

Life as Bacon Fat:
War, Adventure, and Trauma in Hemingway's "Soldier's Home"

Koki Nomura

Courage is a mysterious thing. If a man has an opportunity in front of him to answer the nation's call to service, he may seize it, foreseeing both adventure and horror. War can defeat the obstacles that hold him back from going because it is a place where his courage gets measured. By going to war, he can walk home as a winner or at least avoid getting called chicken (Nomura 30).

War stays in a man's blood for life. A war veteran must survive his alienation from peacetime reality, difficulties adjusting to civilian life, inability to properly represent his war experience, and strange nostalgia for war. All of these are caused, ironically, by the series of unique experiences that he embraced in combat, such as total escape from reality, absolute power as a killer, indescribable scenes unfolded before his eyes, and strong homosocial love between men.

Although American soldiers during World War I suffered from shell shock as severely as British, French, Italian, and German soldiers, their postwar life is not much represented in literature. The few exceptions include Hemingway's "Now I Lay Me," "Big Two-Hearted River," and *The Sun Also Rises*, but none of these treats their protagonists directly as a war veteran. Meanwhile, "Soldier's Home," a chapter-story in his *In Our Time* (1924), depicts the life of Harold Krebs, once a courageous Marine enlistee in Europe during WWI who is now doomed by the irony of war and too exhausted to take on all his postwar responsibilities. This is a model story of postwar trauma including disillusion, alienation, longing for comradeship, and lost faith in everyone and everything. "War is an escape from the everyday into a special world where the bonds that hold us to our duties in daily life . . . disappear," former U. S.

Marine and writer William Broyles says in his essay "Why Men Love War." "In war, all bets are off. It's the frontier beyond the last settlement, it's Las Vegas . . . I knew many Marines who were great warriors but whose ability to adapt to civilian life was minimal" (58). Las Vegas is one wild experience where a man can bet his all, and Harold Krebs did volunteer for this experience but ends up being a bewildered and alienated sluggard.

There has been no criticism on "Soldier's Home" that probes strictly its psychoanalytic dimensions. This study will examine Harold Krebs' postwar trauma and his relations with the community, romance, family, God, and his job in America primarily by reviewing the story's historical, militaristic, and gender elements and deciphering the meanings of ambiguous symbols, characters, and situations in the text. Reading implications is one inevitable task for a better understanding of Hemingway's work since he "forces his reader to participate, to take sides, to supply answers to unvoiced questions, to understand more perhaps than his characters do" (Smith 16).

A veteran's isolation from his community is often caused by the society's collective amnesia towards veterans and the veteran's own repressed emotions. Harold Krebs, a man who did "the only thing for a man to do," returns to a *real* world populated with strangers. The reader with knowledge of American history can recognize the significance of Krebs' military record. According to the narrator, he fought at Belleau Wood, Soissons, the Champagne, St. Mihiel, and the Argonne, all of which make the top ten of the fiercest battles that American troops have ever experienced in their lengthy military history. Indeed, at the Battle of Belleau Wood (France, 1918), the U. S. Marines Corps earned their very first worldwide reputation. Krebs enlisted in this elite force known as "the few, the proud" who must value honor, courage, and commitment and are forever held to the highest standards, ethically, and morally. He went to the war in 1917 from a Methodist college in Kansas. Christian institutions during WWI put emphasis on producing disciplined young men for America's first war overseas. Krebs' America of the 1910s had already been acknowledged as the world's leading superpower, so it was no coincidence that the nation elected Woodrow Wilson as its president. Son of a widely known Presbyterian minister, Wilson was never shy about calling himself "Son of God" while in office. He wasted no time in breaking the Monroe

Doctrine and entering WWI to save Britain and France. "The sense of saintly aloofness was visible in his refusal to ask for a declaration of war" (Jewett and Lawrence 71). After victory, the President acclaimed, "At last the world knows America as the savior of the world" (11). American troops did rescue the people of Britain and France, if not the whole world, and Krebs is supposed to have been one of those saviors: "He had been a good soldier. That made a difference" (72). Above all, when he enlisted, it made "him feel cool and clear inside himself" and made him a man of action rather than words by doing "the only thing for a man to do, easily and naturally, when he might have done something else" (69-70). In short, Harold Krebs is a man of action.

The prewar photo in the story's first paragraph proves the refined bearing of a well-trained young man: "Krebs went to the war from a Methodist college in Kansas. There is a picture which shows him among his fraternity brothers, all of them wearing exactly the same height and style collar. He enlisted in the Marines in 1917" (69). This photo obviously suggests his good faith in service and his Methodist mother, which means that he is the perfect image of a good, obedient son. Wearing the same height and style collar, which is the universal symbol of military conformity, indicates that those men are trained to be excellent, indistinguishable, and replaceable in order to achieve one common goal. A group of fraternity brothers certainly implies an alienation from women, virginity, and homosociality, a reminder of knights in the chivalric world. The U. S. Marines, now and then, have the knights' strictest code of conduct, which stresses the strong bonds between men and prohibits men from consorting with females especially during military training. In addition, American culture molds men into warriors by stressing manhood and considering war a big test of this manhood, all of which serves as a motivation to fight. "Gender identity becomes a tool with which societies induce men to fight," Joshua Goldstein writes (252). Hence, in this prewar photo loaded with rigid components such as fraternity, Methodism, and the Marines, the novelist is presenting to the reader American servicemen's nobility and genuine brotherhood.

Meanwhile, freedom takes over in the second paragraph's wartime photo: "There is a picture which shows him on the Rhine with two German girls and another corporal. Krebs and the corporal look too big for their uniforms. The

German girls are not beautiful. The Rhine does not show in the picture" (69). What is wrong with this photo is obvious. In terms of their bodies being "too big," Robert Paul Lamb states that Krebs had become "individualistic" and "grown" as a result of his wartime experiences (21). It could also be said that a combat soldier's looseness is more predominant than the fraternity brothers' innocence. As for the Rhine photo without the beautiful Rhine and the girls' being "not beautiful," the novelist is excluding beauty from the photo to suggest how promiscuity increases as men become "less focused on the long-term future in wartime" (Goldstein 335). The men asked the girls out on a date, probably out of curiosity about foreign females, or they wanted to take a souvenir photo with local girls to prove their manliness. Their sharing no common language spared them the troublesome intricacies of verbal interaction: "You couldn't talk much and you did not need to talk. It was simple and you were friends. . . . On the whole he had liked Germany better. He did not want to leave Germany. He did not want to come home" (72). Finding an irony in those Americans dating their enemies, Tateo Imamura believes those girls to be prostitutes with whom the men had sex in order to satisfy their lust on the bodies of foreign women (103). Perhaps, like many other American soldiers, Krebs and his comrade might have felt so free overseas and tried to amuse themselves by interacting with local citizens, including German girls (or prostitutes) with very little English. In sum, the pair of the two young, cocky soldiers are making their war experience look glamorous in this photo. Nobility and highest commitment to the nation having faded, here Krebs is savoring freedom, adventure, comradeship, and manhood, and the novelist is implementing photography as a device to show it rather than tell it.

This war hero is now spending the summer of 1919 at his parents' house in Oklahoma strolling downtown, playing pool, watching local girls from the front porch, reading books, going to bed, and sleeping late. A man like Harold Krebs usually uses his military career for obtaining a decent job, but he never shows any such sign. There is one major reason why he cannot celebrate and set forth on a new life: he returned to the United States too late. "By the time Krebs returned to his home town in Oklahoma the greeting of heroes was over. . . . People seemed to think it was rather ridiculous for Krebs to be getting back so late . . ." (69). In fact, the Marines and Army Second Division (a

company widely known by its motto "Second-to-None") served together, and even after the war ended in November 1918, they were assigned to serve in occupational duty in Germany until August 1919 so that they had to return nine months later than the majority of soldiers. Krebs thus should be considered one of those men without a parade. Celebration after a long tour of duty is a reward for achievement for any veteran, and if there is no parade for them, some veterans get angry and others get depressed. Krebs is arguably a member of the latter group. This veteran must have felt great pride in doing "the only thing for a man to do" and he has so much to tell, but no one in town wants to listen to him. He never wanted to talk about the horrible war when he first returned home, and later he felt the need to talk because everyone was fed up with war stories. If the people ever wanted to hear a story, they only wanted to hear something extremely cruel and patriotic, so, to get listened to, he began to tell lies or exaggerations, only to acquire the nausea. War veterans have a drive for understanding, making sense of, and narrating their war experiences. Krebs is also in this phase, but it is the narrator who has to tell what is inside of his head since Krebs himself has no audience and no voice.

When he happens to find a listener, he is never sure what he wants to say. When he met another veteran by chance in the dressing room at a dance party, he "fell into the easy pose of the old soldier among other soldiers; that he had been badly, sickeningly frightened all the time. In this way he lost everything" (70). This passage has a double meaning. First, he only "posed" as though he had been a coward in combat to play along with the public's perception of war as all horrible, despite the truth that he did fight bravely or competently. Secondly, because he finally met someone who understood war, he was so relaxed that he accidentally confessed to the hidden truth that he was less than a man in combat. A critic, J. F. Kobler, even questions Krebs' military record and his having been a good, fighting Marine. Perhaps, Krebs was as adventurous and vain and scared as any other young American soldier, and that does not necessarily make him a coward or a bad soldier; even good soldiers shake and they know how to hide it. After all, this physically unbreakable man who survived all the fiercest battles was not so unbreakable mentally. Still, the story line is the community's complete disregard for him and his war experience, not the credibility of his military record.

Krebs' alienation from the community deepens when he observes local girls walking on the other side of the street from his parents' front porch. He seems to be doing this just to remind himself how much he had enjoyed serving with a group of men in Europe, returning at heart to a world of men without women in his postwar solitude. The narrator says that the town has not changed except for the fact that the girls have become women who now have short, bobbed hair and wear sweaters, shirts with round Dutch collars, silk stockings, and flat shoes. Krebs says that he loves to watch them with new looks (arguably "the flappers"), and indeed, his vision works like that of a Marine sniper. The front porch is his ambush; the street seems to have separated one world from the other. Since he is obsessed with the girls' boyish look, what he sees may be nothing but his former comrades in uniform after all. Wearing short hair, collar, stocking, and flat shoes, they certainly look as if they are marching down the street, and helmets and rifles would make them perfect soldiers. In this sense, he is missing the feeling of togetherness that is evident in a group of those girls, something he once had in the Marines, as Imamura observes (105). This man of action would love to see the Marines in front of him. He says that he can go out with one only if she approaches him and he would never work hard to get one because he hates the girls' "intrigue" and "politics" (71). Accordingly, the military taught him not to have a girl until he became a man of a certain age. He also says that he hates to see those girls in Greek's ice cream parlor. In the end, he cannot tolerate what is symbolized by ice cream: sweetness, innocence, and casualness, and perhaps, for the one who once swore to sacrifice himself for the country, life is never ice cream so those girls in pseudo uniforms could never understand him nor the war. He certainly believes that he deserves to be approached and treated as a war hero by the girls.

He now misses those non-English speaking French and German girls and it is hardly surprising. Perhaps for the one who acts first under fire, a human bond is something that should be built on nonverbal communication. Combat soldiers are all bonded in brotherly love, which is supposed to be something very special since they must carry injured comrades on the battlefield. So a parallel can be drawn in that regard between his love for military men and his fixation with foreign girls. Former U. S. Marine Philip Caputo explains this all: comradeship is "unlike marriage, a bond that cannot be broken by a word, by

boredom or divorce, or by anything other than death. . . . It was as if in comradeship we found an affirmation of life and the means to preserve at least a vestige of our humanity” (xv-xvi). But the question still remains: why does Krebs miss Germany so much more than France? Did this German American (“Krebs” is a German surname) find a home in Germany? Another possibility is that those German women were hostages, and for the two American soldiers, to take pictures with female hostages was something with which to prove their domination over and to humiliate German male soldiers, because war has everything to do with domination and humiliation.

Krebs never tries to ask a flapper out. He obviously fears losing his veteran’s pride by getting rejected by a cigarette-smoking, alcohol-drinking, freely-dating modern woman who may never be thrilled by war stories or the notion of sacrificing oneself for the country. Or, this ex-fraternity member simply does not know how to date a girl. Moreover, in the glorious 1920s, a man of his age without a car and a decent job may not have been able to get too far with girls in the first place. The flappers emerged to challenge the traditional Victorian gender roles and conservative ideas. The last thing a liberated woman needed was an old-fashioned American husband. On the other hand, in the middle of the woods of France or Germany, he might have dreamed of receiving a hero’s welcome one day at home, surrounded by a bunch of nice, quiet, and conservative girls who would love a man in uniform. Veterans expect very little change when they return home, and a radical change amongst the hometown girls must have given him a major headache. Consequently, “He did not want to come home. Still, he had come home. He sat on the front porch” (72). This young man surely reminds the reader of a quiet, motionless patient on the front porch of a sanatorium. According to the American Psychoanalytic Association’s definition, veterans with war neurosis (formerly known as “shell shock”) suffer from an alienation from the self, social withdrawal, irritability, recurrent dreams and flashbacks repeating the details of their experience, severe anxiety, survivor’s guilt, and difficulty in interpersonal relationships (203-4). The first two and the last one can be applied to Krebs’ case. In the end, he has been forced to dwell on his familiar world of reading, playing billiards, imaginary conversations, and staying true to the old military philosophy—a realm of solitude, in which he can at least avoid

the risk of getting rejected by someone. Hemingway's fixation on stoicism, manhood, and male homosocial bonds is so strong and, as Leslie Fielder states, he cannot quite succeed in making his females human. His portrayals of love are either horrible or ridiculous; "Hemingway is only really comfortable in dealing with 'men without women'" (86). Those German girls and the flappers thus seem to have been cast into the story in order to highlight the protagonist's nostalgia for male comradeship.

If war against the girls is a one-way mind game, the one against his family is at least a two-way contact sport. Now, Krebs must confront his family members, from whom he cannot turn his face away so long as he lives with them. His repugnance for his family deepens as the ridiculous pair of his bossy mother and his innocent little sister attempts to control the household. A mother's love for her son, albeit to a lesser degree, offers the same thing that a soldier's love for his comrade offers: "I would die for you." However, Krebs' mother, a defender of Victorian manners and morals, hardly sees the changes in her son and tends to expound on her own opinions and values: "Her attention [to his war stories] always wandered" (70). Of course, the average American in the late 1910s and early 1920s viewed veterans with this new "shell shock" disease as eccentric, weak, self-pitying, and dependent—creatures in opposition to traditional American manhood that represents self-control, strength, stability, and independence (Shephard 149). Mrs. Krebs says, "I know how weak men are. I know what your own dear grandfather, my own father, told us about the Civil War and I have prayed for you" (75). All he needs is a listener, though; he is not asking for Dr. Freud to analyze his situation. And what is worse, she refers to Charley Simmons, a bright young man of the community, in order to get Harold back on track. Though never explicitly mentioned in the story, Simmons must have served and had a parade. She tells Harold that Charley has a respectable job and will soon get married, and that "boys like him are on their way to being really a credit to the community. . . . If you want to take some of the nice girls out riding with you, we are only too pleased" (75). In other words, every American parent would be proud of a son like Charley Simmons: combat experience, a decent job, marriage, and thus a promising future. On the other hand, Harold Krebs sleeps late and hangs around town, showing no sign of finding a job. According to Mrs. Krebs' rigid

standards, he is nothing but a family embarrassment, or a big discredit to the community.

Mrs. Krebs' domination over Harold even shines in the Hemingway world of symbolism and omission. That she smoothes her apron before initiating a serious conversation is the first symbol to indicate her dislike for wrinkles, a reminiscence of her depressed, disoriented, and lazy son. Also, when she starts to preach about his future plans, she takes off her glasses, and then their conversation heats up: " 'God has some work for everyone to do,' his mother said. 'There can be no idle hands in His Kingdom.' 'I'm not in His Kingdom,' Krebs said. 'We all of us in His Kingdom.' Krebs felt embarrassed and resentful as always" (75). Lamb insists that the gesture of taking off her glasses implies her inability or unwillingness to see him, or to gaze at her emotionally-drained son (25). Krebs then tells her that he does not love anybody including his own mother as she fires back: "I'm your mother . . . I held you next to my heart when you were a tiny baby." Krebs then feels "sick and vaguely nauseated" and tells her, "I know, Mummy . . . I'll try and be a good boy for you" (76). Veterans with war neurosis, according to the American Psychoanalytic Association, often provoke fights and other disturbances (204). This seems to be the case with Krebs. His saying that he is still trying to be nice and in sync with his mother's Victorian and Methodist beliefs is just too painful to watch. First of all, being treated as a boy must be a major insult for any veteran who believes that he completed "the only thing for a man to do." Mothers favor boys over girls in most cultures and reward boys for being tough and girls for being nice (Goldstein 309), and there is no doubt that it was Mrs. Krebs who raised Harold a warrior and led him to enlisting in the Marines. And yet, Krebs will not endure another shell bombing because she reduces him "to the status of dependent infant in a sickening nightmare of the Mummy's Breast" (Comley and Scholes 32).

While Mrs. Krebs is an evil, Harold's younger sister Helen is an ex-girlfriend. Indeed, Harold is still a hero to Helen while he likes her as his best sister, allowing her to call him her beau. For Harold, Helen is his only listener in the entire community, assuming that he has no interest in or no stomach for exchanging words with those liberated flappers on the streets. As Lamb has already asserted, Helen is the only family member to show him unconditional affection, and he is attracted to his little sister since he can half-listen to her

demands and she will still show him affection (28). While a mother's love for her son is built around the idea that "I would die for you," a little sister's love for her big brother offers the idea that "I'm with you no matter what." The love of Krebs' mother can be strong only when she is energized to do whatever she thinks is best to make her son become like the great Charles Simmons; she always has expectations. Meanwhile, sisters, in most cultures, never have such expectations. Big brothers are already great because they almost always take good care of their sisters and provide everything that they need. Should brothers have any secret intentions, they are only wishing for their little sisters to stay sweet and innocent forever. In this sense, Harold is only dating Helen for convenience. He surely never minds having conversations with her, but the reader must realize that this man is fully aware that he is dealing with someone who cannot understand war and what soldiers were ordered to do on the other side of the planet and what war can do to those men. Imamura writes that, with Helen, Harold rarely has any danger of being trapped in the complex man-woman world (106). The world of the flappers is certainly filled with dangerous "intrigue" and "politics." In short, Helen can be taken as an angel or a mediator sent to suggest to him that he should grow younger and return to his self-confident and proud self again (or she is a beautiful seducer-energizer like Helen of Troy; men have gone to war over her). Interestingly, Helen Krebs is an excellent pitcher in indoor baseball, and it was Harold who taught her to become one. Hemingway's use of baseball here should not be downplayed because in America this sport has often been referred to as a symbol of boyhood innocence. Indeed, Helen says that she can pitch much better than lots of the boys in town, which of course could be another slap in the face for Harold since she is now acting like a real man instead of him.

While Mrs. Krebs is a resident evil, Mr. Krebs is an absent evil. Mr. Krebs is somehow being "non-committal" (70) and erased entirely from the household and the story. Harold "would not go down to his father's office" to have a conversation with him and "would miss that one" (77). What Hemingway could do at twenty-four should never be understated, especially in light of its omission, in keeping with his famous Iceberg Theory. So, what is behind Mr. Krebs' absence, why does Harold resent him so much, and is there any

relationship between his anger and his reluctance to find a job? First, a hidden intention seems to be in Mrs. Krebs' father having been a veteran of the Civil War while it can be assumed that Mr. Krebs is a non-veteran, whom Harold may be looking down on in this regard. Of course, the United States was not involved in any war when Mr. Krebs was in his teen years, but again, there is omission here, which, other than being "non-committal," is a non-veteran father's lack of understanding for what being a veteran means to his young American son. In addition, Harold might have blamed Mr. Krebs for the family's being lower middle class. First of all, Mr. Krebs always wants to use the family's only car for his real estate business. He, according to Mrs. Krebs, believes that Harold has lost his ambition and would be very pleased if he takes some of the nice girls out riding. But the son knows better; he understands that he cannot borrow the family's only car and that they cannot afford another one for him. The line "Now, after the war, it was still the same car" (71) hints that, even with the nation's booming economy due to the victory, the financial situation in the Krebs household has not changed a bit, so the father cannot purchase a brand-new Ford Model T for his heroic son. So the bottom line is that Harold, without his own car, has been deprived of freedom and thus lost direction in life. Additionally, locating this German American family (a latecoming ethnic group) in a sleepy, mid-western town is nothing but a perfect combination to indicate the family's financial discomfort.

From another perspective, Mr. Krebs is a representation of God who has never spared grace or spiritual home for Harold ("I'm not in His Kingdom"). God does appear in the vignette attached prior to "Soldier's Home" in which "he," lying flat on the ground and sweating, prays "please dear Jesus" four times and begs Jesus to save himself of the German bombing of his trench at Fossalta, Italy. Here is another young soul experiencing shell shock, "the nightmare world" and "inhuman conditions" of trench warfare (Bogacz 545). The novelist inserted a short but full-bodied sketch of another young, scared soldier into this collection as a prelude to "Soldier's Home," which follows. Both accounts share the same theme, courage-cowardice under fire, and are two sides of the same coin. God saved "him" in the trench but "he" then betrays God by not keeping his promise to tell everyone about Jesus, meaning that he is too proud to admit that he owes anything to God. Meanwhile, Krebs survived all his battles but feels bitter because he has not been honored

accordingly, meaning that he just thinks that God has nothing to do with his survival. But he still feels the unfairness or perhaps that, this time, God has abandoned him due to his unfaithfulness.

With or without God, he has to leave his parents' house and his small town sometime soon. At the breakfast table, he opens *The Kansas City Star* to the sporting page and props it against the water pitcher so that he can read while eating. Boys tend to check out the box scores just to be viewed as real men who care about who wins and who loses. Mr. Krebs, a possible God-like figure, never likes his *Star* to be mussed up, and, of course, Harold is a huge fan of musses and winkles. Or, in the end, perhaps, Harold believes that he is "a mussed-up star" himself. Furthermore, that Harold looks at the bacon fat "hardening" on his plate is an obvious symbol suggesting that he is as useless as that hard bacon fat. As he says that he has no love for her, Mrs. Krebs cries: "I'm your mother . . . I held you next to my heart when you were a tiny baby" and he feels "sick and vaguely nauseated." He quickly regrets what he said and reassures her that he didn't mean it, that he does love her, which is his biggest lie in the story. "He doesn't love anybody, and it nauseates him to have to pretend he does. He doesn't even *want* to love anybody; he doesn't want to go anywhere, he doesn't want to do anything," D. H. Lawrence writes, referring to Hemingway's "nothingness" (94). For the man who never wants any more "consequences ever again" (71), finding another Las Vegas in Kansas City is meaningless. The story somehow closes with a small ray of light in the darkness: Krebs "would go over to the schoolyard and watch Helen play indoor baseball" (77).

Yet there is no lesson in Krebs' life. He never wants any more consequences, but he never feels any remorse for his participation in the war. He is looking forward to new war books with more detailed maps. This story should not be read as a young man's initiation either due to its ambiguous ending. Instead, perhaps, there was just a story to tell for the novelist who joined the American Red Cross as an ambulance driver in 1918 and was severely wounded by a mortar explosion just a few weeks after arriving in Fossalta, Italy. "Soldier's Home" features a pseudo-unbreakable man, and interestingly, the story was written by someone who, in reality, had not been able to achieve much in combat at all. Hemingway must have carried a heavy burden of frustration, humiliation, and disillusion when he returned from

Europe to the United States, not so much different from Krebs' emotional baggage. If this story is autobiographical, it is not so in its details but rather in the emotions that men at war have to carry for a long time. Krebs is not yet ready to hump any more work or consequences; like so many other returning veterans, he seems to have felt that he did all the work in combat. And, at the end of the story, once again, the reader has to guess what this traumatized loner does next: Does he pretend to be a mommy's boy and settle down to a boring job? Does he depart on a long, hard quest for his new self? Does he watch Helen the Angel play baseball, recall his adolescence, and then go hang himself somewhere?

Probably a good warrior and good comrade in Europe, Harold Krebs has returned home to find himself totally unwelcomed and unplugged from reality and society. A romantic adventure ended the moment he left Europe, and now energetic flappers on the streets appear to make him look like an odd man with old and useless medals named "duty," "sacrifice," and "heroism." He cannot make a spiritual connection with his mother, who only cares about getting her son back on track. Even his lovely little sister Helen, Harold's only fan in the entire world, is a liability because of her limited ability to comprehend the dark side of war. The presence of his father, a noncommittal, lower middle class man (an uncaring, stingy country-God), adds more fuel to this ex-Marine's disgust for himself and for everyone.

In conclusion, this central character of the Lost Generation is now paying the price for adventure and freedom during combat by abandoning his commitment to everyone and everything at home, and, in return, he is left with disillusion, drowsiness, nausea, alienation, solitude, and a lost faith in God, Woman, Father, and Country. As a result, a good, obedient son from the world of action has been totally transformed into a ghost in the world of inaction of a small Oklahoma town; the two worlds of this veteran are in sharp contrast, which is another element of Hemingway's literary arsenal. Other contrasts made to emphasize Krebs' miserable situation are, of course, Charley Simmons and the flappers with voice, energy, and direction.

Hemingway is masterful at sending his manly characters to limbo and providing them with opportunities to pay the price for their acting manly or flashy. American writers of the Lost Generation, Hemingway and Fitzgerald in

particular, were fully aware of the costs of being courageous and adventurous, or, more simply, of being the American hero. This odd couple saw the surreal and the ridiculous in America's hysteria over victory in the world's most apocalyptic war in which over eight million people had died. While Fitzgerald tended to dramatize his characters' subsequent defeat mercifully, Hemingway did so harshly. Harold Krebs' return needed to be delayed to make his combat experience become an object of ridicule. The problem for the Hemingway reader is that his stoic men's emotions and pains are so repressed and condensed in the novelist's highly omitted text. But they can be found in tiny symbols such as "I" being the mulberry leaves quietly eaten by silk-worms in "Now I Lay Me," Nick Adams being the slit trout looking alive in the water in "Big Two-Hearted River," and Harold Krebs as the hardening bacon fat on the plate. Also, nausea, the only action in the story, is, needless to say, another symptom of war neurosis and a reaction stemming from his having exaggerated and lied about his war experience, but it can be also taken as a reminder of his life and of his being still alive.

Hemingway should be remembered as a writer not of macho simplistic "grace under pressure" stories but of tales of American life (or no life) after courage. Younger American veteran-novelists, such as James Jones (*The Thin Red Line* and *Whistle*) from WWII and Tim O'Brien ("Speaking of Courage" and *In the Lake of the Woods*) from the Vietnam War, have followed in Hemingway's footsteps and portrayed the human condition in the aftermath of war. In his skillfully symbolized text in "Soldier's Home," Hemingway has created a pathetic American to represent the situation of a war veteran from the Lost Generation and what American manhood can do to a young man. This model story of postwar trauma lacks survivor's guilt, another symptom that many veterans claim to suffer. Here is one last wild guess: "another corporal" in the wartime photo could not survive the war, so the photo is presented to the reader to show how much Krebs now misses him.

Asahikawa University

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