

UNIVERZITA KARLOVA

Filozofická fakulta

Ústav anglofonních literatur a kultur

BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

Forms of Alienation and Loss in Hemingway's Texts

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May 2021, Prague

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V Praze dne 29.5.2021

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Prague, date: 29.5.2021

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Abstrakt

Dvacáté století byla jedno z nejbouřlivějších období v lidské historii. Rychle se odehrávající změny, inovace a pokrok, spolu s násilnými konflikty jako první světová válka přispěli k zničení mnoha iluzí a poznamenali budoucí generace. Rozdíl mezi novým a starým světem se stal nepřekonatelným, protože staré představy byly zničeny na bojištích v Belgii a Itálii. Příslušníkem takto poznamenané generace byl také jeden z nejdůležitějších a nejúspěšnějších amerických spisovatelů Ernest Hemingway. Hemingway, jež byl literárním velikánem 20. století, reflektuje ve své tvorbě svou dobu, je plná ztráty a smutku, který museli příslušníci válečné generace prožít. Velké množství jeho románů a povídek se zabývá stavem světa a jak najít své místo ve světě, jakým způsobem se vyrovnat s tím, co se stalo a s tím, co ještě bude. Dále ve svých textech analyzuje vztahy mezi přáteli, mezi muži a ženami, mezi jedincem a společností, hledajíc odpovědi na základní otázky provázející lidstvo již od nepaměti. Jakým způsobem člověk nalezne a vytvoří své místo ve světě? Jak vypadá láska a jak funguje milenecký vztah? Jaký je smysl života? Jak se vyrovnat se ztrátou a utrpením?

Ve svých dílech Hemingway zachycuje své hrdiny v různých životních situacích a událostech, ale mnoho z nich sdílí společnou zkušenost, jako hrdinové příběhů analyzovaní v této bakalářské práci. Tato práce se zabývá formami ztráty a odcizení ve třech klíčových Hemingwayových textech: ve dvou krátkých povídkách „Sněhy Kilimandžára“ a „Krátké štěstí Francise Macombera“ a v románu „I slunce vychází“. Na první pohled se může zdát, že tyto texty jsou naprosto rozdílné, ovšem při bližším pohledu je zjevné že je mezi nimi mnoho podobností, jako téma odcizení od svého vlastního já, odcizení od společnosti, problém ztráty a nalezení smyslu života, otázka smysluplného života a rozpad manželství. Harry z povídky „Sněhy Kilimandžára“ zápasí s vědomím své nastávající smrti, zatímco si přiznává, že vzdáním se svého talentu učinilo jeho život prázdným a beze smyslu. Harry umírá a nezanechává za sebou nic, dokonce ani sebe samého, protože svému vlastnímu já už se dávno odcizil. Na druhou stranu, Francis z povídky „Krátké štěstí Francise Macombera“ je také odcizen sobě samému, ale co je ještě tragičtější je skutečnost, že je k tomu naprosto slepý, dokud není toto vědomí probuzeno prožitím kritického momentu. Román „I slunce vychází“ je plný různých forem ztráty a odcizení, jeho hlavní hrdina Jake Barnes ztratil ve válce doslova kus sebe samého (utrpěl fyzické zranění, nikoliv jen psychické), ale navzdory tomu je odhodlán znovu získat své místo ve světě. Pro lepší pochopení jaké následky měla rozhodnutí těchto hrdinů, jako například Harryho opuštění vlastního talentu, a proč jsou jejich životy takové, jaké jsou, tato práce čerpá při své analýze těchto protagonistů z práce dánského filozofa Sorena Kierkegaarda

„Bud’/Anebo“. V tomto filozofickém spisu Kierkegaard prostřednictvím několika textů vysvětluje, jak důležité je pro dobrý a smysluplný život nalezení sebe sama, bytí sebou samým, a odpovídat na výzvy a příležitosti, které se člověku v průběhu života naskytnou. Kierkegaardovy myšlenky tak pomáhají vysvětlit proč jaké důsledky pro Francisův život jeho zaslepenost nebo jak hrdinské a životně důležité je Jakeovo odhodlání znovu nalézt sebe sama.

Abstract

20th century was one of the most tumultuous periods in the human history. The fast-paced changes, innovations and progress, and the deadly, violent conflicts such as World War I shattered many illusions and marked future generations. The divide between the old and the new world became irreconcilable, because the old beliefs had been killed on the battlegrounds of Belgium and Italy. A member of such generation that had a first-hand experience was one of the most important and successful American writer Ernest Hemingway. A literary behemoth of the 20th century, Hemingway's work reflects his time; it is full of loss and sorrow young people of the war generation had to suffer. Many of his novels and short stories discuss the state of the world and how a person can find their place in it, how to cope with what had been and with what is to come. Furthermore, he analyses the relationships between friends, men and women, between individual and society, looking for answers to elementary human questions. How does one establish their own place in the world? What love looks like and how such relationship works? What is one's purpose in life? How to cope with loss and suffering?

In his texts Hemingway portrays the protagonists in various life situations and plots, but many share a common experience, such as the protagonists of the texts analysed in this thesis. The thesis explores the theme of loss and estrangement in three key Hemingway's works: two short stories "The Snows of the Kilimanjaro" and "The Short and Happy Life of Francis Macomber" and his novel *The Sun Also Rises*. Upon the first glance the texts might appear to be dissimilar from each other, yet there are shared commonalities, such as the estrangement from one's own self, estrangement from society, the issue of losing and finding purpose in life, the issue of meaningful life, and loss of marriage. Harry from "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" is wrestling with his approaching death and coming to understanding how his giving up on and of his talent has rendered his life meaningless and purposeless. He is dying and leaving nothing behind, not even himself, because he became estranged from himself a long time ago. On the other hand, Francis Macomber from "The Short and Happy Life of Francis Macomber" is also estranged from himself, but what is tragic is that he does not know it up until a pivotal moment. Jake Barnes from *The Sun Also Rises* is riddled with several losses, having lost so much to the war, yet he is determined to find his place in the world anew. To better understand how the choices of those protagonists are important to understand their situations and to obtain deeper understanding of their losses, this thesis draws on Soren Kierkegaard's text *Either/Or* to explain the reverberations of those decisions or inaction. The idea of being estranged from one's own self

directly correlates with Kierkegaard's philosophy, which concerns attaining and becoming oneself as the main purpose in life.

Acknowledgments

I would like to sincerely thank doc. Roraback for his help, time and assistance with this thesis, his brilliant insights and comments were invaluable, and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to work with him on this thesis.

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1 Introduction

The 20th century has been one of the most tumultuous periods in the history. The wars, the inventions and discoveries, the rapid progress and development have caused a seismic shift, which has had an impact on generations to come. Writers from that century are deeply influenced by the ever-changing nature of their era, especially those who have experienced the two World Wars. Especially significant was the World War I, whose impact resonated for decades after it has ended. The Polish author Alfred Korzybski called it “the closing of the period of the childhood of humanity.”¹ Before the war nobody would have believed that it was possible for humanity to turn all its technological might to destroy itself. The dream of innocence swiftly disintegrated. Shocked by the narcissism, egoism, nationalism, and other motivating forces that have caused the deadliest war anyone had ever seen, the viewpoint of the contemporary writers underwent a profound transformation. The historical and cultural phenomena of the 1920s and even later, which are captured in the works of the contemporary writers such as Francis S. Fitzgerald or Ernest Hemingway, stemmed from the reverberations of WWI.

Those American writers that wrote about war went into the war before the United States officially joined in 1917, wanting to get into the thick of the fighting. The scars that experience inflicted on them are visible throughout their texts and especially in the work of Ernest Hemingway. Hemingway actively participated in the war during his formative years as an ambulance driver on the Italian front and was injured; when he described the incident, he said that “I died then, I felt my soul or something coming right out of my body”². The mental blow it dealt to him never quite left his memory and the doubts and questions the war awakened appear frequently in his texts. As one of the literary behemoths of the 20th century Hemingway has become a worldwide phenomenon. He wrote dozens of short stories, seven novels, two non-fiction works and won the Nobel Prize in Literature. Considered to be a part of what is called “Lost Generation”, a term coined by another American writer Gertrude Stein, in his work Hemingway grapples with the issues of the purpose of life, social connections and relationships, love, ambition and the frequent senselessness of human actions.

¹ Levinson, Martin H., “World War I: The Closing Period of the Childhood of Humanity,” *A Review of General Semantics* vol. 72, no. 2 (2015): 149.

² Justin Quinn (ed.), *Lectures on American Literature* (Prague: Karolinum, 2016), 187.

Hemingway's method of writing is singular and inimitable. One of his greatest achievements is the so-called iceberg method, which lies in creating texts that at first glance do not betray much, but between the lines there is plenty of emotion. The austerity and conciseness of his works serves to lay bare the souls of his protagonists and to better convey the feelings they experience. As J.L. King noted: "If one reads below the surface, one will see that it deals with great many human emotions without being sentimental."³ With short, unadorned, and repetitive sentences Hemingway writes simple texts that become living things. This is particularly important because it allows Hemingway greater psychological insight than what a mere, lengthy description can offer; his texts resemble and become the feelings they depict, yet never appear pathetically or emptily emotional. Emotion is especially important to Hemingway and similarly to Kierkegaard; according to the philosopher emotions are indicators of character and inwardness, person is not just manifested in emotion, but somehow actualized or made present in his actions, present in a way different from sleeping, day-dreaming and disinterested manner. The sentiments and reactions of the protagonists, which form them, reverberate throughout the text but remain hidden in plain sight, the strength of that literary experience lies in the availability of the meaning and simplicity of the words.

Apart from the style of writing Hemingway puts a lot of emphasis on the language of his works. As mentioned previously, he opts for repetition and clean denotative sentences that "put down what really happened in action, what the actual things were which produced the emotion that you experienced."⁴ The plain sentences, their rhythm, their cadence, and order in the paragraphs all contribute to the unique impressions and level of mastery produced by Hemingway's works. Despite Hemingway's refusal to be pathetic, in his stories and novels he does not hesitate to deal with the most serious issues. Apart from the ones mentioned previously, such as the purpose of life or the question of personal happiness, he also discusses and ponders the issues of alienation and loss. These themes are overarching several of his works; the general sense of pointlessness of life, sense of losing one's own self and not fitting in are a common trait in many of his protagonists. They are either men who have returned from the war and must live with its consequences, men who have failed to fulfil their potential or never had the courage to ask themselves what they want in life. Such men are the subject of this thesis, because they all share the experience of loss and estrangement, albeit each is different.

³ J.L. King. *Notes on The Sun Also Rises, The Snows of Kilimanjaro and Other Works* (Toronto: Coles Publishing Company Limited, 1972) 61.

⁴ Lodge, David. "Repetition". *The Art of Fiction* (New York: Viking, 1993) 90.

They are or were struggling to live a meaningful life, but they failed at it, for some reason or other.

The aim of this thesis is to analyse those specific characters of Hemingway's and examine the nature and degree of loss and alienation in each hero, while commenting on Hemingway's writing style. The protagonists concerned are the title characters of *The Sun Also Rises*, "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" and "The Short and Happy Life of Francis Macomber". To achieve more profound and original analysis of inherently psychological issue this thesis refers to the texts of the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard, who was born some eighty years before Hemingway, has consistently been misunderstood as a philosopher, in a large portion due to his often-complex writings and distinct word meanings. As he himself wrote: "The most important ethical and religious truths cannot be communicated directly, ... they demand creative endeavor by the author and corresponding effort by the reader."⁵ Interestingly, this quote could be applied to Hemingway's writings, because he too does not communicate his truths directly and requires effort to understand his meaning. Kierkegaard's work is varied and includes writings on art and religion, ethics and psychology, theology and politics, and knowledge and virtue. Apart from the requirement of readerly participation, the important parallel between Kierkegaard's and Hemingway's thinking is that both analyse the issue of meaningful life, each writing about the same topic, albeit using very different words.

The purpose of reading of Kierkegaard is to offer a more profound insight into the psychological states and the minds of the Hemingway's protagonists, because parallels can be drawn between Kierkegaard's thoughts about meaningful life and those protagonists. In order to properly analyse each of the selected characters this thesis is divided into three chapters, each chapter dealing with a different story. The first chapter examines the classical short story of Hemingway "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" and the life and death of its hero Harry. The second chapter studies the story of Francis Macomber ("The Short and Happy life of Francis Macomber"), which shares both the similar end as the previous story, as well as the inner incompleteness of its main protagonist. The third chapter of the thesis is devoted to the analysis of the main character of Hemingway's novel from 1926 *The Sun Also Rises* Jake Barnes. Jake Barnes is perhaps the most adequate embodiment of a man marked by war, who is trying set up his life again and find meaning, whilst struggling with the impression of general meaninglessness and loss.

⁵ Ronald M. Green, "'Developing' *Fear and Trembling*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, ed. Alastair Hannay and Gordon D. Marino (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 257.

2 Harry's Loss of Himself in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro"

Short stories have been crucial to the development of Hemingway as a writer. As King notes in his commentary Hemingway learned to write fiction through the medium of short story, he learned "how to get the most from the least."⁶ It was that form of writing through which he developed his inimitable style; unadorned words and sentences, brevity, terseness, repetition. Essentially, not a word goes wasted. The short story from 1936 that Hemingway titled "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" is one of his most famous texts, despite the fact that it does not actually have the usual form of a short story. Some have called it a long-short story or a flash-back novel, which would be fitting given the sheer size and depth of the narration. What is particularly interesting about the story, apart from its contents, is the Hemingway's writing style. His talent shines in this unusual short story, in which he combines dialogues with long, pondering passages and flashbacks into the past. This combination of present, the past and the terrifying future, creates a harmony of temporality. The continuous treatment of time as unified and separate enables Hemingway to observe and analyse in depth the feelings and actions of his protagonists. In "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" the dialogues stand out against the background of the half-forgotten memories, serving as the catalyst for all action happening in the story. This singular juxtaposition underscores the originality and aptness of Hemingway's writing.

The story tells the tale of an American writer Harry, who is laying dying in Africa. At first glance "The Snows" appear to be a hunting tale gone wrong, however, a more profound analysis uncovers its gravity and depth, whilst pondering the fate of the man and his role in this world. The plot opens with the title character Harry musing about his approaching death, noting how marvellous it is that it is painless. Lying there under a mimosa tree the man is slowly but assuredly losing his life. Sensing the looming death nearby Harry is forced to look back at his own life and come to terms with it. What emerges is a portrait of a man that chose the comfortable life over the one of his true calling, man who has failed to do and write as he intended to, man who chose the aesthetic over the ethical, who is impoverished spiritually. What is more, the issue is not only Harry's loss of life, but there are also other forms of estrangement and loss that he is suffering. There is the spatial loss, Harry and his wife Helen are lost somewhere on the plains below the Kilimanjaro mountain, the breakdown of their marriage and their subsequent estrangement from each other. As they exchange replies, it becomes clear that the pleasure, passion, and vivacity that brought them together was just an empty shell that could

⁶ J.L King. *Notes on The Sun Also Rises, The Snows of Kilimanjaro and Other Works*, 61.

not properly sustain their marriage. These examples serve to underscore the message of the story which exposes the shallowness and fragility of life, its lies, and its joys, combined into the beautiful and terrible chaos of human life.

Firstly, the aspect of the spatial loss is key to the understanding of the story because it symbolises the tale itself and sets the scene. Harry and Helen are almost entirely alone, stranded and lost somewhere in Africa. Their only companions are the servants and the wild, untamed animals of the savanna. There are the Tommies⁷, some zebras, vultures, and a hyena, all waiting in the background. Specifically, the hyena and the vultures are significant, because they represent the fast-approaching death that awaits Harry. They can be viewed as a literal *memento mori*. The animals represent the physical side of dying, when the flesh is essentially returned to the nature, becoming once more what it has been before – nothing. What is more, the spatial loss illustrates the fact that both Harry and Helen are lost, not just in terms of geography, but also in terms of their own lives. As they grapple with the oppressing feeling of the dangerous savanna around them their true characters are revealed. It becomes clear how different from each other they really are and how ruthlessly opportunistic their union has been, despite all the glamour and passion.

The relationship between Harry and his wife Helen is another integral part to understanding why Harry feels lost and why Helen is also experiencing loss, albeit of a different kind. Though Harry calls their marriage “rotten poetry”, it started out of Helen’s desire for him as a writer, a companion, a proud possession. Harry did not love her; however, he did love her money and the things she could offer him. At first, he persuaded himself that he was doing it to get behind the enemy lines of the rich people to gather intelligence about them and mock them in his writing. Instead, he became like them, trading his life for security and comfort. The degree of estrangement between Harry and Helen is represented throughout the entire story, with her plaintive and repeated questions and his brash and uncaring responses, which leave him pondering and her crying. Such rapid and intense exchange can be observed in the following dialogue:

“Love is a dunghill,” said Harry. “And I’m the cock that gets on the crow.”

“If you have to go away,” she said, “is it absolutely necessary to kill off everything you leave behind? Do you have to kill your horse, and your wife and burn your saddle and your armour?”

“Yes,” he said. “Your damned money was my armour. My Swift and my Armour.”

“Don’t.”

“All right. I’ll stop that. I don’t want to hurt you.”

“It’s a little bit late now.”

⁷ A species of antelope, a Tommy ram.

“All right then. I’ll go on hurting you. It’s more amusing. The only thing I ever really liked to do with you I can’t do now.”⁸

Upon the first glance, the language and the cadence of this dialogue seem rather plain, however, it reveals several truths about both the titular characters, as well as Hemingway’s unique approach to dialogue. King calls Hemingway “the master of dialogue” because his dialogues are both revealing and purposeful, as can be observed in this particular example. The exchanges between the two protagonists are described with the plain verb “said”, which is repeatedly several times. As a result, the description of the action becomes inconsequential compared to the content of those spoken lines, the attention is redirected. Additionally, the unadorned words, the continued repetition and brevity of those words used in the dialogue further enhance the meaning of those words spoken. The harsh, curtailed “Don’t” spoken by Helen is both plaintive and defiant, as she asks Harry to not “necessarily kill off everything he is leaving behind and to not hurt her”. When she reproachingly tells him that it is “a little bit late now”, it marks one of her attempts to bring back the old Harry she married, but he is uninterested in keeping the illusion alive any longer. As she tries to understand the change he has undergone, her initial reaction is to doubt it. Because in those moments, under the attacks of his cruel tongue, she cannot not recognize him; instead, she sees a stranger.

In various versions Harry always returns to the thought that it was her wealth that he chose when he married her, using her “bloody money” to protect himself from his own self and the reality of the world, making it his “swift and his armour”. With his demise drawing near he no longer cares to pretend their marriage was about anything else but the physical relationship and her means. The illusion of the glamorous, rich couple is destroyed by force of nature, possibly fate, and the reverberations of that event are felt throughout the entire story. In the story, Harry calls Helen a “rich bitch” and their love a “familiar lie”, which suggests how deeply he has come to resent their marriage and all it stands for. That is blatantly obvious in the dialogue presented, as he tells her that: “I’ll go on hurting you. It’s more amusing.” He lashes out at her, because to him Helen represents all the wrong actions he took during the course of his life, the betrayal of himself and his principles. And what is worse he realises that she inadvertently supported him in his self-destruction, as she says that “I left everything and I went wherever you wanted to go and I’ve done what you wanted to do.”⁹ Her last words are especially befitting

⁸ Ernest Hemingway. *The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway* (New York: Scribner, 1966) 57-58.

⁹ Hemingway, *The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*, 55.

the whole story, because it turns out that Harry is the one to be blamed for the failure his life appears to have become, not to mention his pointless death.

Yet the story appears to be incapable of letting the matter go as Harry repeatedly returns to commenting on Helen, her character, lifestyle, and attitude. It is always “this woman”, “fine woman” or physical comments about her face or body. As if on some inner level he feels her to be inexplicably connected to his ruin, blaming her for it. What is worse, after he married her, he understood that she herself was spiritually ruined. In the story Harry remembers how he considered the rich to be a special sort of people, a race of glamorous beings, only to have his illusions quickly dispelled. He soon discovered that under their shining exteriors they are just wrecks, which in consequence wrecks him too. They destroy themselves by their own doing, so does he. The disappointment is the reason why he lashes out against Helen and blames her for his personal failures, because she was the one who made him like those rich people. But deep down he knows that he is lying to himself. His personal ruin was his own responsibility, and it lies at the heart of the story of “The Snows of Kilimanjaro”. Harry voluntarily damaged his writing talent; his true calling, his predestined purpose, the source of meaning to his life and the critical instrument to his becoming himself. His anger with Helen only masks how sad and disappointed he is with himself for having wasted his life.

The issue of the wasted potential is one of the most obvious losses represented in the story. It is at the centre of Harry’s thoughts when he thinks “now he would never write the things that he had saved to write until he knew enough to write them well.”¹⁰ All those flashback passages included in the body of the story prove that he traded on his talent and serve as a vivid reminder of how he wasted all those memories. The lengthy passages cover large swathes of the world, from the city of Karagatch, Paris, Austrian mountains to Turkey and other places, revealing how varied and rich his experience was. The problem is that instead of writing about people, memories, and places he cared about, he chose to write about what he did not care for. The shallowness and superficiality of his actual writing betrays the degree of his cowardness. Too afraid, hesitant, or uncertain to pursue what really called to his heart – “He has been in it and he had watched it and it was his duty to write of it; but now he never would”¹¹ – he opted for the easier choice, belittling, and losing himself in the process. In those years when he experienced and saw all those interesting scenes and people, he was too poor to devote himself solely to writing, however, after his marriage to Helen he could have done what he wanted and

¹⁰ Hemingway, *The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*, 54.

¹¹ Hemingway, *The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*, 66.

write about what he wanted. In the beginning, that was what he promised to himself, but just like his principles, he gave up on that too. As he faces his death Harry finally musters up the courage to write in an engaging and caring manner, but it is too late.

The stage setting of Harry's last moments is very impressive. There is the looming mountain Kilimanjaro, the wide plains of Africa, its terrifying animals and a small group of people lost in the middle of all of it. Harry's death is so small and unimportant in the grand scheme of this buoyant wilderness surrounding him. Similarly, his life has meant something to just a few people, anyone who might have cared is no longer friends with; his death means very little, just as his life did. Not everyone can be singled out for greatness and history books, however, man can live a life that has some meaning to him, for him. And that is something which Harry has failed at. His careless approach to death resembles his ignorant way of life. When he remarks that he is "getting bored with dying as everything else", the aloofness rings both true and false. It rings true since he has been dying for too long, not just physically, but also spiritually. While his body might have been giving out for past few days, his spirit died a long time ago. When he gave up on himself, he essentially rendered himself dead, despite the fact that his body and his devotion to pleasure and fun were still intact. The aloofness is false, because Harry says he was afraid that he would be unable to stand the physical pain of dying. That is why the first sentence of the story about the painlessness of his death is significant, because while he might not be suffering physically, he is definitely suffering psychologically.

The fashion in which Hemingway portrays dying in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" is fascinating. Peculiarly, the story begins with an end; right from the start it is clear that the protagonist is going to die, though the other protagonist is in denial of that. With the first memory inserted into the text the mood of the story is set, yet interestingly it not pathetic nor melancholic. It is an elegy for a man who only at the brink of death starts to grasp the depth of his errors and what it has cost him. The reminders of all of it are interspersed throughout the entire text. From the initial comment on the painlessness the story progresses through the memories to inconspicuous mentions such as "this now, that he had, was very easy; and it was no worse as it went on there was nothing to worry about."¹² what a bore what dying is and finally he sees that "death had come and rested its head on the foot of the cot and he could smell its breath."¹³ This could be considered as one of the sincerest moments in the story, because

¹² Hemingway, *The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*, 73.

¹³ Hemingway, *The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*, 74.

Harry is finally completely honest with himself and acknowledging that death is coming for him. The abstract, yet particular description of death is a very powerful moment in the story. It was hinted at and whispered of for the entirety of the narration, finally, the death has a form.

The loss of life is as terrifying as it is heart-breaking. Again, it can be argued that all those flashbacks serve to remind Harry of what he is losing by his careless death. While that may be true, Harry appears to be rather on good terms with his approaching death. He has thought of his regrets, almost alienated from himself the one person he had left in the world and attempted to make amends with himself (albeit unsuccessfully). Interestingly, Harry is very much concerned with not spoiling his dying, since he has spoiled almost everything else in his life. In the moments of his dying Harry knows that he is completely alone, which is attested to by his earlier dialogue with Helen. She ignorantly remarked that Harry is “the most complete man” she knew, perhaps inadvertently praising him for what she feels she lacks. But Harry responds: “Christ,” he said. “How little a woman knows.”¹⁴ His response shows that he clearly understands she has become wrecked too, only she is too shallow or ignorant to understand it. He might not have minded it before, but he upon his death, he does mind it very much. The singular experience of his life is already painful enough as it is.

The loss of Harry’s life appears to be the most tragic part of the story, however, it is in his estrangement from himself and his failure to become himself and use his talent, where the real tragedy lies. The horrifying injury and the complete break-down of his marriage ask for sympathy, but it is the failure to choose his fate and himself and opting to stay away that is the greatest loss. The consequences of his decision not to choose reverberate throughout the whole story. It is a different case with Helen, who also decided to avoid herself and whatever her talent might be. Helen is completely unaware that there was ever such possibility to become herself and choose herself time and time again, to attain her personality. Instead, living the pleasurable life of an aesthete, she fulfilled her life with societal expectations and what she was (probably) raised to become. Not one time did she consciously ask or choose, she either did not choose at all, or it was a finite choice that had no real substance. Thus, she lives her life relatively comfortably, enjoying the money she inherited and the semblance of freedom it has bought her. That is an important point, because both hers and Harry’s example show that money does not liberate, but either shackles one to the life of a hedonist or a money hoarder. Their lives are the object of envy, but as Harry clearly comprehends in the end there is nothing to be envious of at all; they are all just glittering, walking pieces of wreckage, in one form or another.

¹⁴ Hemingway, *The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*, 74.

The term aesthete and an aesthetic way of life refers to the thoughts of the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard, who considers the aesthetic stadium to be one of the stadia person experiences in their life and either evolves from or stays in, depending on that person. Kierkegaard gives a detailed account of how he envisions the life of an aesthete and ethicist (another stadium of life) in his work *Either/Or*, where he explores the idea from several different angles. In the “Diary of the Seducer” he depicts a masterful seducer, so cunning and always in charge of his actions, which reveal how trapped he has become. As he writes: “He who goes astray inwardly has not so great a range; he soon discovers that he is going about in a circle from which he cannot escape.”¹⁵ The intriguing mind has turned on itself and has lost the thread of its continuity, it now turns its whole acumen against itself. In despair he seeks a way out only to see that he is still trapped within. This is quite fitting description of Harry’s life, which sees him incarcerated in the world he willingly entered. As he lays dying, he seeks one more time to escape it, only to have recognise that he cannot. It is the moment when he asks Helen if she can take dictation, hoping that perhaps by writing something, by finally using his talent for one last time, he could salvage little bit of himself, but it is impossible.

The reason why is because Harry has failed to win the chief thing in life, which is to win yourself, acquire your own self. To do that, one must choose and accept the risk that the something which has been chosen has been lived and must be lived over again. With choice there is danger of repeating the previous errors, yet not choosing means choosing unconsciously. And such manner of choice has consequences. In the question of either/or the Kierkegaard says that “the act of choosing is essentially a proper and stringent expression of the ethical.”¹⁶ Yet the ethical is precisely what Harry ignores in his choices, so does Helen. Helen acts unknowingly because she has never perceived the ethical in her life. She understands the ethical from the lenses of the society she was brought up in and spent her life in. For Harry, there was a different sense of ethical, the “true” ethical, which clearly manifests itself in those flashbacks included in the story. In those moments he observed and felt the ethical, which revealed itself in the people and the topics he wanted to write about. However, he did not heed the “calling” of the ethical, because it required him to choose and to despair over the manifold possibilities included in the choosing. He backed away from that challenge, from the difficult choice. Instead, he made an aesthetic choice. But the problem is, as Kierkegaard writes, the

¹⁵ Soren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or Volume I*, trans. David F. Swenson and Lillian Marvin Swenson (London: Oxford University Press, 1946) 255.

¹⁶ Soren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or Volume II*, trans. Walter Lowrie (London: Oxford University Press, 1946) 141.

aesthetic choice is no choice at all. To use the word choice in relation to the aesthetic is an improper sense of the word because choice in the aesthetic sense is either entirely immediate or loses itself in the multifarious. In other words, that means no choice to speak of at all. It is easily observable in “The Snows” since events are happening to Harry rather than him intentionally deciding upon them. He avoids responsibility for his actions, just as he avoided disinfecting his scratch. In the end, both have cost him his life.

In “The Snows” Harry’s life resembles that of an aesthete, but what does it mean for him? He sees himself as a man who admires and appreciates beautiful things and people, who has a great taste and knows how to find pleasure and enjoy every ounce of it. However, perhaps the greatest pleasure for him is that which he finds in discontent. He was discontent with his toiling for work, so he married well. Later, he grew discontent with the society he was keeping and went travelling. There he is also discontent, yet he thinks himself to be better than the society he keeps, despite the fact that he has willingly joined their ranks. He pretends to be through with finiteness, with those choices that entertain him for short bouts of time, because deep inside he feels a different need. He becomes conscious of that in his last moments, because as Kierkegaard says: “Nothing finite, not the whole world, can satisfy the soul of a man who feels the need of the eternal.”¹⁷ Yet he cannot achieve it, since he is about to suffer the greatest physical loss, and it will not unite him with the eternal.

That is precisely Harry’s problem, because the moment he decided to not write about those things and write about something else instead, he made a choice in the aesthetic sense. He acknowledges it himself, when he says that by being rich and comfortable “you kept from thinking and it was marvellous.”¹⁸ The ethical choice has the presence of eternal in it, which the aesthetic is lacking, it is finite and temporal, it cannot sustain Harry and his self. Harry admits this need to acknowledge the eternal to himself as he lays dying. Unfortunately, the thoughts of death, that have awakened his conscience, cannot perform that movement of spirit that would allow him to enter the ethical. The aesthetical represents neutrality, but a man cannot be neutral when his chief objective is to choose and to attain himself, to become himself. The ethical, which is prominent in the question of either/or is not a question of choosing something in particular or the thing itself, it is the reality of the act of choice. Kierkegaard writes: “I would say that the experience of choosing imparts to a man’s nature a solemnity, a quiet dignity, which

¹⁷ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or Volume II*, 171.

¹⁸ Hemingway, *The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*, 59.

is never entirely lost.”¹⁹ The instant of choice is when the soul of a man is at its loftiest, when he does not become another man, but becomes himself and he is himself. However, that is something Harry did not achieve and could not achieve, since he was not strong enough. As a result, Harry is estranged from himself and so is Helen, but the difference between the two of them is that somehow Harry is aware of it.

For Kierkegaard the choice, the task of becoming oneself and being oneself, finding and following’s one calling, those are the key parts of the ethical life, which is the desirable stage of life, because it is another step towards the religious stage, which is the highest. In Kierkegaard’s view a man can become himself and choose, be both universal and individual, through God. However, since there is no mention of God in this story or any other story discussed in this thesis, the Kierkegaardian analysis of those protagonists will focus on the ethical and the aesthetic present in their lives. Despite that, it is worth noticing that the gaping absence of God or any other spiritual authority in Hemingway’s texts presented in this thesis. His protagonists do not aspire, certainly not Harry, to attain some higher sense of self and become themselves through God, unite their personalities and make their choices in God. It is especially obvious in Hemingway’s novel *The Sun Also Rises*, which will be discussed in the third chapter. In that text the loss of values, of spiritual authority such as God, is one the most prominent themes.

Since it has been established that Harry is living the life of the aesthete, albeit one who is internally deeply dissatisfied with it, it is crucial to turn the analysis towards the issue of Harry’s talent. His talent for writing is mentioned in the text several times. Harry admits to himself that he has traded it away, when he decided to write about the aesthetic, rather than include the ethical in his works and thus perhaps brought on himself his own spiritual demise. It is the death of spirit he is fighting against in those last moments in the story, his struggle towards the eternal, but it comes awfully delayed. The problem is that in the moment he stopped using his talent and strayed from his calling, anything that could have tethered him to that struggle for his own self has vanished, consequently it was impossible for him to become himself and attain himself. In his descriptions of the ethical stage Kierkegaard describes working and making one’s living as a significant part of the ethical:

The conflict for the daily bread is so ennobling and educative because it does not permit a man to deceive himself with regard to his own situation. ... the strife is so ennobling because it compels him to see something else in it, compels him, if he will

¹⁹ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or Volume II*, 149.

not throw himself away entirely, to see in it a combat of honor, and to perceive that the reward is so small in order that the honor may be greater.²⁰

However, this honour that Kierkegaard speaks of is something unattainable to Harry because he chose not to work. For him, the necessity of working to be able to make living was not something universal and beautiful, but burdensome and annoying. When he married Helen and acquired her lifestyle, he lost this opportunity to appreciate the honest and respectable condition of living, which is working. Therefore, there is no reward or honour to speak of. His stopping working is also one of the reasons why he is so tired of his life, why it suddenly cannot offer him anything beyond temporal pleasure. That pleasure masks the absence of purpose, absence of meaning to his life.

The problem is that Harry removed from his life the possible source of meaning to it – his calling. The aesthetes speak of talent, but the ethicist says that “every man has a calling.” The advantage of the ethical expression over the aesthetic is that it does not view it as something particular and different, but as something particular and universal to every man. The aesthete views talent only as a talent, as such it can never cross the boundaries of that expression. On the other hand, the ethical consideration speaks of calling and as Kierkegaard remarks “talent is beautiful only when it is transfigured as a call, and existence is beautiful only when every one has a call.”²¹ Only upon answering their call can a person accomplish things and find success, not just in terms of the fruits of their labour, but also by choosing to heed their calling, thus acquiring themselves, which is the ultimate objective. When a person works in order to live, this work is at the same time source of pleasure and they find it to be beautiful and honourable, they fulfil the duties of their calling and accomplish their job – that person has its living, its own personality. And it precisely what the comfortable life has robbed Harry of. What is interesting is that he understands it, as he berates himself for accepting Helen’s money and her for offering it. If Harry had kept working, he could have had looked for pleasure and meaning, he could have found himself, but that is not the story in “The Snows”.

Throughout the story Harry speaks of talent because he only understands his calling in the aesthetic sense of the word, only later he manages to understand that it was not just a talent, it was his calling. By saying that he has traded away his talent, essentially betrayed it, he has done something even worse, he has failed to perform the duties prescribed by his calling. When he decided – chose – to not write properly (about the topics that meant something and he felt it),

²⁰ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or Volume II*, 238.

²¹ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or Volume II*, 245.

he sentenced himself to the aesthetic existence and constant despair. Hemingway himself eloquently expressed the need for courage to answer a calling and willingly choose to despair, when he said that writer could have success only if he were willing “to be driven far out past where he can go, out to where no one can help him.”²² The courage that could have sustained that fight was not to be found in Harry and that became the source of his tragedy. Harry was unable to find satisfaction in the world of the wealthy because he was tired of it, but this tiredness stems from the inner dissatisfaction, melancholy, and the surfeit of pleasure. He is a man of the world, but he is not really universal (not like other men who are working towards living), nor can he be particular (individual), since he chose not to follow his calling. Therefore, he cannot attain himself, become himself. And this is the true reason why, at the brink of death, he reminisces of the good times he had, the choices he made and the ones he did not take. Harry is the epitome of the “evolved” aesthete who in his soul understands that this life is not enough for him, but is not willing to do something about it, to choose consciously. And that is the greatest tragedy and the biggest failure contained in the story.

There are several tragic aspects in this short story; the various kinds of losses and estrangement, the cowardice to face the despair to attain oneself, become oneself, the will to choose with consciousness. The spatial loss is perhaps the least severe one, yet it is also the one mirroring all the subsequent ones. Harry and Helen are lost in the wilderness, but they are lost in their lives, alienated from themselves. Their marriage was never complete in the ethical sense, it was always about the aesthetic. She offered the money; he offered his reputation and fun. As Harry waits to die, the façade of their relationship slowly, but surely crumbles. The loss of the marriage is terrible, not only because of Helen’s reactions (in her ignorance she appears to be truly heart-broken), but also for the fact that Harry is truly alone in his dying. He realises that fact from the beginning of the story, hence the harshness and brutality of his responses to her. At the first glance, the loss of life appears to be the greatest woe contained in the story. The promising writer, who has finally found the will and courage to write properly, is dying an inglorious death in the middle of the African savannah. What is worse, as he is dying, he is quarrelling with his wife, who tries to lie to herself and tells them both that everything shall be alright. He almost succumbs to the need to blame his wife for his own failure, lashing out at her because of his own losses and failures.

The greatest loss is the fact that throughout the course of his life Harry cowardly chose not to fulfil his calling and to become himself. As a result, by giving up on his call (his writing), he

²² Scott Donaldson, “Introduction: Hemingway and Fame,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Ernest Hemingway*, ed. Scott Donaldson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 13.

estranged himself from himself, lost himself. This grave loss is the cause of Harry's mental unrest, even though he might not comprehend it at first. As the story progresses and he recounts the memories he has experienced in his younger years he begins to understand how misguided his choice to not follow the calling has affected his life. He tries to rectify that by attempting to write once more, finding the boldness he did not have, alas, he is not successful. Yet, what makes his story honest and admirable is the fact that in the face of death he has finally admitted to himself his failures and the familiar lies he had been living in. In this short story Hemingway created a hero who is living the life of a Kierkegaardian aesthete, but the upcoming death awakens him to the realities of his life, and he battles with them. The juxtaposition of the descriptive passages and the dialogues is almost symbolic, because those two war with each other throughout the entirety of the story, just as its main hero fights with himself and against himself. It only serves to underscore the genius of Hemingway's writing, in which the words and the texts become the very thing they depict.

3 Francis Macomber's Blind and Oblivious Life

The "Short and Happy Life of Francis Macomber" is a peculiar story, because its main hero does not fit well into the mould of the "usual" Hemingway hero. The regular protagonist of Hemingway's texts is very masculine and sure of himself, very apt at sports and physical activities, he drinks and has a way with women - almost everything Francis Macomber appears not to be. The story describes him as "very tall, very well built if you did not mind that length of the bone, dark, his hair cropped like an oarsman, rather thin-lipped and was considered handsome."²³ That is not a description of virile masculinity, yet the tale of Francis Macomber discusses some of the classical themes of Hemingway's texts, such as the relationships of men and women, fear and courage, manliness, the issue of meaningful versus pleasant life. What makes the tale so interesting and potent is the fact that Macomber faces his own masculinity for the first time in his life and attains it, only to lose it a few moments afterwards, though not by his own doing.

In certain ways the story is like that of "The Snows of Kilimanjaro"; the narrative is set in Africa, where a rich, married couple decided to go on safari and hunting. The couple are likewise surrounded by wilderness, whilst enjoying the comforts of the upper class; however, there the similarities end, because there is another important character apart from Francis's wife Margaret, and that is their guide, Robert Wilson. Wilson is instrumental for expressing the opinions about Francis since Margaret reveals her feelings only through her behaviour and her dialogues. On the other hand, unlike "The Snows" there are no flashbacks in this story, Francis is not remembering the choices he never made, he is not even aware of the fact that there were any choices to be made in the first place. Instead, Hemingway chooses to depict Macomber solely through the words he speaks and through the opinions of other people, presenting him as an oblivious and unknowing hero. Interestingly, the past still has a significant bearing on the heroes of this story, while it is never explicitly described as in "The Snows", it is clear certain events and experience have shaped those people into their current forms and states of mind. All that matters is revealed in the dialogues.

The story opens with a very inconspicuous lunch scene, the lunch appears to be very pleasant, but the hidden undercurrents are slowly bubbling to the surface. The titular characters are pretending that everything is alright, when the text mentions that Francis "had just shown

²³ Hemingway, *The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*, 4.

himself, very publicly, to be a coward.”²⁴ There is the repeated mention of lion and Francis being a coward, but not a hint as to what has occurred. The two men are happy to pretend that nothing has happened, because one is too ashamed of himself and the other just wants to keep earning his wages. It is Francis’s wife Margaret who appears unable to bear the pretence and she forcibly changes the topic of the opening dialogue from the lion to some inconsequential topics, such as the colour of Wilson’s face. However, it is not working; Francis attempts a feeble joke and Wilson keeps bringing up the lion. When Margaret says: “I wish it hadn’t happened. Oh, I wish it hadn’t happened.” she breaks the spell of the moment and the reality crashes back in. The repetition of that sentence underscores how deeply has the incident wounded Margaret. Before that, she was able to tell herself that her husband is a good-looking man, who is rich, sociable, and overall a very nice husband. Now, she cannot bear to think about him because he has shown himself a coward. The loss of illusions in the marriage, the breakdown between Margaret and Francis, is one of the key losses in this story. The pair of them seems to be just another rich couple, not too unhappy, but not blissfully in love; after the lion incident that is over. She saw him running from the lion and afterwards could not bear to look at him, recognise him as the husband she was peacefully living with. His cowardness made her sensitive to the reality of the man she married, the man she has happily controlled for most of their relationship.

It should be mentioned that both are acutely aware of the state of their marriage even before the lion incident. He admits that she is with him because he is rich, and she is no longer beautiful enough to try her luck with another man. The brute sincerity of that statement points out that the marriage has been doomed for some time; ever since they stopped truly caring for each other and rather started to live with each other, the marriage was over, and the pretence started. Now even that has been destroyed. It is very important to note that the incident influences each of the characters differently. As was asserted in the previous paragraph, for their marriage and Margaret it means confrontation with the impact of Francis’s cowardly escape. For Robert Wilson, who represents a sort of an impartial judge (impartial in the sense that he is communicating with both sides and has opinions about both), it is observing the shame and the failure of Francis to grow into a fully-grown adult male. To him Macomber represents a man that has never developed into a proper man, he has been a boy all his life. “It’s that some of them stay little boys so long, Wilson thought. Sometimes all their lives. Their figures stay boyish when they’re fifty. The great American boy-men.”²⁵ Those men remain estranged from

²⁴ Hemingway, *The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*, 4.

²⁵ Hemingway, *The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*, 33.

their adulthood for the entirety of their lives, forever acting as boys. At first, Macomber is one of those men, but in a spur of an instant he develops and starts to flourish. He cuts the shackles of his boyishness.

For Francis Macomber there are two big confrontations in the story: The first incident, the lion incident, which forces him to shamefully face the fact that he is indeed a coward. He does not understand the consequences of his behaviour fully until he notices the faces of others who have seen it all, his fear, his running, his seeking cover far away from the danger. He is full of self-pity and loathing, at last comprehending that everything has changed. In that moment, he loses his standing as a person, and not just in the eyes of others. Because of his cowardly fear, he has lost his place in the world; no longer is he to be afforded respect and acknowledgment based on the merit of his money, which is especially painful since that is all he knows. Suddenly, he cannot be sure of anything, not even of himself. If he has thus betrayed himself, how easy it must be for others to betray him? Very easy, as Margaret shows the following night.

There is an argument between Francis and his wife in the middle of the night, when he discovers that she has sneaked out to sleep with Wilson. The quarrel is an important moment in the story, both in terms of understanding the loss of any misconceptions Francis might have had about his wife and Margaret's assertion of control over Francis. The delusions shatter when he asks her where she has been and she directly lies to him, with both of them knowing it. When he reminds her that "There wasn't going to be any of that. You promised there wouldn't be."²⁶, he is angry not just with her, but also with himself. Not only has he shown himself to be a coward and lost the respect of everyone in the camp, but his wife has also shown in how little regard does she hold the marital promises they have made to each other. As a result, in that moment Francis is twice as embarrassed as he was before. However, later, all these losses, of face and respect, of the marital fidelity, of bravery, are recast into the hatred and fury that propel the change in him. A change he did not know he needed, but the absence of it was always unconsciously felt throughout his entire life.

The assertion of Margaret's total control over her husband is brilliantly displayed in her disinterested responses to his questioning about her night visit to Wilson's tent. When she lies to him because he is a coward, she only says: "What do you want me to say, darling?"²⁷ The condescending tone of that response sets off Francis's rage, but she could not care less. Her

²⁶ Hemingway, *The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*, 23.

²⁷ Hemingway, *The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*, 22.

dismissal is the ultimate sign of her power, as she repetitively rebuffs him with “I’m very sleepy” and “let’s not talk” she openly exerts her dominance over him. That day when he proved himself a coward, she gave up all the feigning she might have kept before for his and her sake. The loss of his face means the loss of his right to any courtesy she might have offered him as her husband. It is not a moment of estrangement or alienation, not in the strictest sense of those words because even though Francis does become someone strange (she has never expected him to behave in such way), he also becomes someone revealed: Margaret discovers and exploits his deepest fears and anxieties. Wilson accurately describes her attitude when he thinks that women like her: “are ... the hardest in the world; the hardest, the cruelest, the most predatory and the most attractive and their men have softened or gone to pieces nervously as they have hardened.”²⁸ For Margaret’s presence is like a knife cutting through Francis again and again, reminding him of how much he has softened and how hard and controlling she has become. Even though he is the one who has money, she appears to be the one who is making the decisions and shaping their marriage. Francis is just passively accepting it, as he is too frustrated in his personal growth and too unaware of his boyhood, he readily welcomes it; the relegation of control allows him to live the unobstructed life of a rich man with a handsome wife.

However, the moment of Francis’s awakening comes. As he faces the next day, hardened by his wife’s unfaithfulness and Wilson’s feigning, he is full of bright, flaming anger. Suddenly, the control he so readily gave is suffocating him. When Margaret tells him to behave, he just throws the question back at her “Why don’t you try behaving?” and she responds: “I’ve tried it so long. So very long:”²⁹ Masterfully, she is shifting the blame that lies with her to Francis, because after all he is the coward who has made a spectacle of himself the previous day. As they go hunting for buffalos, Francis, brimming with anger and empowered by hatred, determinedly goes after the animals, and kills most of them. The moment he manages to stake out and kill those buffalos is a moment of great transformation. Both Francis and Margaret face some great revelations. Francis is finally getting rid of the shackles that bound him to his innocent adult-boyhood, the fear he expected to feel is gone, so is the anger. After he launched himself at those animals, propelled forward by the shame, the fear, and the anger, somewhere in the process he managed to lose all of that. This loss of mental constraints that have been incarcerating his soul for most of his life means an empowerment, liberation, adulthood. At last,

²⁸ Hemingway, *The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*, 8.

²⁹ Hemingway, *The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*, 25.

Francis is assuming control over his own life and it is a heady feeling. Wilson again steps in in his commentator role, marking that:

Beggar had probably been afraid all his life. Don't know what started it. But over now. Hadn't had time to be afraid with the buff. That and being angry too. ... Be a damn fire eater now. ... Fear gone like an operation. Something else grew in its place. Main thing a man had. Made him into a man. Women knew it too. No bloody fear.³⁰

On the other hand, Margaret is experiencing something entirely different. The moment Francis almost jumps out of the car he represents a man untethered from his wife, at last. And she is very conscious of this change. She knows her control is slipping, and she begins to be afraid of Francis's transformation. She speaks with contempt and attempts to mock both Wilson and Francis for acting like they are some heroes, but her mocking and her contempt lack conviction. As Wilson's quote mentioned in the previous paragraph declares something has changed, and Francis has become a man. He knows it, owns it, and Margaret knows it too. In the moment Francis loses his fears and anxieties, Margaret loses all her security. Gone is the husband she might have had controlled to a certain degree because he was still a boy, she is now dealing with a man. A man that she has cheated on the previous night, a husband that she has mocked for his not just for his cowardice, but also for his general impotence. Yet it is she who has been rendered impotent in her power. No longer is she the self-assured woman as yesterday, when she felt the moral superiority towards her husband, it is Francis now who has all the superiority and the control. For the first time in the story, Margaret realises that he could actually get rid of her and start a completely different life. As he is gaining, she is losing. However, in the end, there is no winner. Unable to bear the consequences of Francis's transformation and the wound it has already caused to her life she kills him. It could be speculated that it was an accident, like Wilson suggests, but the previous paragraphs paint a different picture. Scared and unsettled by the unravelling empowerment of Francis she (accidentally?) kills him, at once taming him and ending him.

The loss and gain of control is one of the central themes in this story. Francis loses control of his fear, then gains control of himself, Margaret strengthens her control, only to completely lose it, both by Francis's manning up and by her killing of him. In order to explain the notions of Francis and the undercurrents of their marriage, Hemingway places Wilson into their relationship. Wilson serves as both an observer and a commentator, who is watching the spectacle of them unravel. To heighten the tensions and the anxieties of the protagonists,

³⁰ Hemingway, *The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*, 33.

Hemingway focuses most of the attention on the dialogues. The descriptive parts, including Wilson's ponderings, are essential to explain the inner processes, however, most of the action happens in the verbal exchange. Francis is humiliated in conversation, he is angered by conversations and quarrels, he asserts his new-found strength in brief conversation with Wilson. All these talks and discussion are at the heart of the story, shaping it and developing it. With each repartee and answer the protagonists are further revealed, the plot explained, without Hemingway having to explicitly describe every little emotion or action that will take place.

More importantly, there is another brilliant device that shows the mental state of the protagonists and what is currently going on in the story, which are the facial expressions of Francis, Margaret, and Wilson. The looks on their faces are inconspicuously mentioned throughout the text, the short sentences divulging their thoughts and opinions. It is clever nod to the Hemingway's usual approach to let the words and sentences reveal the emotions brimming under the surface. In "The Short and Happy Life of Francis Macomber" it is possible to almost visualise those faces. The descriptions of the faces and their looks are present right from the beginning. There is the opening discussion about Wilson's red face, possibly hinting at the hidden anger and loathing he feels for Francis, when they talk about his cowardice and failure to kill the lion. The blank face of the serving boy at the lunch who is expected to say nothing of what he hears from his masters. The American face of Francis Macomber as he apologises to Wilson for running away like a coward, so boyish and handsome. The perfectly oval face of Margaret, which Wilson presumes would signify her as a stupid person, even though she is not. "That red-faced swine" being the expression Francis uses for Wilson when he discusses him with Margaret after she has cheated on him. When Francis frees himself from his fears, Margaret is described as "very white faced", looking ill. When Francis gets killed, he lies face down, his expression no longer visible. It was possibly one of "drunken elation", because he was feeling heady with courage and heroism. And it is Margaret, who is both averting and covering her face, when she understands what she has done.

The faces have symbolic and very useful role in the story. Firstly, they clearly display the feelings of the protagonists and what they are momentarily thinking. Secondly, they also serve as masks, especially in the case of Margaret. The faces are a contradiction, as are the heroes of the story, as is perhaps the story itself. Francis and Margaret both show their faces to the world, while hiding behind them. They are the masks they offer to the world and it is only in moments of great emotion and passion that they let their faces showcase their true natures. When they lose control, the true feelings emerge. Wilson's ruddy, red face is possibly the most honest one, because it expresses who he is. It reflects his life under the African sun, his work

for the rich, whilst enjoying the lifestyle they provide him with. He is in there for the money, working hard, with his face illustrating just that. When Wilson notices Margaret's perfectly shaped face, he first is poised to call her stupid, only to hear her talk and understand that it is a mask of a strong, controlling woman. Margaret's face is her greatest feature and possession, she has used her beauty to capture Francis and now she uses the poise mirrored in her face to control him and dominate over him. Perhaps the most peculiar face is that of Francis, who has "lost his face" in the first few moments of the story. The face is described as handsome and American, again a remark of Wilson's, which is very telling. Francis's face is designated as unremarkable, just another rich, good-looking American having his fun under the African sun. However, as is later revealed, the American-ness of his face also signifies innocence and boyishness. It is the visual version of Wilson's comments about Francis's stunted personal growth. In the final moments of the story, when Margaret averts her face from Francis, who is laying face-down, it is a masterful culmination of the whole face-play that went on throughout the entire story. Margaret's mask has dropped, her face white and ill, reveals how very terrified she has become of Francis's sudden growth into a man. By turning her face away from what she has done, she is the last true coward of the story, unable to bear the consequences of her actions and unable to come to terms with the fact that her control has disintegrated. Her face is the source of her fear and her shame, that is why she covers it. On the other hand, the symbolic of Francis's face concealed in his death, is the last show of his victory over Margaret and of his courage. Because when Francis turned to face the buffalo, he was once again looking right at danger and possible death, but he did it intentionally and with purpose. In that moment, he was finally a man. And he stayed so until his very last breath.

The psychological development of protagonists in this story, mainly its titular character, is very different from those described in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro". The issue of dying is also present, but almost as an afterthought, which is the opposite of "The Snows". The biggest contrast is that the marriage between Francis and Margaret is very different from that of Helen and Harry, and there is also the issue of Harry being a man, when Francis has not been a man for almost his entire life. The marriage of Francis and Margaret is like that of Harry and Helen, meaning that there is also no sense of union, no joining of forces against the world. It is a very functional marriage, as is the case in "The Snows". Margaret only married Francis for his money, which Harry did with Helen, but in contrast to him, Margaret is the one who is secretly controlling him. And what is worse, Francis lets her do it. By allowing her to dominate him, though not perhaps in all aspects of his life, Francis vanquishes any sort of ownership for his own life and his decisions. He gives up on, loses the most important thing in life, which is being

responsible for that life and being at the helm of it. There is a reason why he has allowed himself to become estranged from his life, even if he did it unconsciously – he never became a grown, full-blooded man. His underdeveloped spirit never changed from a boy to a man. The fact that he never truly crossed the threshold of male adulthood is having a bearing on every aspect of his life. It is the cause of the erosion of his marriage. It is the justification of why he fled like a coward from that dying lion. It is the explanation of why Wilson loathes him.

From a Kierkegaardian point of view, there are several angles from which to analyse Francis and his failures. In the previous chapter, Harry the dying writer was presented as a perfect example of an aesthete who lives only for pleasure and excitement. However, as he lays dying, he finally acknowledges the awareness of the need for spiritual growth, which has been suffocated for years. With Francis it is a different case. While Francis is essentially living a life of an aesthete, he is not conscious of any need for spiritual development. As Kierkegaard writes: “The aesthetical in a man is that by which he is immediately what he is. ... He who lives in and by and of the aesthetical and for the aesthetical in him lives aesthetically.”³¹ Francis is not in a melancholic state, which would have been caused the absence of the eternal in his life, he is completely oblivious to that fact. Instead, Francis is enjoying his money, the life of leisure he is living, and his pretty wife. He is surrounded by beautiful things, people, and settings, in other words he is living in the aesthetical and of the aesthetical. These aesthetic elements around him sustain him, he lives for and of them, never stepping outside that cycle of merriment and beauty. However, his obliviousness to his spiritual underdevelopment has been the unconscious bane of his entire existence.

Though Francis has never felt it, never wanted for money or comfort, what a tale of woe his life has been. A complete ignorance of the most important struggle of his life – to become himself. In addition, there is no union of love, nor any sort of true job or true calling. His life has no purpose, there is no success to be found in making his own living. The lack of working towards living is impoverishing him, as was asserted in the previous chapter, because Kierkegaard considers working to be one of the most important things in life. The problematic element of his life is also his marriage. Not just because he is not a partner in that union, but also because Margaret is not offering him what she could offer him as a woman. She is not guiding him towards becoming a man, supporting him in his unconscious despair to overcome his fears and become himself; she does none of that, because she too is unaware of how empty and aesthetic her life is. Neither of them has attached themselves to each other fully because

³¹ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or Volume II*, 150.

they are not complete themselves. Furthermore, Kierkegaard write that “it is an insult to want to attach oneself to another person in the way one attaches oneself to a finite and casual thing, conditionally, so that if later difficulties were to arise one could change one’s attachment again.”³² That is probably one of the reasons why their marriage is so lacking. Francis knows Margaret is with him mainly for his money, should an opportunity present itself, she would change the attachment and not think anything of it.

For Kierkegaard there is a great value in marriage, because it can offer man so much that he is unable to find in himself. For a man the relationship is ordinary and universal. “It deprives him of the vain joy of being the extraordinary, in order to give him the true joy of being the universal. It brings him into harmony with existence as a whole, teaching him to rejoice in this.”³³ The problem is that Francis never comprehended the need to be both individual and universal, to become himself, to find his calling. Universal in the sense that like any other men he would be working in order to live and find his success and fulfilment in his work. Therefore, neither could he be individual, because he did not choose to become himself. His wife could never teach him something he did not now, nor could she do it for because she herself is too opinionated and vain, an embodiment of the aesthetic life. However, there is a moment of enlightenment in the story, so to speak. The transforming experience of losing his fear connects Francis for the first time to himself. He does not see his calling, nothing like that, but for the first time in his life, when he ran after those buffalos, Francis consciously chose and thus chose himself. He saw himself as a man, saw his own self, and chose it. Kierkegaard explains both the difficulty and the importance of the act of choosing. It is difficult for an individual to muster up the courage to choose, because he unknowingly senses the gravity of that action. He who chooses aesthetically is not deliberating one either/or, but a multiplicity, he is not choosing absolutely, only for the moment. Therefore, in the next moment the aesthete can choose again. When Francis rejects his fears, he chooses ethically. The ethical choice is infinitely easier, but also harder. There was only choice to select, but it carried a far greater importance than the previous choices. That is why the choice Francis makes in that pivotal moment has such a significance. Kierkegaard explains this thus:

Making a choice is not so much a question of choosing the right as of the energy, the earnestness, the pathos with which one chooses. Thereby the personality announces its inner infinity, and thereby, in turn, the personality is consolidated. ... For the choice being made with the whole inwardness of his personality, his nature is

³² Kierkegaard, *Either/Or Volume II*, 252.

³³ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or Volume II*, 254.

purified and he himself brought into immediate relation to the eternal Power whose omnipresence interpenetrates the whole of existence.³⁴

When Francis chose to conquer his fears, it was an either/or choice, his personality was consolidated. In that moment he was himself, he made that choice with “whole inwardness of his personality” and became a man. This transfiguration is a powerful moment for Francis because he understands what has happened and what is now his task. That puts him in a completely different position in relation to the other characters in the story. The power shift is especially obvious to Margaret, who unconsciously understands what has happened. While she cannot attain the same consecration of spirit because she is always choosing aesthetically, she can still somehow comprehend the change. Francis’s veins are filled with “life”, for the first time he feels like himself, like the master of his own fate. The moment of choice enabled him to become himself and see the infinite in him and in the world. Margaret’s finite, yet masterful grasp on him cannot withstand such spiritual power. She is left shocked and weak.

Margaret is an interesting example of someone making aesthetic choices, which are finite and temporal. She has only her face, her intelligence, and her manners to recommend her as a person, and she has been using those tools thoroughly. There can be no doubt of her intelligence, as was confirmed by Wilson. She understands her situation very well and makes the best of it, by staying with Francis and enjoying the lifestyle he can offer. But her killing of him portrays her not only as a woman fighting for control over her husband, but also someone in despair. She is only capable of making an aesthetic choice, that is necessarily finite and temporal, as such it can offer satisfaction for just a short period of time. When she kills Francis, it is not just her attempt to get him back in her clutches, but outburst of her despair. Innately, she appears to be suffering. Kierkegaard aptly describes the internal passion of perdition she is suffering from with the following words:

This passion of annihilation which rages in you; for this is what you desire, you would annihilate everything, you would satiate the hunger of doubt at the expense of existence. To this end you cultivate yourself, to this end you harden your temper; for you are willing to admit that you are good for nothing, the only thing that gives you pleasure is to march seven times around existence and blow the trumpet and thereupon let the whole thing collapse, that your soul may be tranquilized.³⁵

In other words, she kills Francis in order to pacify the torrents of emotion inside herself. Despite her face displaying obvious distress she still pulled the trigger. It might have been to save Francis from what she perceived to be imminent danger, but more likely she did it to save

³⁴ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or Volume II*, 141.

³⁵ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or Volume II*, 136.

herself. Francis's revelation and transformation threatened the peacefulness of her existence and the order she had created for them. By vanquishing the threat Francis represented, she is able once more to continue to pursue her aesthetic existence. Margaret acted on pure spiritual instinct. She might be feeling horrified as she looks at Wilson, but at the same time she is asserting the righteousness of her approach to life. She is proud of her ambiguous wisdom, which she has now preserved from the existential threat posed by her husband's transformation.

It is hard to predict whether she will view her choices in a different light and perceive the possibility of the ethical choice, like her husband did, whether she will face only one either/or, rather than a multitude. However, even if she did find the courage to make an ethical choice, there would still be the issue of repeating that choice and sustaining it, striving for it (for her own self) continuously. In the light of the fact that she has never, as is documented in the story, found herself inclined towards a particular calling, which could help her with that choice, the probability of that moment of ethical choice remains low. The reason why Francis was able to make that choice was the incident with lion that happened earlier, which awakened him. He might not have understood the origins of his cowardice or why he acted the way he did, but he became aware of the realities of his existence and the state of his life. His previous cowardice enabled him to become brave enough to face the either/or and choose one thing, choose eternally. Within the extent of the story Margaret lacks that sort of personal pivotal moment, but possibly Francis's death might awaken her. Again, the issue is not in making that choice once, but making it again. In that respect Francis seemed far more likely to repeat his choosing rather than Margaret, who is portrayed as too comfortable and essentially too satisfied with the current state of her life.

The types of losses and estrangement described in the "Short and Happy Life of Francis Macomber" are varying, yet significant. They ask the elementary questions of human existence, like growing up and becoming a man, accepting the responsibility for one's life, or the value of marriage (similarly to story "The Snows of Kilimanjaro"). In the beginning, Francis loses his face, because he publicly shows himself to be a coward. But despite the initial appearance of loss, that awful moment enables him to gain something more significant – himself. The loss is instrumental to Francis's spiritual development. It is not an overstatement to call him a phoenix, because he is able to rise from the "ashes" and (finally) stand on his own feet. It is a majestic moment and in line with how Hemingway often depicts his protagonists. They become great when they suffer, because in those moments they are pushed to their limits and asked to show what they are made of. The same happened to Francis Macomber, since he showed that he was man, after all.

Then there is the loss of control, which occurs both to Francis and Margaret. Francis's loss of control manifested itself in him running away from the dying lion, whilst completely besieged by fear. He loses control of himself when he argues with his wife in the middle of the night, enraged by her behaviour that alienates her from him. As if he sensed that she does not care to recognise him anymore. As was said before, these losses culminate into a gain for Francis. Margaret's loss of control, on the other hand, is something completely different. There are two moments in which she loses control, in juxtaposition to each other in the text. She loses control at the beginning of the story, when she cannot stop talking about what a coward her husband is. She repeatedly draws the attention to the incident, as if she could not believe how quickly the illusions that she might have had about her husband were dispelled. More interesting is her loss of control that happens at the end of the story, when she kills Francis. In the moment Francis chose ethically she understood that she lost her control over him. She had been so certain of her position in his life and of their marriage, that she can only watch with fear and anxiety how becomes a threat to her existence. His newly acquired sense of his manhood and of the possibility of becoming himself erase any semblance of superiority she, in her ambiguous wisdom, might have had over him. To preserve herself, she kills him. That leaves her inner peace somehow intact, but the question is whether she has not lost more than she has gained?

That decision keeps her in the aesthetic prison she has created for herself, by constantly choosing aesthetically which, as Kierkegaard has said, is no choice at all. She remains estranged from herself. It is right to say that the issue of alienation from self is the biggest problem of the two protagonists of this short story. Francis has spent his whole life being ignorant and afraid, estranged from himself. The tragedy of his story, similarly to that of Harry, is that his revelation is severed by his death. Margaret, on the other hand, apparently chooses to remain in her ignorance and in her estrangement. By killing Francis, Margaret chooses to stay alienated from her spirit and from the choice of the eternal. She cements her aesthetic choices with one of the most significant choices – by killing another person. She murders another to murder any rebellion from her own spirit, because she does not have the courage to change her life and live differently.

Another example of estrangement presented in the story is their marriage. While they might be estranged from their own selves, throughout the course of the story they also become estranged from each other in their marriage. He is revealed as a coward, she confirms her reputation of an unfaithful woman. Externally, at the beginning their marriage seems to be another marriage of wealthy people. She is beautiful and he has the money, together they socialise and spend the money. It is simplified view, which is expanded as soon as Francis

proves himself to be a coward. In that moment the estrangement, that was hidden, starts to seep through. Margaret cannot unsee that incident with lion, nor does she appear to be willing to forget it. He cannot forgive her episode with Wilson. As a result, the next day their marriage is alienated from the state in which it was the day before. The pretence is gone, at least on Francis's side. The loss that occurs in their marriage that day and night, is Francis's gain, because it enables him to transform the anger that he is feeling towards something more productive – courage. The experience made him stronger, and Francis is finally ready to become a man, even though he does not know about it. It is sad that he dies so soon after discovering and becoming himself; on the other hand, compared to the rest of his life, he dies in the best possible moment. At the pinnacle of his life.

4 Jake Barnes as the True Hero in *The Sun Also Rises*

The Sun Also Rises is Hemingway's first novel, which was published in 1926; it is also one of his most famous. The story centres around the main protagonist named Jake Barnes, but there is also a group of characters who are key to the plot of the story. This group might be perceived as gathering of wastrels, the dregs of the post-war "meaninglessness", as Linda Martin-Wagner writes in her essay³⁶, but this is not the case. Jake Barnes and his friends emphasize the positive characteristics of friendship and unity; they are a group because they share the same experiences and beliefs. They each have been marked by the great war. A fitting description for the world they are living in can be found in Kierkegaard, when he compares the contemporary society to the state of a dissolute Greek city state:

Everything goes on as usual, and yet there is no longer any one who believes in it. The invisible spiritual bond which gives it validity no longer exists, and so the whole age is at once comic and tragic – tragic because it is perishing, comic because it goes on. For it is always the imperishable which sustains the perishable, the spiritual which sustains the corporal; and if it might be conceived that an exanimate body could for a little while continue to perform its customary functions, it would in the same way be comic and tragic.³⁷

In certain sense that is precisely the situation of Jake Barnes and his friends. They find themselves in the midst of the clash between the perishable and the imperishable, the tragic and the comic; it is a clash they are experiencing within themselves. They were born to a generation, only to have that generation almost completely erased – all because of the war. They saw the bodies of their friends and acquaintances shattered by the iron fist of the war, all of them having fought a meaningless war full of empty words. Jake and his friends, in the words from Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, have learned to be:

always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious, and sacrifice and the expression in vain. ... had seen nothing sacred, and the things that were glorious had no glory and the sacrifices were like the stock yards.³⁸

In other words, the humanity turned on itself and used Jake and his friends as means to achieving that. The civilisation started to consume itself, just like in that failed Greek city state example quoted in the previous paragraph. Only when that annihilation stooped giving pleasure

³⁶ Linda Wagner-Martin, "Introduction," in *New Essays on The Sun Also Rises*, ed. Linda Wagner-Martin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) 7.

³⁷ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or Volume II*, 17.

³⁸ Wendy Martin, "Brett Ashley as New Woman in *The Sun Also Rises* New Essays on *The Sun Also Rises*, ed. Linda Wagner-Martin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) 66.

did the world awaken to the consciousness of what it had lost and started to feel its misfortune. Who are profoundly feeling the world's misfortunes are Jake and his friends. With their lives forever involuntarily marked by their wartime experience, Jake and his friends are "just" living, going to bars and drinking heavily, meeting friends, travelling, overall enjoying themselves. They are substituting loss with perishable values and actions because the return to the imperishable feels impossible.

The plot of the story might be described as a story of a group of friends going to see the bullfighting in Pamplona, Spain, where the emotions and passions among them galvanize and erupt. However, that would be very a short-sighted approach, because the novel is both a brilliant example of Hemingway's talent for writing, as well as insightful psychological analysis of the titular characters. Besides Jake Barnes, there is Brett Ashley, Robert Cohn, Bill Gorton, and Mike Campbell. Each of them has experienced some form of loss and estrangement and now appear to be drifting through their lives. Interestingly, the novel opens with the first two chapters describing not the protagonist Jake Barnes, but his friend Robert Cohn. Hemingway includes long sentences about his boxing at Princeton, how he has always felt sensitive about his Jewishness and worried over how others would treat him. Robert Cohn is the only character in the book to be described this way, which can be understood as a sign of the fact that even though he is part of the group (the community mentioned in the previous paragraph), it is not entirely true. He belongs, but not completely, because he always stays on the surface, never entering the true depths of the friendships that he considers to be his own. He does not understand the inner fight that goes on in them, possibly because he is too insensitive to it. Still, his distance from the other people in the group is key, because it allows him to act as the emotional catalyst at the end of the story. He has a role to fill, though that is not clear at the beginning of the story.

The deliberate omission of the main protagonist serves to highlight the importance of the dialogues between the characters in the book, because it signals that therein will lie the action. Jake Barnes is not revealed through lengthy descriptions about his history and how he came to be in Paris, rather, he is presented through his thoughts, discussions and talks with friends, his actions. It is the words he thinks and speaks that shape the impression he gives and tell the tale of his life. It is a brilliant example of Hemingway's writing technique, which can be compared to Cezanne's painting. As Colm Tóibín writes in his introduction to *The Sun Also Rises* Hemingway strived to write like Cezanne painted, with the brushstrokes:

open and obvious in its textures, with repetitions and subtle variations, each one containing something close to emotion, but emotion deeply controlled. Each

stroke sought to pull the eye in and hold it, and yet to also build to a larger design in which there was a richness and density, but also much that was mysterious and hidden.³⁹

Just as each stroke builds up the larger design, so do the words in the novel build up the momentum of the plot. The biggest brush stroke, the *crescendo*, comes in the form of Robert Cohn, his words, and actions. Like the painting described in the quote, the text of *The Sun Also Rises* too is open and obvious in its textures, yet it also contains subtle variations. Between the lines hides the mystery of the background story of Jake and how deeply he and his friends have been wounded by the war.

From the beginning of the novel Jake's background story remains concealed. It is there, but not entirely. Often there is repetition of words and situations in the text, which inconspicuously hints at his story. Some of the dialogues between him and his friends are rich and open, full of allusions and shared context, some contain very few words, and their simplicity is the key to uncovering the true meaning that is being left unsaid. As was mentioned before, this approach only serves to heighten the impact of the emotions the characters in the novel are experiencing; their passions and heartbreaks are simultaneously concealed and bared. Every word and paragraph carry the weight of meaning they depict; every repeated sentence underscores the thoughts and feelings expressed in the text. With this masterful juxtaposition of simplicity and complexity, of short and long, hidden and revealed, the text aptly mirrors the conflicting nature of not just the characters of its protagonists, but also the period they are living in.

The main protagonist Jake Barnes is a young man living in Paris, where he is working and spending time with his friends. His life can be characterised by the fitting words of his friend Bill Gorton: "You're an expatriate. You've lost touch with the soil. You get precious. Fake European standards have ruined you. You drink yourself to death. You become obsessed by sex. You spend all your time talking, not working."⁴⁰ To that Jake mockingly replies that what could he wish for more? But that reply betrays the depth of the loss he has suffered. Estranged from his home country and the tradition he was born into; he is slowly drifting through life. On the surface, it is a life full of fun and enjoyment, going around cafés, dancing, meeting strangers and getting drunk with friends. However, that glamorous and careless lifestyle conceals his inner struggle. It is not living what Jake does, nor is it surviving, but

³⁹ Colm Tóibín, "Introduction," in *The Sun Also Rises*, (London: Vintage Books, 2014) xii.

⁴⁰ Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*, (London: Vintage Books, 2014) 100.

somewhere in-between What is Jake doing is coming to terms with what has happened to him and his generation, looking for a way to live in a world that has lost all sense to him. That is why his friends are so important to him and their relationships are so essential to understanding the meaning of this novel. The shared experience of their group, mentioned in the first paragraph, has forged a bond that will never break, no matter how much they might hurt each other. In a world where they saw everything destroyed and trampled upon, the only certainty being death, they are all they have. The only way to bear the losses and the chaos they feel is their friendship.

The losses that Jake has suffered are numerous. There is the physical loss, the lost years he spent soldiering, the semi-loss of his belief in God, the loss of ideals, the estrangement he is feeling, and his doomed love for Brett. As a man who has served in the war, Jake has seen many men lose their lives or get severely wounded. Those who survive their injuries are forever marked with their experience, which is what happened to Jake. It is never explicitly revealed in the book how much or when did Jake get hurt, nor does any of his friends talk about it very often; this purposeful omission created by Hemingway underscores the severity of that injury. It is never talked about, because it is something painful, it represents a constant reminder that they might have left the battlefields and field hospitals behind them, but they can never truly erase them from their memory. Jake's impotence, his inability to have sex, might be more pleasant to the eye than a bodily disfigurement, but it is equally damaging to him. His injury permeates everything, since he will never be able to be with a woman again or have children. That one injury, albeit healed, will never properly heal, because it is for life (life that will never lead to the creation of another life, in terms of evolutionary direction of thinking Jake is a worthless specimen). His impotence is stealing from him in the same manner that the war stole from other people, having robbed them of their dreams and ideals, their beliefs, and their loved ones. Jake has survived the war, but at what price? What life is he to have now? Having suffered such physical loss Jake is now forcefully estranged from the other people, rendered different by something which was not his fault. The novel is a testament to his attempt to try and carve out a life for himself. The blaring unfairness of that is staggering, even more so, because not once does he ask for a word of sympathy or pity. All he ever says is that he feels "tight", like the others also sometimes feel.

The mentions of the feeling of "tightness" are interspersed throughout the entire novel. It is used to describe the moments when Jake is feeling down, as a reason why Mike is angry with Robert Cohn and cannot seem to stop, even though he knows well that he should, it is there when Bill Gorton is joking about "Irony and Pity". That "tightness" is another form of loss

suffered in the war. Shaken by everything that has happened to them and the things they have seen, with their hearts broken, and reason trampled on, Jake and his friends have lost their ability to move on and be truly carefree and free. The war has taken that option from them, instead it left behind that tight feeling and an empty mask. It is another part of the war's terrible legacy and something Jake is trying to either ignore or make peace with, but he is unable to, because even if he were able to forget for a moment, he only needs to meet a friend from his group to be reminded of it again. It is like a constantly bleeding wound that will never close. It is obvious when Jake and Bill meet an Englishman Harris and they fish together and when it is time to say goodbye, Harris is feeling a little tight. Harris says:

“I say. Really don't know much how it means. I've not had much fun since the war.”

“We'll fish together again, some time. Don't you forget it, Harris.”

“We must. We have had such a jolly good time.”⁴¹

When Harris says they do not know how much it means, he knows, and they know that they do. That is why they promise each other they will meet again. By promising and saying “Don't you forget it” they are not only reminding themselves to not forget the good times they have had and will have in the future, but they are also reminding themselves that there is no need to feel tight at that moment. The war is over, and they are done with it, they are free to wrestle with fate and make as many promises as they can, because very little can prevent them from fulfilling them. It is pledge not only to the fishing, but to the life itself, when Jake says “we must”; we must commit ourselves to making promises and having a good time, since that is what we have shed blood for and now can destroy ourselves with it. The difference about this destruction is that it is voluntary, it is chosen, and it means drinking life to the lees. What else could be more important or sacred to those who have been to the war?

Another sign of how broken that generation and those people have become is their relationship to faith and God. Though Jake is presented as a Catholic, when asked directly whether he is, he replies “technically”. He does not hesitate to pray or go to confession, but there are apparent issues with his faith. The reply “technically” would suggest that he believes because he was raised to believe in God, however, he is not so certain anymore. The safety and simplicity of childhood belief in God has been stripped from him and that has left his heart bare. The solid faith that might have been there, probably nourished by family example and tradition, got uprooted. The loss of this certainty of faith is manifesting itself in every possible manner, because suddenly the questions of purpose of life and certain things happen do not get clear answers. The clarity Catholicism offered is no longer present in Jake's worldview, it has been

⁴¹ Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*, 112.

replaced by the strong relationships with his friends and his dedication to live a nice life. His friends have become his family and even though they are not perfect, he would not give them up for anything. The objective of having a good, solid life can be observed for example in Jake's dedication to his work, he often goes to the office and works, something none of his friends have shown care for, or his comment to Robert Cohn that in the summers he goes to Spain. His craving for stability and predictability of life is another sign of what the war and the loss of God have taken from him. With the absence of some divine plan or fate Jake has become the architect of his life and he is building it to be sturdy rock on which he can rest his heavy mind.

However, there is a repeated restlessness in Jake's life represented by his complicated relationship with lady Brett Ashley. She is a tragic figure, flying from one entertainment to another, from one man's embrace to another's, never truly belonging to anyone and perhaps even to herself. Jake has been in love with her for "off and on for a hell of a long time", and Brett loves him too. But they can never be together, and not just because of his injury and of her escapades. He is the only constant in her life, therefore, she is drawn to him because of the stability and certainty he exudes, but he can never offer her what she truly craves. When she falls in love with the toreador Pedro Romero, she is completely lost and besotted. Brett loves Romero so much that she goes away with him to Madrid, only to later change her mind. She says that she could not ruin him and be a bitch who ruins children, which makes her "feel rather good". She remarks "It's sort of what we have instead of God."⁴² The reason she gave up Romero is because she did not want to destroy him with her losses and her feeling of detachment from normal life, which is something the young toreador could never understand, and Jake understands it too well.

The episode with Romero presents her as rather selfless person, however, it also raises questions. If she loved Romero and was able to give him up for his own good, why cannot she love Jake despite his impotence? There are several reasons. To her Jake represents a reminder of war and she loves him, not the least because of what they had experienced together, but that is not enough. Jake cannot give her what she wants and though she might flock back to him from time to time, she will never belong to him (never give herself to him) and they both know it. He represents the past and she is desperately looking for the future, even though she might not be aware of it herself. The novel ends with Brett saying: "Oh Jake ... we could have had such a damned good time together." To that he replies: "Yes. ... Isn't it pretty to think so?"⁴³

⁴² Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*, 214.

⁴³ Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*, 216.

This example shows how Brett is still somehow tethered to the past and the idea that she and Jake, after they have survived the war and fell in love, might have married, had children, and led a happy life. But Jake knows this could have never happened, despite her loving him, she is not honest with herself and consequently with him, their love and possible marriage would have been built on illusions. His reply “Isn’t it pretty to think so?” is therefore tinged with irony. It is an illusion they know to be false. She will never be able to give up the pleasures and visions of the future she is looking for, and Jake could never offer her what she craves. Therefore, as hinted by Jake’s last words, it is better for them to suffer and love each other from a distance. At that moment, Jake is finally admitting that to himself. Throughout the novel there was a sliver of hope from Jake that Brett might turn to him and stay with him, although she was already engaged to Mike Campbell and simultaneously having an affair after affair. The love between her and Jake was a lost love, love forever doomed. They could never be together, the end of the novel marks their acknowledgement of that. However, it is not probable that they will ever give up their relationship and their love. It is a link binding them to each other, giving them a sense of belonging somewhere. If they have each other, they are not completely lost to the world, estranged from it.

One of the most significant losses that has yet to be mentioned is the loss of illusions. It is observable in the remarks of Jake and Bill Gorton when they speak of irony and pity, when Robert Cohn discovers that Brett does not really love him, and most significantly when their little group of friends falls apart. Though it was previously mentioned that their war experience and the common sense of estrangement bonded them, it was not enough to hold the group together. It would have been easy to blame Robert Cohn for ruining the atmosphere on their trip to Spain but is just a catalyst for the explosion at the end. Brett’s promiscuous behaviour, Jake’s turning blind eye and Mike’s tolerance all contributed to the dissolution of their easy friendship. Brett’s careless behaviour with Cohn pushes him to the edge and he starts punching around himself. But he is too weak to face the violence he has caused; in the end he wants to make peace with everyone and eventually leaves like a beaten dog.

Cohn’s outburst pops the bubble of friendship that has protected them from the reality. That moment uncovers several facts: Firstly, Cohn has finally understood that he does not entirely belong with the rest of the group, not only because he was unable to leave Brett alone after she broke up with him. Cohn is like his friends, but not in the way that matters. Consequently, his friends remain out of reach for him, which predestines him to be alone, as his silent departure at the end confirms. However, the loss of illusions is more severe for Jake. The fact that their little group of friends has been destroyed is difficult, because it leaves him

vulnerable. His friends not only helped to quell the noise in his head, but they also made him feel like one of them, even though he is not fully a man, in physical terms. After Cohn's outburst Jake understands that even though war experience has bonded them, it is not enough to erase the differences between them. The vision of happy little group of friends has been destroyed, because they were never a harmonious party to begin with. The loss of the group only confirms Jake's impression that no one can save him, except for himself. What is more, Jake finally accepts that Brett could never care for him in the way he needs her to, which is the reason why he gives up his love and lets her be.

There is personal awakening at the end of the novel, not least for Brett and Jake. Brett might not have wanted to be a bitch and ruin Romero, nonetheless, she will go back to Mike and embark once more on that life of affairs, drinking and shallow pleasures. Yet the ending of the novel also evokes the feeling of even greater loss, a loss of an era. Can all the friends go back to their carelessness and feigned oblivion? Or will they all admit to themselves that they have very little idea of what they are doing with their lives and that they are only trying to fill in the void they are feeling inside? The losses captured in this novel are profound and wounding. What is worse, they all have one common cause. They have been caused by the war, either directly or indirectly. The war is to be blamed for those lost lives (theirs included), those lost years, the loss of illusions. The war is the reason why they constantly feel estranged from the world and outside society they are living in. The war created void inside them and the feeling of deep restlessness, to beat this they are delving to drinking escapades and parties, seeking pleasure after pleasure to silence the beating in their ears. Jake is the symbol of all the losses that war has caused them. Though working and living more peacefully than others, he has been left impotent and untethered, longing for and loving Brett, a girl he could never truly have. There is no God to save him, no loving embrace to accept him. In the end, he realises that he is on his own.

From a Kierkegaardian point of view, Jake and his friends represent a very interesting set of people. The issue of becoming oneself is an interesting question to pose to and analyse on the three characters of Robert Cohn, Brett Ashley, and Jake. Robert Cohn can be likened to the character of Francis Macomber, similarly to Francis Cohn has never become a true man. The fact manifests itself in the moment he uses his physical strength to hurt others, only to cowardly cry and ask for an apology. Cohn cannot be veritably sincere in his apologies because he lacks the understanding of what he has done. He simply cannot bear the consequences of his actions. While the aesthetic choice is no choice at all because it is choosing the finite and the temporal, Cohn seems to not be choosing at all. He passively accepts whatever happens and the

moment he acts, he gets lost and scared. That points at both his childishness, as well as the stunted state of his spirit, like it was in the case of Francis Macomber. What Cohn lacks is the pivotal moment in which he could confront himself, that moment might have spurred his spirit and quietened his conflicting desires. That moment might have been his eruption in Pamplona when he felt as a betrayed lover. The problem is that he was never really a lover, rather a source of pleasure to be used and discarded. But the breaking point never came for Cohn, which is why he leaves like a beaten dog. He must be feeling exhausted, his outburst was the manifestation of a rebelling spirit, which was not strong enough to awake Cohn to its existence and the possibility it represents.

The case of Brett Ashley in terms of psychological analysis is interesting. On the surface, Brett is a very popular woman who has charms almost everyone who appears in her life, including Jake. She is a social butterfly, always flying from one party to the next one, always all over the place and commanding everyone's attention. Her affairs and promiscuity, her drinking and relentless search for pleasure, and her almost hedonistic approach to life mark her as an aesthete. However, she is very different from Harry in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" or Margaret from "The Short and Happy Life of Francis Macomber". Brett is intentionally making those aesthetic choices, not because she could not understand the ethical, but because she is trying to avoid it, thus avoiding herself. If she chose to live ethically, to choose ethically, it would mean confronting herself with her own self, accepting it and becoming it. And that is something she appears unwilling to do. Most probably, it is the heritage of the war. To use Kierkegaard's words: she is "constantly hovering over her self", but she refuses to approach it. She artificially stunts the growth of her spirit. Rather than face the difficulties and the effort linked with the ethical choice, she drifts through the life and is not looking for giving it meaning. She willingly stays in the aesthetic melancholy, seeking temporal relief, choosing the finite.

Yet her spirit is not as tamed as she would wish for it to be. It struggles to assert itself and lead her to becoming herself. The moment of struggle can be observed in the scene at the end of the novel when she tells Jake that she could not behave like a "bitch" and destroy Pedro Romero. Those are the words of her spirit, which seeks a higher stage of life. Kierkegaard describes such moments thusly: "There comes a moment in a man's life when his immediacy is, as it were, ripened and the spirit demands a higher form in which it will apprehend itself as spirit."⁴⁴ In other words, Brett's spirit is seeking to apprehend itself as a spirit, it posits the absolute which posits it. Kierkegaard writes: "I posit the absolute and I myself am the absolute;

⁴⁴ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or Volume II*, 159.

but with complete identity with this I can say that I choose the absolute that chooses me, that I posit the absolute which posits me.”⁴⁵ Essentially, she already has her self and understands it, but she also has to choose it, then she will have a complete identity.

If she allowed her spirit to collect itself out of this dispersion and let it transform itself, she would be happier. The problem with Brett’s life is that it lacks any sort of meaning. There is never any mention in the novel of any sort of her calling. Any sense of calling she might have felt, she did not heed it. In that sense her life is more tragic than Jake’s, despite his impotence, because she is unlikely to experience the satisfaction and sense of purpose that comes from working towards living. She fails to fulfil this condition for a meaningful life, as a result, she remains frozen, temporary. But as the ending of the novel reveals, that is what she prefers; her boisterous life with Mike and the oblivion granted to her by drinking and excessive partying. It is easier for her, rather than accepting herself and coming to terms with her war experience. Thus, she willingly chooses to stay feeling “tight” till the end of her days.

It is a very different situation with Jake. At the end of the book, Jake too arrives at a decision, but it could not be more divergent. When she admits her scruples, he accepts the truth about their relationship. Not only in terms of their love, but also in terms of their psychology. While she is intentionally staying in the aesthetic stage, Jake’s spirit is more restless and more determined. With Kierkegaard in mind the entire novel can be viewed as Jake’s process of spiritual growth, its preparation to transform itself and attain a higher stage of life. From the beginning, Jake is standing on his own: He is the only one from the Parisian part of the group who is working. His work is very important to him, it is one of the first facts mentioned about him at the beginning of the novel. The placement of the work at the beginning underscores its importance to Jake. Through his work Jake can invest his life with feeling of accomplishment, satisfaction, and success. He is working in order to be living, he has a something to relate all his actions and decisions to, which gives him an advantage over Brett and Cohn in terms of spirit. Yet before Jake proceeds to ascend to the higher stage of life, he experiences the bullfighting with his friends. It is his pivotal moment, the moment in which he faces just one either/or, in which he willingly chooses itself.

It might appear that Jake has taken too long with his decision, but one of the problems is the fact that not only does this spiritual “move” require a significant courage, but he is also doing it entirely on his own. None of his close friends have achieved it, except perhaps for Bill Gorton who is not there in the critical moment, Jake walks alone. He is a pioneer in his own

⁴⁵ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or Volume II*, 179.

world and as such he slowly musters up the courage and will to become himself. Throughout the novel he is deferring the decision, hesitating to make a choice. But once he awakens to the reality of his relationship with his friends and Brett, he decides. Kierkegaard describes compares the moment to a birth of a child, expect in this case that person is giving birth to itself.

It is an astonishing moment:

There is a seriousness in this which perturbs the whole soul: to become conscious of oneself in one's eternal validity is more significant than everything else in the world. It is as though you were caught and ensnared and could nevermore, either in time or eternity, make your escape, it is as though you lost your own self, as thou you ceased to be ... It is a serious and significant moment when for an eternity one attaches oneself to an eternal power, when one receives oneself as a person whose memory no lapse of time shall efface, when in an eternal and unfailing sense one becomes aware of oneself as the person one is.⁴⁶

At the end of the novel, that is precisely what Jake is heading towards to. His spirit is rising towards the ethical stage of life, requiring him to accept the ternal and attach oneself to the eternal represented by his spirit. As Kierkegaard writes, it is more significant than everything else in the world. As he chooses himself and fights for the eternal possession of himself, Jake is experiencing the freedom of passion (which is aroused in him by the choice, as it is also presupposed by the choice). When he thus fights, he fights for something which is his eternal blessedness, which at last will offer him a measure of peace.

For his courage to endure this difficult, yet simple transformation, Jake can be called a true hero. A hero because he is striving to become himself, which is something none of his war-marked friends tried to do. Despite the losses he has faced, the estrangement he has felt and continues to feel, Jake is willing to overcome those and struggle to find the meaning in his life, to choose himself. With this he is refusing the short, vain oblivion that Brett is seeking. It is an attestation to Jake's spiritual strength, because in his despair he finds the will to despair consciously and to use that despair to choose himself, to choose the despair. Thus, even though Jake might have been physically emasculated by his impotence, his spirit has only grown empowered. With Jake Barnes Hemingway presents more of man than Robert Cohn or Mike Campbell will ever be. A true hero, who continues to fight long after everyone else has ceased to.

⁴⁶ Kierkegaard, *Either/Or Volume II*, 173.

5 Conclusion

The issue of meaning of life is a problem that has plagued humanity from its nascent. How to find purpose in life and is there any to be found are some of the questions posed by the literary characters analysed in this thesis. The aim of this thesis was to analyse selected heroes of Hemingway's texts and examine the nature and degree of loss and estrangement they have suffered and that is depicted in those texts. The words "loss" and "estrangement" manifest themselves in different forms in those stories, nonetheless, put in context they both stem from the same source – the World War I. In both "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" and *The Sun Also Rises* the impact of war has a significant presence in those texts and a heavy bearing on their protagonists. The analysis of loss and estrangement in their lives reveals the deeper undercurrents of their lives and provides explanation for their life choices and behaviour. Nowhere is it perhaps more obvious than in the first story analysed – "The Snows of Kilimanjaro".

In "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" Hemingway presents a protagonist who is about to suffer to the greatest loss that can ever happen to someone – Harry is about to die. As he lays dying, he looks back on his life and comes to a revelation that death is not the worst thing that could have happened to him. He is losing his life, but since it is not painful, it becomes of secondary importance in the light of more severe loss. The relationship with his wife is crumbling yet to him it only means the loss of pretence that he has ever loved her or cared for her more than in a shallow manner. What surfaces as the most significant loss in his life is the fact that he has squandered away his potential. Ever since he was a young man Harry understood that there were things that he should write about and that it was crucial to write about them properly. However, he did not do that, instead opting to write about things that were liked but not as substantial. Later, he stopped writing at all. What he understands as he nears his death is how much bearing this decision has had on his life and why it can be rendered essentially meaningless. He failed to do the one thing in his life he was supposed to do, the one activity that could have given him purpose. Since he did not fight for it, he lost it, as Hemingway shows on his example. While Hemingway never directly distinguishes between a meaningful and a meaningless life, the notion clearly emerges in all three texts analysed in this thesis. Harry has not lived a life of meaning, surrounded by the comfort that has suffocated his talent and essentially his own self.

In the second short story "The Short and Happy Life of Francis Macomber" Hemingway presents a different hero, who is nonetheless suffering from estrangement, albeit of different

form than Harry from “The Snows”. Francis Macomber has spent his entire life not being himself, estranged from his self and from his adulthood. In two pivotal moments when his life is endangered does Francis confront himself with the real state of his life. How he has never lived fully, instead spending his life in a subdued form of personality, enslaved by his upbringing, and controlled by his wife. His marriage is slowly decaying, but it has not been a proper marriage from the beginning of that relationship, since it could be rendered as a mere transaction years later. The losses Francis is suffering due to his cowardice are important to the development of his own character, for his struggle to become himself, to attain himself. The loss is also a gain, which becomes clear later in the story, when he manages to become himself and to feel the full possession of his own self. In that moment, his life gains a meaning, some sense of purpose, but it is taken from him too early.

Those two different examples of Harry and Francis show both how fragile and unpredictable life is, but more importantly how difficult is the struggle for a meaning in one’s life. Harry had brushed himself against it, only to refuse it, because it appeared to be too much work and he did not want to exert himself. The refusal to fight for his own self and his talent is the greatest tragedy of his life. Francis’s example is almost equally tragic because of the complete obliviousness to his own underdevelopment, his estrangement from himself. He spends almost his entire life blind to the fact that he has never grown up, nor has he ever asked himself about the purpose of his life or strived to give it one. Only when he reveals himself as a coward his transformation can begin. Francis is more courageous than Harry, because he seizes the opportunity and gains himself for that one glorious moment. Victorious in his possession, he is killed. Harry, on the other hand, is full of the knowledge of his own loss when he dies.

The one Hemingway hero analysed in this thesis who addresses the struggle within himself to attain his own self is Jake Barnes. From the first pages of *The Sun Also Rises* his story is laden with loss; there is the physical loss of his manhood, the psychological injury stemming from his war experience, the loss of sense and purpose in the world, and his lost friends. However, the story is not just a tale of woe. As the plot of the novel progresses so evolves Jake’s acknowledgment of his mental estrangement from the ordinary world and in a sense from himself. Because all his previous beliefs and wishes have been eradicated, he has to find new ones, establish his self once again. He is tired, but nonetheless musters up the courage to strive to attain himself, he has understood that he has to rely on himself in the first place, not others. He is choosing to enter the struggle for himself and to become himself, to one more restore purpose and meaning to his very altered life.

On the surface, what is Hemingway telling in his novel is a story about a lost generation, that has suffered on too many occasions, seen too much destruction and loss. People whose whole life has been uprooted, any beliefs they held crushed to dust. Silently, they are crying, but they keep the smiles on their faces and drinks in their hands. Brett and her fiancé Mike Campbell are the epitome of that attitude towards life. They embody those broken ideals and the repercussions of the violence performed on humanity. Robert Cohn is a different case, he is more akin to Francis Macomber, an American boy-man who is frozen in that state, despite the wartime experience. Jake is both part of the group and outside of it. Aside from the argument that he has suffered the most given the fact that he has been injured physically and is to be always reminded of that injury, he has a work and focuses on simplicities rather than excesses. But what is most admirable about Jake is his silent determination to once more find his place in the world. He might have lost the footing and everything in between, but slowly (throughout the course of the novel) he is building up himself again. Therefore, what Hemingway depicts is not only a group of lost cases, but a man of a fine inner strength who continues to fight the fate despite the cards he has been dealt. Jake Barnes is the true man, not in the sense of physical prowess, but because he has the will, the determination, the mind to stand on his feet again. It is what makes him different not just from his friends, but also from the two main protagonists of those two short stories analysed in this thesis. He is man in the spiritual sense, which combined with his preserved physical ability (as well as the admiration for the physical, hence the fascination with bullfighting), makes him a true hero.

The application of Kierkegaard's thoughts on these texts is crucial, because it enables a better understanding of why the lives of those protagonists are problematic and from what are their problems stemming. It is the philosophical expression of the theme in Hemingway's texts. The characters in those texts are all searching for a meaning, sometimes they are aware of it, and sometimes not. The issue of search for meaning in life, the search for one's own self, is the central thought of Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*. Kierkegaard analyses how a person can choose themselves; how difficult the choice can be, yet how important and vital it is, how it contributes to a meaningful life. The consequences of not choosing to struggle to become one's own self are significant, because it results in life only half lived. The key is not only the choice, but also finding one's calling, which is instrumental to the choice, because through this calling that person can confront the choice and become themselves. For Kierkegaard that means working for living, which all the heroes analysed in this thesis fail to do, except for Jake Barnes, who has job at a newspapers to support himself. Bouchard, though unknowingly, precisely expresses in his article on Hemingway what Kierkegaard has in mind: "The value of work as a constant

recovery of purpose.”⁴⁷ Through work Jake Barnes is able to give his life a sense of purpose and as a result he can attempt to become himself. Harry from “The Snows” and Francis are unable to do that; the first has long given up on any sort of work, which has not only silenced his calling (his writing), but also robbed of the knowledge of his own self and the chance to become himself. Francis has never found his working, never had a work through which he could recover some sort of purpose of his life, thus he is completely ignorant of the struggle to become one’s own self.

While Hemingway does not use the same words as Kierkegaard, they are both discussing the same issue, the quest for a meaningful life. Hemingway uses his writing skill to ask what makes a man’s life meaningful and well-lived? What makes man a man? A hero? The character of Harry is a portrait of a man who had the talent, but stopped using it, he stopped being what he was supposed to be – a writer. Francis, on the other hand, is a different case. From the beginning of the story, he is portrayed as anything but a proper man or a hero, yet in the pivotal moment he discovers the strength and courage needed to become one. Suddenly, Francis’s life gets some of that meaning and purpose it has lacked. In that moment he becomes himself, as Kierkegaard would say. The embodiment of hero, albeit not in the traditional sense of physical prowess or manliness, is Jake Barnes. As mentioned previously, he is the one who consciously embarks at the quest to give his life a renewed purpose and meaning, he willingly chooses to become himself, aware of how difficult and personal that choice is. The application of Kierkegaard helps to explain why there is the overall sense of decay in “The Snows of Kilimanjaro”, why Francis’s has been a man-child for most of his life, and why Jake Barnes finds himself consciously refusing the illusion of his and Brett’s happiness, knowing it would never sustain him the way he needs to. By looking at the texts of Hemingway from a Kierkegaardian point of view it is possible to analyse the layers of meaning hidden in those stories and understand the personal development of their protagonists, since they are all essentially struggling with and for their own selves.

In the light of this the pairing of Hemingway’s texts and Kierkegaard’s thoughts appears to be almost instinctive, they are both dealing with the similar issues, though in a different manner. What is more, the use of Kierkegaard to analyse Hemingway’s texts showcases the sheer brilliance with Hemingway’s writing skill. He writes about the elementary philosophical problems in a manner that is anything but philosophical. His texts are direct, the dialogues of his characters are brief and brisk, yet he manages to hide in those simple, unadorned words

⁴⁷ David F. Bouchard, “Being Collected,” in *Hemingway: So Far from Simple*, (New York: Prometheus Books, 2010)119.

essential philosophical questions. Kierkegaard, on the other hand, explains simple philosophical problems in detailed and innovative fashion. By pairing the two of them it is possible to more profoundly analyse the degree of loss and estrangement in those selected stories, because the philosophical insight explains the hidden recesses of the stories. Similarly, it attests to the timelessness of both Hemingway's and Kierkegaard's texts. The issue of purpose and meaning in life, the quest of becoming one's own self, are deeply ingrained into both philosophy and everyday life. The union of philosophy and literature is instinctive, because those two disciplines are connected in their struggle to explain the phenomenon of human life. In this quest they complement each other, give meaning to, and explain each other. They might use different words and approach, yet the underlying question is shared. Such is the case of Hemingway and Kierkegaard, although there is no personal connection between them, the spiritual connection established by their respective writings is clear and sound. Hemingway's texts embody the thoughts and examples of life Kierkegaard presents in his treatises, on the other hand, Kierkegaard aptly gives explanation for the psychological state of the protagonists in those selected stories. By marrying Kierkegaard's thoughts to Hemingway's texts, it is possible to look at each of those Hemingway's protagonists with a new perspective and to understand the power and veracity of Hemingway's writing.

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