The Picaresque Elements in Ernest Hemingway's Nick Adams Stories
I recommend this thesis for acceptance by the Honors Program of Ball State University for graduation with honors.

[Signature]

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Henry Thoreau, himself a traveler of some note, says in A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers:

"The traveller must be born again on the road, and earn a passport from the elements, the principal powers that be for him." Although not intentional, Thoreau had aptly described the picaro, the hero of picaresque literature. Simply, this hero is a young person who travels through various lands depending merely on his wits and nature for survival. As a literary tradition, the picaresque hero was created in Spain as early as 1554 with the appearance of La Vida de Lazarillo de Tormes y de sus fortunas y adversidades (The Life of Lazarillo de Tormes and of his fortunes and misfortunes). Begun as a reaction against the fantastic romances of chivalry, this literature showed that "everyday life could offer situations as interesting as the imaginary careers of magicians, giants, knights, and dragons." The picaresque tradition was carried on by Le Sage's Gil Blas, and, in English literature, by Thomas Nashe's The Unfortunate Traveller, Daniel Defoe's Moll Flanders, Richard Smollett's Roderick Random, Henry Fielding's Tom Jones, Robin Hood, The Pirates of Penzance, and George Bernard Shaw's Man and Superman. In American literature, the picaresque includes Saul Bellow's The Adventures of Augie March, Jack Kerouac's On the Road, Mark Twain's The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, and Ernest Hemingway's Nick Adams stories.

In this latter collection, Nick Adams appears as a type of picaresque hero, for his travels are those of a young lad making his way in the world. However, he is not a pure picaro, for as an outcast - to all intents he is without family and friends -
he flees the restraints of his civilization, and journeys through
the world in search of understanding and identity. As Robert Alter
says,

[he] is not altogether a picaresque hero for
his ruthlessness, wandering, desire for
multiplicity and diversity of experience
[which are definitely picaresque elements]
have been used also as a vehicle for a
bildungsroman, "a novelistic search for
the true self."

However, because of the appearance of many of the elements of the
picaresque in these stories, Nick's search for identity can be
described as picaresque literature.

As a general definition, it was stated that the picaresque
hero or picaro was a young person who traveled around relying on
his wits and nature for sustenance. Traditionally, this hero
commonly begins as a naive fellow who, because he must live by
his wits, is soon "drawn into a world of opportunists and scoundrels
and becomes as bad as the rest in order to survive." As the picaro
or rogue (picaro being the Spanish word for rogue or knave) must
depend entirely on his own initiative for survival, he will often
serve in some menial, temporary position which will provide him
with either the money or the food and clothing that he needs to
continue his wanderings. If he cannot find some type of work,
the picaro will then take or steal whatever he needs. Consequently,
the picaro has often been termed a "social parasite," a person
who draws on society merely to fulfill his needs. It is this
type of involvement with society that serves as a basis for the
picaro's satire and ridicule, since it is "through his experiences
as a social parasite that he satirizes the society he has exploited."
Huck Finn is a good example of this type of picaresque hero. Thus, for some critics, typical picaresque literature is the adventure story of a rogue, telling of his wanderings, his adversities, and his ingenuity in acquiring the necessities for survival, and incorporating a satiric view of the society through which he travels.

Nick Adams, however, is not this type of picaresque hero. Although the Nick Adams stories are a collection of the adventures of a young lad from his boyhood in Michigan, through his wartime experiences (World War I), to his middle-aged role as husband and father, at no time does Nick actually become the type of scoundrel or knave that characterizes Robin Hood, Augie March or Huck Finn. At no times does he work at some menial labor or resort to stealing in order to acquire some life-supporting necessity. Neither does he ever actually satirize his society. While it is true that Nick is forcibly involved with society, and that, in seeking to extricate himself, he does deliver some subtle observations and comments on that society (and more noticeably on life itself); nevertheless, Nick never truly ridicules or satirizes society. Nick is

merely a voice of yearning for a lost and unidentified freedom, bemoaning some lost harmony between men and nature. . . . a voice of sad protest against the deadening encroachments of civilization . . . a voice reminding of the losses involved in the twin processes of growing up and civilization.8

Nick's desire to wander, his curious aloneness, his disillusionment, and his nostalgia are the picaresque elements of this naive hero. Concerning the Nick Adams stories, the characteristics of
the episodic structure and the inclusion of the picaro as the central character allow them to be an example of picaresque literature.

In any picaresque work, the narrative is usually loose and rambling, the unity being provided by the unity of the hero: "the story is a single piece of art because it all relates to a single personality." In Our Time, the novel that contains most of the Nick Adams adventures, is arranged in such a manner. Because there is very little transition from one story to another, the various adventures of Nick are but loosely joined together. Consequently, the only truly unifying element is the appearance of Nick as the center of consciousness in each story.

Although there exists this loose, rambling relation between the various stories of In Our Time, such a structural technique results in an increased amount of emphasis being placed on each separate story and experience - each story usually being one self-contained adventure. Instead of the typical method of moving from one chapter or adventure to another as a means of building to a climax and definite conclusion, picaresque literature includes the climax and conclusion in each story. The sequence of the picaresque work is, therefore, merely a succession of self-contained units in the life sequence of the wandering hero. However, to offer some continuity, the author may direct the wanderings of the hero to some definite end. Thus, the travels of the picaro may take a geographical form; i.e., in a definite direction or toward a definite goal. Or, the travels may take a biographical form in which the hero is taken from childhood
to maturity, for example. It is this latter type of wandering that is mainly adhered to in the Nick Adams stories, for as Clinton S. Burhans Jr. states about In Our Time:

Hemingway arranges the stories in a significant structure. From youth to maturity, from innocence to experience, from peace to war to peace again and from America to Europe and back to America.

Although In Our Time is the main source of the Nick Adams stories, not all of the Nick tales are found in this one novel. In Our Time is a series of fourteen stories separated by sixteen interchapter vignettes. Of the fourteen stories, however, only seven deal directly with Nick.

The first five stories reflect Nick's boyhood in pre-World War I America. These are followed by a vignette... in which Nick, now a young man, is wounded in the war.

Within the last part of the book, two of the stories deal directly with Nick after the war, and two deal with other soldiers who are purported to be Nick (although one is never named and the other is Harold Krebs). Thus the book begins and ends with stories of Nick Adams which are arranged in a roughly chronological order.

As for the few Nick stories that are outside of this novel - there are several stories in Hemingway's novels Men Without Women and Winner Take Nothing, and in his collection of short stories - they are generally descriptive and informative enough to allow one to easily insert them into the chronology established in In Our Time. It is all these stories taken in a chronological order that establishes Nick's literary biography; all of these accounts together show Nick's progress from childhood to maturity.
The pattern of Nick's development is that of a boy who, while with his father up in Michigan, and without him, on his own as a tramp or with friends, is learning several lessons about life. The first stories of Nick as a youngster show the emotional attitudes of adolescence and his uneasy passage from boyhood to manhood. Nick is confronted with the problem of "recognizing and accepting the world and the human condition as they really are." In the novel In Our Time, the first five stories deal primarily with Nick's initiation into actuality and reality; they tell of an event which is either violent or evil, or which serves to bring the boy into contact with something that is perplexing and unpleasant.

In "Indian Camp," for example, Nick is suddenly introduced to suicide in the midst of another shocking experience. When Nick is about twelve years old, he assists his father, a country doctor in the wooded regions of Michigan, in performing a Caesarian birth with only a jack-knife and fishing leaders. During the operation, the Indian woman's husband, quietly smoking his pipe, lies in the bunk above with an injured foot. After the operation, Nick finds that the husband, unable to endure his wife's screams, for the doctor had no anaesthetic to give her, had cut his throat with a razor. Paradoxically, the man's love for his wife and his identification with her suffering had led to his death; . . . birth and death, Nick discovers, are alike commingled with violence and suffering; and, in between, man lives on the knife-edge of paradox. Thus, Nick is initiated to suffering, pain, and the violence of birth and death.
However, since Nick did not know these people, he was not overwhelmed by the disaster. On the way home, as he asks his father many questions about death, he is intensely aware of the living world and of himself as a part of it. He notices the rising sun, the jumping bass, and the sensation of his hand trailing in the water. All of these aspects of life and movement are relevant to Nick's state of mind at this moment, for "it is a moment of intense awareness of the livingness of live things and the delights of the senses." It is at this moment that Nick "felt quite sure that he would never die." As if by engaging his emotions, the very terror of his experience has somehow made Nick more aware of and more appreciative of life. Also, by placing the fearful experience in a context of continuing life, Hemingway has provided relief from the feeling of dread that he had previously evoked.

Hemingway did not intend this story to be particularly shocking, for he is not interested in scaring or frightening Nick, but is concerned only with the effects of this event on the young boy who witnesses them. At the time of the story, the event does not seem to have any extraordinary repercussions, but the importance of this incident can be seen in the "badly scarred and nervous young man that Nick later becomes." It is interesting to note, that the vignette which accompanies this first story is concerned with moving up to the front in World War I, that is to say, moving to the conflict. The vignette immediately following the story is a starkly impersonal account of refugees fleeing a city in the Near East: "There was no end
and no beginning. "18 "The Indian Camp" shows Nick as an observer of a beginning and an end: the beginning and the end of life.

The next story, "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife," presents Nick's first contacts with matters that are not violent, but which affect his young life because they are perplexing. In this story, Dr. Adams "backs down from a senseless fight with [Dick Boulton, an Indian] who wants to avoid working out a debt he owes the doctor, and Nick's mother refuses to believe that anyone could really behave so."19 At the end of the story, Nick is called to see his mother, who is ill and in bed. But Nick would rather go for a walk with his father, and he does. Thus, three views of human nature are here provided for Nick. At one extreme is Dick Boulton, primitive and violent, willing to fight the doctor to avoid paying a debt. At the other end is Mrs. Adams, romantic, sentimental, and religious - Nick's mother is a devout Christian Scientist. In the middle is Nick's father, rational and non-violent. 20 These, then, are the types that make up the society of Nick's life; and it is among these people that Nick must learn to live. Because Nick chooses to go with his father rather than answer his mother's call, he rejects the mother and her naive refusal to admit evil.

The male values are here equated with the estimable, sincere and realistic, if morally faulty; and the female, or feeling values with the perfectionistic, pretentious, and phony. 21

This story, "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife," although not centered around Nick, is of importance to Nick's role as a picaro, for it is a result of Nick's dissatisfaction with his evasiveness and his father's seeming failure as a protector that
a conflict is established between Nick and his family. Eventually, this rift will become a barrier between Nick and his own flesh and blood.

As the separation develops, Nick grows more isolated from humanity. In addition to cutting himself off from his parents, in the following story "The End of Something," he also breaks off his association with his girlfriend Marjorie. Nick feels that he has to break up his love affair, for it is tending to become too: Marjorie wants to be too possessive. It begins to emerge that between the opposites of mother and father, of man and woman, of action and feeling, a breech has been made within Nick. It is with hesitation and pain that he tells Marjorie: "It isn't fun anymore. Not any of it . . . I feel as though everything was gone to Hell inside of me."22

Nick's empty feelings persist in the subsequent episode, "Three-Day Blow," which relates how "The End of Something" felt to Nick like the autumnal three day wind storm that was raging: 'All of a sudden everything was over,' Nick said. I don't know why it was, I couldn't help it, just like when the three-day blows come now and rip all the leaves off the trees.'23 Although Bill, Nick's companion, suggests that the romance seemed doomed from the start, for "you can't mix oil and water,"24 Nick is not consoled until Bill reminds him that there is some danger of his becoming again involved with Marjorie. Nick need only go to town Saturday night and the whole affair could be revived. At the thought that the break is not irrevocable, Nick feels better, even though he knows he will probably never renew the romance. Thus, Nick contrasts his earlier reactions to life and
death with the idea that there was not anything that was irrevocable . . . Nothing was finished. Nothing was ever lost. . . . There was always a way out.25

It is at this point that the picaresque element of wandering appears in the Nick Adams stories, for the next step in Nick's life, related in "The Battler," shows an adolescent Nick who has left home and is out on his own for the first time. In this episode, Nick has cut himself off from the past and the people in it by catching a freight train and venturing alone into a world of tramps. Here he meets "the Battler," a former champion boxer who is now a punch-drunk bum roaming the country under the care of a Negro whom he had met in jail. Nick stays with this pair long enough to eat supper and to see the colored man bludgeon the Battler with a blackjack when the latter tries to attack Nick. Again, Nick has come into contact with violence and suffering, but this time it has a crucial effect on him, for these people are strangers, this world is strange. Nick realizes that violence and brutality also exist in the "outside" world, a fact that will soon have a devastating effect on his relationship with this outside world, because as Nick encounters various unsavory experiences during his traveling, he will be forced to retreat further into himself, and become continually more isolated from society.

This incident with the "Battler" is important, therefore, because it is the beginning of the picaro's withdrawal from society. Because Bugs, the colored companion, suggests that Nick, to whom he has just extended the hospitality of sharing
the meager, evening meal, had best be on his way before the Battler regains consciousness, Nick is made aware of his growing isolation. As a result of his encounter with the boxer and Bugs, Nick has gained an increased understanding of his inevitable apartness and loveliness in an existence peopled by others. Accompanying Nick's retreat into isolation, is his subsequent loss of innocence. In "The Light of the World", Nick and his friend Tom converse with two whores while waiting in a small, dirty railroad station. In this story, Nick comes into contact with the lurid, "dirty" aspect of sex. While it is true that Nick had had some experience in sexual relations with Marjorie and Prudence Mitchell ("Ten Indians"), these early relations had been those of an innocent, adolescent type, common to an average boyhood experience. Now, however, Nick is confronted with the sexual aberrations associated with the world of prostitution. "His picaresque loss of innocence has been transformed into a process of growing moral awareness." 27

This loss of innocence, occurring for Nick after his encounters with life and death, violence and suffering, love and sex, exerts a definite influence on the young man (for at this point, Nick has only reached early manhood). These lessons of life, which could easily cripple an impressionable and sensitive boy such as Nick, result in his further avoidance of any lasting or meaningful human relations, his further isolation from society.
This sense of isolation is also augmented, by the structure of the picaresque work. Because the stories in picaresque literature are merely a loosely-arranged series of encounters, the secondary characters are often little more than chance acquaintances. Tom in "The Light of the World," George in "The Killers," and the peasant Olz in "An Alpine Idyll" are minor characters whom Nick encounters on his wanderings in this country and in Europe. Their roles in each story are merely to present Nick with a situation to which he responds; seldom are these characters carried into Nick's later life. Because of the lack of unity and consistency in the picaresque structural arrangement, these characters can easily fulfill their roles without causing confusion and ambiguity: the characters set the stage, Nick reacts, and the travels move on. The picaresque work does not linger long enough for the situation to become complex or binding. Nick meets the characters once, interacts, and then leaves unaccompanied, alone, isolated.

Another picaresque element that occurs frequently in the various Nick Adams stories is that of first-person narrative. Although most of the stories are from a third person, limited-omniscient point of view, a few are narrated in first person. In such stories, the name of the speaker is often not revealed. Because Hemingway is focusing on the character's experience and his reactions, he does not clutter up the story with a lot of background information. The talks of the characters
become "inner dialogues, a constant effort to keep back words, with everyone speaking for himself in answer to his own thoughts." 28

Thus, the main character of some of the Nick Adams stories is never actually stated to be Nick, but it is assumed from the details of the conversations that the "I" is probably the Nick Adams character. For example, the fact that the narrator in "Now I Lay Me" is Nick Adams becomes perfectly clear when the "I" says that he cannot sleep unless he has a light. In the earlier story "A Way You'll Never Be", Nick says that he has become unable to sleep without a light. More definite proof that Nick is the narrator of the former story is presented later when the speaker, remembering his parents, hears his father call him by name: "Get a rake, Nick". 29 Similarly, the "I" who accompanies Tom in the story, "The Light of the World", is also assumed to be Nick Adams, for he is a young boy of about sixteen or seventeen years - Nick's age during his early wanderings - who is traveling in Michigan.

A third story that describes Nick's experiences on the road is "The Killers". This epiphany shows Nick's gradual hardening to the evils and sordidness of life. While Nick is eating in a small town diner, two gunmen come in and ask when Ole Andreson usually eats his meals, for they plan to kill him. This ruthlessness and brutality is shocking to Nick, but not nearly as unnerving as such an encounter would have been earlier. Nick has changed; he has hardened. After the gunmen leave, Nick shows his nonchalance with this confrontation of death and evil by swaggering around
the kitchen with the towel that had been used to gag him. It is important to note here that Nick's first reaction to being bound and gagged is not one of fear, but of excitement, for "He had never had a towel in his mouth before." 30

As a result of this contact with evil and crime, Nick decides to struggle against it; and, after the gangsters have left, he rushes off to warn Ole Andeson (another former prize fighter figure) of the threat to his life. But Ole's reaction on hearing that his life is in danger is merely to turn his face to the wall: "There ain't anything to do now . . . . I got in wrong." 31

Although the reality of the gangsters is somewhat shocking to Nick, even more shocking is the fact that Ole, the hunted man, accepts this reality. His resigned cynicism is beyond Nick's comprehension. Nick can see, hear and feel acutely, but he has little capacity for analyzing or interpreting the situation; he does not understand that for Ole the "fear of death is so acute, that the only cure is the defiance of death." 32

His attitude toward the world is the picaresque attitude: empirical and pragmatic, attempting to deal directly with the facts of experience without any interpretation. 33

Like "The Indian Camp." and "Three-Day Blow," "The Killers" is another story of Nick's discovery of evil and disorder. But, unlike the reactions in the earlier episodes, Nick does not question the happenings in order to gain a deeper understanding of life. Instead, his response is a horrified inability even to think about it, a desire to get completely out of town. "Everything in life has become a drug for Nick, except reality which is unbearable." 34 And since this reality cannot be faced
or thought of, it must be avoided; consequently, Nick is back on the road again, wandering now to the battlefields of Europe during World War I.

Although these stories of Nick's youth have "recorded the shocking effects of the modern age upon the forming character of a sensitive boy," and have presented him with the actualities of the world and the human condition, the vignette telling of Nick's being wounded during World War I is the focal point in Nick's life as a maturing person and as a picaresque hero.

Nick sat against the wall of the church where they had dragged him to be clear of machine-gun fire in the street. Both legs stuck out awkwardly. He had been hit in the spine. His face was sweaty and dirty. The sun shone on his face. The day was very hot. Rinaldi, big backed, his equipment sprawling, lay face downward against the wall . . . . Nick turned his head carefully and looked at Rinaldi. "Senta Rinaldi. Senta. You and me we've made a separate peace;" Rinaldi lay still in the sun breathing with difficulty. "Not patriots." Nick turned his head carefully away smiling sweatily. Rinaldi was a disappointing audience.

This vignette is the only place in the novel In Our Time where the inter-chapter material meets with the actual stories. Just as this narrative is the climax of Nick's adventures, so "Nick's wound culminates, climaxes, and epitomizes the wounds he has been getting as a growing boy." The shell that he has embedded in his spine is part of the long acquaintance with the brutality of life that began when he saw the jack-knife Caesarian, the nearly decapitated Indian, the Battler, the blackjacking Negro; "when he felt he was forced to repudiate his mother and his girlfriend; and
when he hit the cinders after a blow in the face from the official on the freight train." 38 Nick has been complicated and wounded by what he has seen, done, and been through even before he receives this physical wound.

Up to this point, Nick's development by violence has been clearly marked; each of the stories already examined "have dealt with a moment of extreme crises, violence removed from all narrative context and given a maximum emotional charge." 39 Taken as a whole, both the stories and the inter-chapter materials add up to one single effect.

From the idyllic landscape of the Michigan Indian country to a bloody Italian street and a wound in the spine . . . . it is evident that Nick has merely traded one horror for another, and that back home he was surrounded by as many, if not as imminent, dangers as he encounters in the war." 40

Ironically, Nick realizes that the worlds of war and peace are not separate entities at all, but both contain violence and brutality.

As a boy who is dissatisfied with respectability, chiefly as is represented by his mother, Nick runs away from home; home being a place of violence and pain. But, although it is easy to flee respectability, on his own during the war, Nick comes up against brutality harder than ever. He is hurt by it - he is wounded, and he ends by rebelling utterly against a society that sponsored, or at least permitted, such horror. Nick decides that he is not a patriot, and makes his own peace with the world (being wounded is an honorable avenue to peace.) He will no longer seek objectivity in the abstract and meaningless noun 'patriotism,' nor in an army of ciphers where the responsibility does not rest with the individual." 41
In the blinding flash of a shell, in the icy-burning impact of a bullet, in that ill-defined twilight between life and death where time and place become irrelevant, man faces his freedom, and Nick makes his pact to leave the society which allows the inanities of war and violence to exist. It is important to remember here, that Nick is doing the rejecting, not society.

As a result of his decision, Nick becomes an outsider; he definitely becomes the typical picaro who wanders from Illinois and Michigan to Italy and Switzerland, and back to Michigan. During these travels, he is alone and isolated from society. Like the traditional picaresque hero, he is an inveterate displaced person. He has no home, no calling, no sure set of values. He is moved by the picaresque impulse to assume responsibility for his own life, to make himself master of his own fate." 42

But although, Nick travels alone and struggles alone, he does not completely reject society. Typical of the picaresque hero, Nick chooses to be apart from humanity; however, the difference between the picaro's chosen separation and that of complete isolation is that the picaro can drift back and forth between society and isolation, at times involving himself with others and at times remaining alone. The picaro is not dependent on society, yet his faculty for empathy, especially with other human beings in need, prevents him from being radically alone in the world. The picaresque hero in this way is a figure both detached from the society of men, and yet possessing a profound sense of involvement in the human condition.

This compassion or empathy that is characteristic of the
picaro is experienced by Nick as he sees Ole Andresen turn to
the wall on hearing that his life is in danger; as he sees an
Indian husband driven to suicide, presumably because he cannot
stand his wife's suffering; as he sees a former prize fighter,
half-demented and belligerent, withdraw from society to lead a
hobo's life; and as he sees a wounded Italian major, grief-
stricken and unable to resign himself to the unexpected death
of his young wife ( "In Another Country"). Although involved
and sympathizing, Nick is still personally detached from these
misfortunes that he happens to observe:
It is while he is most keenly aware of
the strangeness of this world that he
witnesses the suffering of a character
whose existence had previously meant
little to him.
Perhaps, one of the best examples of this feeling of
simultaneous involvement and detachment is found in the story
"The Alpine Idyll". Here, Nick and his friend John, on taking
refreshment at a small Swiss inn during a skiing trip, hear the
story of a man who is unable to bury his wife because of the frozen
ground. It is discovered that the body of the women has become
disfigured since her death, because her husband, who had propped
up her stiffened body in his shed during the winter, had gotten
into the habit of hanging the lantern from the corpse's open
jaw. Although Nick understands the suffering and grief that this
peasant feels about the death of his wife and his inability to
bury her properly, he realizes that neither he nor anyone else
can help this man- or could have helped the prize fighter, or the
major, or the Indian husband. Consequently Nick looks upon this
experience as mere entertainment during a brief respite from skiing. To Nick the peasant's story is just an appetizer before dinner.

While Nick's boyhood travels had been a sort of vagabond experience, his wanderings after the war become a flight or attempted escape, from society which ultimately leads to expatriation.

Regis Mihaidr wrote, in 1928, in his *Panorama da la litterature Americanine*: What is life good for? A war to save Right, Civilization, the dollar, flirting, and machines? And then what? Drinking, gambling, debauchery, suicide, or for the luckier men some sort of escape . . . . The young American no longer believes in America. On the same day he lost his faith both in himself and in his country. In revolt against his parents and his masters, he does not find an outlet for his energy. Instead he regrets; he curses; he wanders.

In "Cross-Country Snow" the idea of Nick's expatriation is further explored. In this adventure, which is similar to "Alpine Idyll," Nick and his friend George are skiing in Switzerland and stop for a short while at a inn. While drinking wine and eating strudel, the young men begin to discuss America, to which Nick must soon reluctantly return while his wife Helen has a baby. Nick, who has already rejected what his mother represented and what a relation with the girl he loves represents, here rejects what his mother-country represents and chooses a foreign world:

'Will you go back to the States?'
'I guess so.'
'Do you want to?'
'No.'

In choosing expatriation, Nick chooses to live on the surface; as in skiing - which has become a very important and personal indulgence for Nick now that he is outside of society - he well
only skim the surface of life. Nick's interaction with society will leave him with the same thrill that he derives from skiing, which "plucked Nick's mind out and left him only the wonderful flying, dropping sensation in his body." 46 His decision to return to America contrasts the fellowship and freedom of the slopes, which symbolize his wanderings, and the mixed blessings of the U.S. and parenthood.

Although the aspect of random traveling is the mainstay of picaresque literature, another element that is characteristic of this genre is the revelation of the disintegration of society. In this literature the typical social background is a world where the old social order is decomposing, but yet is regarded as though it were continuing undisturbed. In the Nick Adams stories the mere fact that a war is going on shows that the order of the existing society is being attacked and torn apart. Nick's view of the world and society as he makes his separate peace, is one of disgust and disillusionment, for the world is filled with a violence and terror that he cannot understand. In "The Killers," for example, Nick's reaction is to abruptly leave this town where violence impended instead of confronting the situation. Indeed, "violence - occasionally even sadistic violence - ia a pattern of behavior congenial to the picaresque novel." 47 In the Nick Adams series, all the stories relate mainly to violence or evil in one form or another. Even the title In Our Time "was a silent protest against violence." 48 Some critics have implied that the title is an ironic echo of the text of the Book of Common
Prayer which states "give peace in our Time, O Lord." and certainly In Our Time dejects a world and human condition in which there is very little peace of any kind. The contents of this novel, as seen previously, are also filled with violence and horror. In the Indian cabin, while his wife screams with pain, the Indian in the upperbunk had turned his face to the wall and cut his throat. A great distance away, in both miles and years, Nick "potted" Germans as they came over the wall into the garden. Some time later, six cabinet members are executed against the wall of a hospital; two Hungarians caught breaking into a cigar store are shot by the police; and an outraged bull has charged a man across an arena in Spain. Although the scene changes, the violence remains typical of life, and Nick remains the same. Having known nothing but violence since early boyhood, he can react to nothing but violence. But, finally, too much pain has been endured. There have been too many bodies, too many murders, too many terrors." All that remains for the disillusioned Nick is a single determination to survive; this is Nick's separate peace.

The disillusion that encompasses Nick manifests itself in a complete loss of faith in practically all of the traditional values, an awareness of violence and death, and a sensitivity to the mass of sham and insincerity that was an outgrowth of the war. It is ironic that Nick, having entered the war in hope of finding a glorious adventure, an escape from boredom and a cause worthy of belief, instead, finds that war "involves ugly, senseless, or impersonal forms of violence, in which a man has little chance to set the terms of his own integrity."
Life, Nick realizes as he sits wounded in the streets of a small Austrian town, is a solitary struggle, a desperate fever of action, conscious of having no sense or reason beyond mere existence. Nothing has any meaning except survival. "The superfluities of race, culture, tradition, religion all disappear in the face of one overpowering fact - the necessity to exist. This is the only peace which can be won in our time."52

Nick's wound intensifies and epitomizes the wounds that he has been receiving psychologically during his boyhood in Michigan. From this point on, however, Nick will continually appear as a wounded man - wounded not only physically but psychologically as well. The only way Nick can maintain himself in this wounded and disillusioned state is by orienting himself in the outside world just as he had earlier oriented himself within society. Thus, in "A Way You'll Never Be," Nick, taking a nap, thinks he is dying, and fights to get the facts of his past straight and in order:

If it didn't get so damned mixed up he could follow it alright. That was why he noticed everything in such detail to keep it all straight so he would know just where he was. . . .53

During this nap in Captain Paravicini's headquarters, Nick pictures, in detail, a night when he was in Paravicini's outfit. A bombardment before an attack is taking place, and Paravicini has Nick lead an hysterical platoon, two at a time, out into the shelling to show them that movement during a bombardment can be done. Suddenly, these detailld remind Nick of his casualty, and, consequently, his mind goes completely:

And there was Gaby Delys, oddly enough, with feathers on . . . Sometimes his girl was there and sometimes she was with someone
else and he could not understand that, but those were the nights the river ran so much wider and stiller than it should and outside of Fossalta there was a low house painted yellow with windows all around it and a low stable and there was a canal, and he had been there a thousand times and never seen it, but there it was every night as plain as the hill, only it frightened him.  

This scene of the buildings and the river is so frightening to Nick because, as Hemingway later reveals in Across the River and Into the Trees, it is here that he received a second wounding. 

Although Nick had decided to make a separate peace between himself and the world, he did not immediately quit the armed service after receiving his wound. "Now I Lay Me" finds Nick still in uniform, but not in the fighting. Also, "A Way You'll Never Be" shows that Nick, while still in the military, is now serving in the capacity of a "morale builder" instead of being a fighting soldier. Nick's reason for visiting Captain Paravicini's camp is to allow himself to be seen among the allied troops in the uniform of the American soldier. Hopefully, a glimpse of this uniform will encourage the troops' fighting, for they will believe that their ranks will shortly be augmented by American soldiers. Nick explains this situation to Paravicini as he says: "I am demonstrating the American uniform." The uniform is not very correct, . . . But it gives you the idea. There will be several millions of Americans here shortly." 

Only after being sent to a hospital in Milan does Nick decide to abandon his last hold on society. "In Another Country," points to Nick's growing awareness of the barriers that are being erected between himself and society - here represented as the
other soldiers in the hospital. In this hospital, all that holds the men together is the fact that they would meet every afternoon and, out of the necessity of being together, would talk of their experiences and past life. Except for this daily gathering, each man had very little involvement with the other patients. In addition, looking backward to Milan and to his physical recuperation from the second of his two woundings, this story also points forward, for the hero's physical and psychological wounds having been established, Nick decides to break away from society as it has degenerated. Thus he leaves the military, an action which is symbolic of his association with and placement in society, and becomes the wanderer, out to seek his way in another country.

This country becomes, at one point, the separated, disillusioned world of Harold Krebs (Krebs supposedly being a different identity for Nick Adams.) In "Soldier's Home," Krebs has returned from fighting in World War I to the Oklahoman world in which he had grown up only to find himself isolated and estranged. Although he had been a good soldier (Nick and Krebs having won several medals), no one really cares what actually happened in the war. Only sensational lies will arouse any interest; consequently, "Krebs] is forced to tell lies that tarnish his memories and destroy his pride in them. Moreover, he finds the relationships of civilian life based on politics, intrigue, and still more lies."\(^{56}\) As a result of this disillusionment, Krebs looks at life somewhat detachedly. As he sits on his front porch and watches the girls walk by on the other side of the street,
he reflects that "he liked the look of them much better than the French or German girls. But the world they were in was not the world he was in." Consequently, as Nick does, Krebs, traumatized by his war experiences and shocked by his postwar discoveries, sheds the complexity of all relationships and continues to look at life from his front porch.

On the road again, Nick travels through Europe until he is forced to return to America since his wife is expecting a baby. In "Father and Sons," Nick, now thirty-eight years old, is driving along with his son, presumably the child that brought him back to America. This story is a type of flashback, for in relating to his son, Nick begins to think about his father, who had killed himself. Thus the relationship between generations is examined in Nick's reflection on his relation both to his father and to his son. Nostalgically, Nick remembers his father as a busy, yet kindly physician whose chief delights were hunting and fishing. Naturally, it was the father who, in teaching Nick to hunt and fish, had become the companion of the boy (i.e., Nick as a boy). Nick recalls that he "loved his father very much and for a long time;" however, the two gradually grew apart, for Nick became dissatisfied with his father's weakness and sentimentality. Now, just as the doctor was not much help to Nick with problems outside the life of sports, Nick cannot communicate with his son either. The boy wants to see his grandfather's grave, a place he has never been. This is the last thing that Nick wants to think of, for the death of his father is very troubling to him. But his son is
insistent, and the story ends with the father giving in: "I can see we'll have to go." There is the merest suggestion of defeat in this: perhaps Nick is failing as his father failed.

Growing up for Nick was a process of learning to endure. Whether as a soldier, or here in "Fathers and Sons" as a middle-aged father looking back upon his childhood, it is not peace or protection that Nick remembers, but a time when there was less call upon this endurance.

What Nick recalls best from his childhood are manifestations of life's dire cruelty: the suicide of the Indian, the lynching of the negro described in the vignette which precedes chapter 15 in *In Our Time*, the brutal scenes of everyday living. Nick has viewed life as a world based on the sordid laws of violence and death. It is grappling with these problems, in overcoming difficulties and doubts that Nick has grown up.

This growth to maturity is another characteristic of the picaresque hero. "In the early chapters of the picaresque novel, the young hero is generally made to undergo some sort of deniaiement or 'wising-up.'" Nick's experiences during boyhood have adequately provided him with this "wising-up". His contacts with life and society have taught him many lessons about living. It is this learning and these experiences that attribute another aspect of the pica ro to Nick Adam, for "picaresque literature is very much a literature of learning, a bit of experience."  

In order to review all of the picaresque qualities that are found in the Nick Adam stories, one need only read the "Big Two-Hearted River" accounts, for it is in these stories that Hemingway has culminated all of the picaresque characteristics
of Nick Adam. And in addition, he has here reiterated the idea of Nick's disillusionment and consequent search for identity and belonging. In this two-part episode, Nick returns to the fishing grounds of his youth after the war. Both parts of the story annotate this return, this re-establishment of an harmonious and therapeutic intimacy with nature; the flight from bad memories and unpleasant thoughts, and the re-immersion of the senses into the miraculous plenitude of an unspoiled world. 62

The plot of these episodes is, simply, that Nick, leaving the burned-out town of Seney behind as he had left behind his burned-out world, hikes into the hills of Michigan, makes camp by a river, and spends a day fishing. The first part of the story covers Nick's progress toward the river, and his pitching camp on the banks. The descriptions in this episode run to considerable length and are carefully detailed. Yet these details have strong, emotional connatations for Nick. He thinks of his camp as "the good place," 63 the place where none of his troubles can touch him. In the mechanical techniques of pitching camp and making coffee, Nick takes extraordinary pleasure. In fact, his sensations have become so valuable that he doesn't want to hurry them, for they bring pleasure, beauty, and a sense of order which, until now, has been sorely lacking in his civilized experiences. These sensations are a part of a healing process, a private means of wiping out the damages inflicted by society, and of redefining his relation to that society. Nick is finally back where he should be.

Deliberately choosing this camp site where he can set his
own conditions for living, Nick has journeyed many miles by train and by foot. This journey epitomizes the picaresque wanderings that Nick, has made during his early boyhood and after his decision to come to a separate peace with the world. However, before he reaches the camping ground, Nick must pass the burned-out territory where the town of Seney once stood. This area suggests to Nick the death and violence that civilization can create. Furthermore, the fact that a town, one of the basic units of society, once occupied the burned fields, denotes the destruction of the values of society and civilization. Nevertheless, Nick moves from the town to the river, the river being a traditional symbol of life.

The second part of this episode recreating Nick's first day of fishing brings about the confrontation of his knowledge and fear. In the morning, Nick forces himself to cook and eat breakfast, "he was really too hurried to eat breakfast, but he knew he must." Besides, "he did not want to rush his sensations any," since, for Nick this trip was an attempt to lose himself in the nostalgic ritual of fishing as he had known it before the war.

As Nick first enters the river, he fishes the shallows first; he wants to be able to cope with his less threatening memories before he tackles the problem of trying to reconcile his disillusionment with the society that created it. As he walks downstream into deeper water, Nick begins to run into trouble. He hooks a big fish, but has to struggle to reel it in. This battle with the
fish parallels Nick's battle with his emotions in this deeper water. "Nick's hand was shaky. He reeled in slowly. The thrill had been too much. He felt vaguely, a little sick, as though it would be better to sit down." Nick's tension is suddenly released in this climactic scene. Unless he regains his self-control, he will have failed in his attempt to overcome his fears of disillusionment and violence.

Nick discontinues any further advance up the river, for now the river is narrowing and heading into the dark swamp. This swamp is the dark, barren place, the patch of dismal shadows that forebode many things: growing up, learning of life, disillusionment, violence. "Nick did not want to go into there now . . . . In the swamp fishing was a tragic adventure," for it involved the risk of death. Nick had hooked one trout, but he must not follow the fish into the swamp; he prefers the clear portion of the river to its second and more congested heart. The man Nick has become cannot enter the swamp and fish; he can only fight it and all it means from the outside, on the other side of the ocean. This rejection of the swamp, the heartland, is symbolic of Nick's earlier rejection of his country, his mother-land.

Nick cannot pass that point where the river narrows into the swamp, because it reminds him of that spot in "A Way You'll Never Be" where he was wounded during the war. This association between the Big Two-Hearted River and the European river is what makes the swamp so terrifying. It becomes clear that Nick is suffering from shell shock and is desperately trying to keep
his hold on his sanity. This fishing trip, conducted against a background of escape and terror, was taken as a means of keeping Nick from going crazy. "Clearly; 'Big Two-Hearted River' presents a picture of a sick man, and of a man who is in escape from whatever it is that made him sick." 68

Thus, recoiling from the memories of a sick world, Nick sought retreat in the Big Two-Hearted River. His only desire was to perform physically in hopes of allaying the torture of performing mentally. "Nick's only function was to fish, to immerse himself so completely in the physical sensation and details of fishing that there was no need to think." 69 It as though Nick wants to rub out of his mind all thoughts of the immediate past and begin over again in the woods. "But even the woods had been burned over . . . Yet here . . . was a moment of separation of forgetfulness, of peace." 70

The intensity of Nick's passions in this story can be easily acknowledged by the reader. Under the surface one can feel a snapping of ties and a mood of unrest - the type of unrest and isolation that causes the picaresque hero to wander. Also to be sensed is the sharp nostalgic remembrance of things past. Nick thinks of his father and of his happy youth of hunting and fishing; yet the brutality of life that he had also learned during his youth is reflected in the nervous, disillusioned, "sick" adult that Nick has become. Thus, the essential qualities of a picaresque hero are shown to be characteristic of Nick Adam, especially as epitomized in "The Big Two-Hearted River."
FOOTNOTES

1 Henry David Thoreau, A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers (Boston, 1893), p. 404.


3 Shipley, p. 309.


6 Shipley, p. 309.

7 Shipley, p. 309.


10 Linn and Taylor, p. 92.


12 Burhans, p. 316.

13 Burhans, p. 319.

14 Burhans, p. 320.


16 Ernest Hemingway, Short Stories (New York, 1953), p. 95.


18 Hemingway, p. 97.

19 Burhans, p. 320.

20 Burhans, p. 320.

22Hemingway, p. 110.
23Hemingway, p. 123.
24Hemingway, p. 123
25Hemingway.
29Hemingway, p. 366.
30Hemingway, p. 286.
31Hemingway, p. 288.
33Alter, p.124.
36Hemingway, p. 139.
37Aldridge, p. 27.
39Young, "Adventures", p. 102.
40Aldridge, p. 28.
42Alter, p. 109.

Hemingway, p. 187.

Hemingway, p. 183.

Alter, p. 66.


Maurois.

Aldridge, p. 28-29.

Spilka, p. 300.

Killinger, p. 18.

Hemingway, p. 409.

Hemingway, p. 408.

Hemingway, p. 410.

Burhans, p. 323.

Hemingway p. 148.

Hemingway, p. 491.

Hemingway, p. 999.

Kashkin, p. 104.

Alter, p. 30.

Tanner, p. 253.

Hemingway, p. 215.

Hemingway, p. 221.

Hemingway, p. 227.

Hemingway, p. 226.

Hemingway, p. 231.
68 Young, "Adventures", p. 106.


70 Bachman.
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