illustrates what he ultimately accepts as a solution: “Well, that was over now anyway. He would

go over to the schoolyard and watch Helen play indoor baseball” (153). Krebs rejects his mother’s solution of prayer and faith, and instead lies to her, an act that he has already expressed that he hates. Krebs, knowing that his father also lacks understating of a realistic solution, rejects his father’s wish to see him as he decides he “would miss that one.” In fact, Leo Gurko perfectly describes Krebs’ rejection of these possible solutions: “His parents, devout Methodists, want him to get a job, but work does not interest him. His mother wants him to pray, but he cannot; she wants him to love her, but he finds this hard to do” (182). Krebs’ parents do not provide their son with effective solutions for becoming strong at the broken places. However, the one solution that he does not reject is in watching his “best sister,” Helen, play “indoor baseball.” Helen, who asks “Will you come over and watch me play indoor?” provides the ultimate solution for Krebs to become strong at the broken places (150). Krebs, in his final actions, accepts this proposal as he “would go over to the schoolyard and watch Helen play indoor baseball” (153). Similarly to how going to the pool room each day and playing pool suggests forward movement, healing, and human connection, watching his sister, whom he loves unconditionally, play indoor baseball is a movement towards healing that provides him with, finally, an authentic form of human connection.

Krebs’ acceptance of Helen’s solution perfectly cements “Soldier’s Home” as one of Hemingway’s most effective “sports-stories.” In the story’s conclusion, Krebs, like the major from Hemingway’s “In Another Country,” is in motion. He, like the major, “went out of the house” and is in motion away from despair and towards healing. While Krebs’ movement out of the house is important in his healing process, it is more notable that like so many of the “sports-stories” throughout *In Our Time*, Krebs’ movement and motion is towards a sport or game. While the game of pool has provided Krebs motion throughout the story, it is indoor baseball

that provides a healing and restorative motion in the conclusion of the story. Krebs' final movement out of the confinement of his home and out into the world to watch his sister play indoor baseball reflects Dr. Adams' final movement toward the woods to hunt with his son at the end of "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife," Marjorie's forward motion of rowing away from her tragic and unexpected breakup with Nick in "The End of Something," Nick's stepping outside of Bill's restrictive cabin to hunt in the conclusion of "The Three-Day Blow," and even Nick's buckling up of his jacket as he heads outside to ski with George for one last time in "Cross-Country Snow." Each of these stories ends not only with the conflicted character, or "athlete," in motion, but more importantly in motion toward the healing and restorative rituals of sports and games. Harold Krebs -- because he is in motion, because he is with another, his sister Helen, and because he is going to watch the game of baseball -- will become strong at the broken places.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Carlos Baker elaborates on Theodore Brumback's influence on Hemingway's interest in the Red Cross. Baker also points out that Brumback, "who had begun work at the Star a month after Ernest's arrival," was a "dark-haired boy of twenty-two whose most striking feature was a glass eye" (36). Like Hemingway, Brumback's eye issues meant that he was also unable to enlist, making the Red Cross ambulance corps that much more appealing.

<sup>2</sup> Scriptotherapy is best defined as healing by writing. Like the "talking cure," scriptotherapy works by bringing suppressed memories and events to the surface, writing about them, thus beginning the healing process. Frederic Henry employs scriptotherapy as the events of *A Farewell to Arms* are set in retrospect, ten years before the writing of the events begins. In writing out the horrible events that occurred ten years prior, Henry is healing.

<sup>3</sup> While many critics have discussed *The Sun Also Rises* as a novel depicting Jake Barnes' journey towards Catholicism, H.R. Stoneback, in his *Reading Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises*, provides an in-depth analysis as to the centrality of Catholicism in the novel as he breaks down Barnes' religious pilgrimage.

<sup>4</sup> In fact, years after this initial *New York Times* review of *In Our Time* called "Preludes a Mood," Michael Reynolds discusses this use of the term "athletic" by the *Times* critic. Reynolds claims that the "anonymous critic called his short stories 'lean, pleasing, with tough resilience,' 'fibrous,' 'athletic,' 'fresh,' 'hard,' and 'clean,' almost as if an athlete, not a book, was being reviewed" (1).

<sup>5</sup> While Hemingway himself turned to the healing rituals of pool on his Convalescent- Pass to Stresa, Italy, he also played pool throughout his lifetime. In fact, in a letter to Archibald

MacLeish shortly after the publication of *In Our Time*, Hemingway writes: “Hadley won 4 straight games of the local form of Kelly pool from the hotel owner... I used to give her 200 points at Billiards – shooting 400. Now she beats me at evens. I have come like manna to the local pool players” (448-49).

<sup>6</sup>This infamous scene comes in Chapter 35 of *A Farewell to Arms* as Count Greppi and Frederic Henry, “concentrated on the game,” play beautiful game of billiards (225).

<sup>7</sup>In his book *A Farewell to Arms: The War of the Words*, Robert Lewis provides an in-depth analysis of Hemingway’s use of sports and games throughout *A Farewell to Arms* in his chapters, “Games: But Still a Hitter” and “The Game of Love.” In these chapters, Lewis analyzes not only pool and billiards but also other “games” referenced in the novel such as bridge and chess.

<sup>8</sup>Joseph DeFalco offers a closer look and interesting analysis of the significance of the literary works which Nick and Bill discuss inside Bill’s cabin in his *The Hero in Hemingway’s Short Stories*. Paul Smith also elaborates and notes interesting details of Hemingway’s literary selections in his *A Reader’s Guide to the Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*.

<sup>9</sup>Hemingway refers to “Cross-Country Snow” as a “ski-ing story” in a September, 1924 letter to Edward O’Brien (154). Referring to his stories not by name but by their sport suggests the significance of sports in Hemingway’s works.

<sup>10</sup>Many critics have discussed the significance of fishing in “Big Two-Hearted River,” Paul Smith, in his chapter on the story in his *A Reader’s Guide to the Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*, provides a through analysis.

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