



## **The Symbolism in Hemingway's Social Relationships and Perversion Stories**

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### **Keywords**

Symbolism,  
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### **Abstract**

Ernest Miller Hemingway (1899-1961) is widely regarded as a founding father of the contemporary American short story. He invented and popularized new approaches that had a profound influence on the art of short story writing. The purpose of this study is to discuss and analyze Hemingway's use of symbols in his short stories in order to convey certain messages to his readers; that is, to demonstrate the complexity of human reality, to provide a comprehensive view of the troubled human psyche, and to emphasize the importance of the environment and its influence on human beings. Hemingway uses symbols to convey a message about the trials of existence and how humans battle to live.

The research examines the growth of symbolism in American literature, its leading personalities, and the nature of their symbolic tactics. It also offers light on the growth of the American short story, the field's leading writers, and their use of symbolism.

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It examines Hemingway's use of symbolism in chosen short tales. The research will concentrate on the societal and perversion issues addressed in these tales. It contains stories about marriage, such as *The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber*. It examines Hemingway's stories about homosexuality and lesbianism, such as *A Simple Inquiry* and *The Sea Change*.

## **1. The Symbolism in Hemingway's Social Relationship and Perversion Stories**

### **1.1. Marriage Success Stories**

#### **1.1.1. Francis Macomber's Brief Happiness**

The story was first published in 1936 and reprinted in 1938 in Hemingway's first collection of short stories (Harmon. 116). The Macomers, an American couple, are on a safari in Africa, accompanied by Englishman Wilson. When confronted with a mad, wounded lion, Macomber demonstrates his cowardice, is rescued by Wilson, and earns the utter contempt of his wife. Macomber experiences a surge of strength during the next hunting expedition, and his wife, who has always found satisfaction in his weakness, is taken aback by this new Macomber. His second opportunity comes in the form of a wild buffalo. Cowardice has vanished, and as he heroically attempts to kill the charging beast, a bullet fired by his wife misses the buffalo and kills Macomber.

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The story's central theme is marriage. Macomber is battling issues surrounding women and moral manhood. Margot, his wife, is in desperate need of her husband's money but worships her ability to control him. Wilson, the Macomber's hired white hunter, is drawn into the emotional turmoil surrounding a failed marriage (Baker, 45). Their relationship as husband and wife is fraught with tension, and the numerous exchanges between them reflect these emotions.

As the story begins, we learn that Macomber attempted but failed to shoot a lion, fleeing in fear, and that everyone is "pretending nothing had happened" (Ibid: 3). Although Wilson assures Macomber that this is a perfectly normal reaction for a novice hunter: "Ignore the entire situation. There's nothing to it in any case" (Ibid: 6), it's clear that neither he nor Margot believe that. When Margot informs Macomber that she requires a gimlet, an alcoholic beverage but also a tedious tool, Macomber responds, "I'll have a gimlet as well." "I require something" (Ibid: 3), she alludes to the fact that what she truly requires is a manly husband. The conflict is not simply between Margot and Macomber or Macomber and Wilson; it is also between Macomber and himself (Bernardo, 1).

The story is replete with intriguing symbols, beginning with each character's appearance and their reactions to descriptions of their surroundings, such as the animals and the way nature operates on their fates and brief lives. Beginning with appearance symbolism, it is critical to examine each character's appearance in order to gain a better understanding of his or her nature. Beginning with Wilson's physical appearance:

*Wilson, the white hunter... was of average stature, with sandy hair, a stubby mustache, a very red face, and extremely cold blue eyes with faint white wrinkles at the corners that grooved merrily when he smiled. (Ibid., p. 4).*

*The use of color symbolism is critical in determining who Wilson is. The colors red, white, and blue are all symbolic of various things. The white color is a symbol of death; it indicates that Wilson is a senseless individual who has lost his ability to feel. "The cold blue eye is a symbol of the lack of human warmth or the coldness of the soul that one finds in a torture specialist," Hutton asserts (239-240). A very red face is a symbol of heroism; he is a brave man capable of cold-blooded murder (Hutton, 239). Hemingway describes his eyes as "flat, blue, machine-eyes." gunner's (Ibid:8). This exemplifies cruelty and demonstrates "Wilson's extraordinary ability for murder" (Hutton, 240).*

Margot's appearance is extremely telling. It implies that Macomber cannot divorce her because she is too lovely for him to divorce, as Hemingway's description demonstrates:

*She was an extremely handsome and well-groomed woman of the beauty and social standing that had demanded \$5,000 for endorsing, with photographs, a beauty product she had never used five years before. (Ibid., p. 4).*

Margot and beauty are an evocative pairing. It is a sign of dominance, as she is squeezing her husband. She is capable of doing everything without allowing him to open his lips (Baker, 4). Margot is described by Hutton as "the dominating American bitch" (248); she is the improbable civilized woman who despises the civilized man for his lack of initiative and nerve and then, out of jealousy, exhausts herself in breaking him down as soon as he begins to exhibit any of these characteristics (Donaldson, 171). To return to Macomber, Hemingway depicts him as follows:

*Francis Macomber was a tall, well-built guy with black hair trimmed in the manner of an oarsman.... and was regarded beautiful. He was dressed in the same kind of Safari clothing as Wilson, only his were brand new; he was 35 years old. He maintained himself in excellent shape, excelled at court games, and racked up a number of big-game fishing records. (Ibid., p. 4).*

The description is somewhat different than the rest. It depicts Macomber as a frail and sensitive individual. When we examine his clothes, we notice that they are new; this indicates one thing: inexperience or a lack of experience, particularly in hunting; however, when we examine Wilson's clothes, we notice that they are old; this is also a symbol; it indicates not only experience, but also talent and profession (Bernardo, 1). Macomber excels in all areas except hunting, as Hemingway states, "he had just shown himself, quite openly, to be a coward" (Ibid: 4). The tension between Macomber and his wife lasts eleven years, until his performance on the scene of his cowardice, a moment that exacerbates the dispute. Macomber is carried into the tent by the personal lads; he enters and sits on the bed till his wife arrives. When she enters, she "says nothing to him" (Ibid: 3). This is the initial step in escalating the tension.

between them after the successful hunt. She weeps and adds, "I wish that hadn't occurred" (Ibid: 5). Margot begins, after this occurrence, by attempting to convince her husband that he is worthless, as she says:

*What difference does it make whether Francis is skilled at lion hunting? That is not his line of business. That is Mr. Wilson's line of work. Mr. Wilson is very remarkable in assassinating anything. (Ibid., p. 8).*

This is the first step in stripping Macomber of his manhood and allowing him to simply fall into the arms of another. However, Wilson had something to say about American spouses when he stated:

*They are the toughest in the world, he reasoned; the hardest, the cruelest, the most predatory, and the most seductive, and their men have softened or disintegrated nervously as their men have toughened. Or do they choose men who are capable of dealing with them? (Ibid., p. 8).*

Wilson and Margot have a role in Macomber's demise, particularly after he realizes she is sleeping with him, as Macomber makes plain in his statements:

*"How long have you been gone?" Macomber inquired in the shadows.*

*"How are you doing?" she inquired.*

*"How have you been?"*

*"I just stepped outside to take a breath of fresh air."*

*"You did, and you did it magnificently."*

*"What do you want me to say, sweetheart?"*

*"How long have you been gone?"*

*"I'm out for a breath of fresh air"*

*"That is a novel designation for it. You are exceptional.*

*bitch."*

*"You are, after all, a coward." (Ibid., p. 22).*

Macomber has already made a first step toward masculinity by expressing moral anger. Hemingway has previously pushed a flashback that foreshadows such a move, and indeed, it is a component of the story's dominating symbol. While Macomber's wife was with Wilson, Macomber relived the whole incident of his cowardly lion escape. And, just before his wife returns to the tent, Macomber has a dream that foreshadows his impending personality change:

*It was now approximately three a.m., and Francis Macomber, who had fallen asleep shortly after he had stopped thinking about the lion, awoke and then fell asleep again, awoke abruptly, terrified by a dream of the bloody-headed lion looming over him. (Ibid., p. 22).*

The lion becomes a sign of Macomber's timidity in this instance, "and its arrival in the dream indicates the power that must be resisted" (Defalco, 204). The lion becomes a symbol of "father power; the mother-lover; wife's and the new person that Macomber must become in order to steal the father's couch" (204). The bleeding head is a representation of the shame Macomber feels as he flees from the lion (Defalco, 204). From this point forward in the story, Macomber ascends to prominence via a series of well delineated phases. Although he had to put up with his wife's infidelity for years, he gets enraged at her activities immediately after the dream. Following that, he comes to despise Wilson, which reflects his inner fortitude, since Wilson had served as a guide-figure so far: "'you bastard,' thought Macomber, 'you arrogant bastard'" (Ibid: 23). He abhors both his wife and Wilson (Defalco, 205-6).

The location and surrounding forest, the monsters, the plants, and the insects are all significant. The forest is a sign of darkness; it is a location where Macomber must achieve himself and defeat all of his adversaries, who emerge from the shadows to work against his will, such as his wife, Wilson, and the lion, whose roar can be heard from afar (Defalco, 202-3). Next a night of torture "during which he [Macomber] is compelled to watch his wife sleepily return from the English man's camp" (Baker, 47), the party pursues a buffalo the following day. They enter the open vehicle. The automobile has a critical symbolic function in this case. It is the identical automobile they used in the previous quest, but with one distinction. The distinction lies in the order in which the characters appear.

Macomber sits in front of Margot and Wilson on the first hunting trip and on their approach to the lion. Macomber slumbers in the back car next his freezing wife after that day's catastrophe, while Wilson sits in the front seat. This is significant; Macomber withdraws to the back seat, implying something has been ignored. He is behind Wilson, which indicates cowardice; Wilson is in front, which indicates bravery (Baker, 47). This is immediately apparent when Hemingway designs the chairs as follows:

*They stepped into the automobile and drove up the river among the woods in the gloomy early morning light. Macomber unlocked the breech of his rifle and saw he was carrying metal-cased rounds. He then sealed the bolt and secured the firearm.... He returned his gaze to Wilson, who sat opposite him in the rear seat of the doorless, box-bodied motor vehicle. (Ibid., p. 14).*

Then, upon Macomber's demise:

Macomber's wife had not glanced at him or Heather, and he had sat beside her in the back seat, with Wilson in the front seat. (Ibid., p. 20).

Returning to the buffalo hunt, they take the open vehicle, Wilson in the driver's seat and the Macomers in the back:

*He went into the front seat beside the driver, while Francis Macomber and his wife sat in the rear seat silently. (Ibid., p. 25).*

Macomber abruptly sheds his dread in the middle of the "second day's shooting and with the assistance of the white hunter. His wife immediately recognizes and despises this development, since it undercuts her authority" (Baker, 47). However, Wilson discreetly watches Macomber's true Manhood; when Wilson remarks on Macomber's behavior, he thinks, "Damned if this isn't an odd one. He was very ill yesterday, and now he's a roaring fire eater." Wilson's description of Macomber as a "ruddy fire eater" (Ibid:31) is metaphorical. Clearly, the color red or ruddy represents authority and virile vigor (Watts, 141-2).

Macomber has killed three bulls in cold blood, establishing his bravery in the process. However, one of the bulls, notably the first one, escapes and walks into the jungle, while Margot's face is "white and she seemed unwell" (Ibid: 31). As a result, she exits to the rear seat, leaving the two men alone.

are seated in the first row:

His wife remained silent and looked at him oddly. She was seated far back in the seat, while Macomber sat ahead, conversing with Wilson, who had twisted sideways and was conversing over the back of the front seat. (Ibid., p. 32).

This reflects Margot's inner struggle, as seen by her statement to Wilson " 'it was awful. I've never felt so terrified in my whole life.' (Ibid., p. 29.) She perceives that Macomber has shifted, and one has the impression that the roles have been switched. She loses control of her husband and upon observing the change in him, particularly when he views the buffalo "with delight" and Margot remarks, "He's

hateful looking" (Ibid: 31), and she appears "ill" with Macomber brimming with "power," she realizes immediately that he is about to leave her: "But she saw the change in Francis Macomber now" (Ibid: 33). She is in the rear, and she will follow Macomber. Macomber acknowledges this shift when he tells Wilson, "something changed in me when we first met."

saw the buff and began after him.

It was pure elation (Ibid: 32). And when he declares, "I feel completely different" (Ibid: 32), Macomber's wrath against Wilson "and Margot accelerates toward self-definition via action, Defalco declares, "Macomber has attained masculinity." As a result, he has cut the mother wife link and gained his liberty" (206). Margot raises her own rifle and shoots Macomber as he attempts to kill the wounded, charging buffalo. Waldhorn refers to Macomber's death as a win, stating:

*Macomber's act of valor cleanses him of fear—not just of nature, but also of Margot—and inspires a trust in himself that transforms even his death into a triumph. (Ibid., p. 50).*

The narrative concludes with Margot's frantic sobbing and Wilson's assessment of Margot as a 'murderer' when he asks her, "Why didn't you poison him?" That is how they do things in England." Ibid., p. 37). The conclusion is somewhat enigmatic. It is probable that Margot murdered Macomber out of concern that he would abandon her with his newfound confidence, particularly when Wilson informs her that "he would have abandoned you as well" (Ibid: 36). Alternatively, Margot may have been shooting for the buffalo in order to deprive Macomber of the grandeur of the slaughter he so urgently desired to do alone. However, she might have been worried that the buffalo would kill her husband, and she lacked confidence in his ability to slay the buffalo on his own. This might exacerbate Macomber's humiliation, which Hemingway regards as a calamity (Bernardo, 1).

Macomber's win lasted for about a half-hour. What finally killed Macomber was the disparity between his wife's intense need to attain a male identity and what Macomber required to create that sense of identity inside himself. Hemingway contends that Macomber's death was not sad at all, but rather a triumph, since he died asserting himself (Bernardo, 1).

In this novel, the symbols are utilized to amplify the reader's thoughts about the sad triangle connection between Macomber, Margot, and Wilson; this relationship functions as the eight sections of an iceberg that enable the ninth portion to bloom radiantly above the surface.

## **2. Stories About Homosexuality**

### **2.1. An Uncomplicated Inquiry**

The tale first appeared in Hemingway's second collection of short stories, *Men Without Women*, in 1927. (Harmon, 115). The narrative is about homosexuality, and the novel's strategy of implication is very prominent. The narrative follows an Italian major, Maggiore, who is now serving in the military, and his assistant, Pinin, who is also currently serving. They are having a chat; the major is attempting to entice Pinin, but he refuses his major's attempts and promptly departs.



Hemingway begins the narrative by describing the environment around the protagonists. The sun and the snow are significant metaphorical elements in the plot. The snow represents chill and the absence of a human soul, while the sun represents life and humanity (Wells, 2), "the sun was high and the light poured in over the top of the snow" (Ibid: 327).

Hemingway portrays the Italian major as a guy devoid of humanity, which is embodied by his "snow-glasses" that shield his face from the light. Another way of describing him is via his face. He seems to be exhausted, and one senses a lack of vitality about him (Wells, 2). He has been transformed into an extraterrestrial by the war:

*Two white rings around the major's eyes, where his snow-glasses had shielded his face from the light on the snow. The remainder of his face had been burnt, then tanned, and finally scorched through the tan. His nose was bloated, and blisters had left margins of loose skin. (ibid., p. 327)*

The major's orderly seems to be quite obedient and has a strong sense of discipline. He has a dark complexion, which indicates that he is a negro, and Africans are constantly humiliated by others. He is the ideal search for the major (Wells, 2), "Pinin served as the major's orderly." He was a dark-faced youngster, and he repaired the stove, carefully inserting the pine wood, locked the door, and returned to the rear of the cottage" (Ibid: 328). The significant begins asking strange questions about Pinin's age and if he is in love with a female or not. The major has gone through all of Pinin's letters in order to ascertain his romantic relationships. Pinin is in fact in love with a female, but he does not communicate with her. This raises significant doubts about their connection. He believes that they may be compelled to split apart (Wells, 2):

*"Are you nineteen?" he enquired.*

*"You are correct, signor Maggiore."*

*"Have you ever fallen in love?"*

You've fallen in love with this girl, haven't you? You do not correspond with her. I

*"I have read all of your letters."*

*"I adore hefPinin said.*

*"However, I do not write her." (Ibid., pp. 328–29)*

To ensure his comfort while speaking, the major inquires of Tonani, a serving adjutant, if he can hear him or not. He desires seclusion while while maintaining a clean reputation (Wells, 3). "Tonani, the major said, in the same tone of voice, "can you hear me speaking?" (Ibid., p. 339). The major responds to his queries. "He is deaf," the major said. "And you are certain that you adore a female?" (Ibid: 329), but the major ultimately wants to convey to Pinin what he requires of him: "And, the major asked rapidly, that you are not corrupt?" (Ibid., p. 339). And the major continues to inquire, speaking with implicit intents, and "you don't really want—and that your big desire isn't truly-" (Ibid., p. 339). The major now begins spewing out phrases and never finishes them, but Pinin eventually understands and stares

at the floor in refusal (Wells, 2). The major then begins counseling Pinin: "You're a nice guy, Pinin. However, avoid being superior and be cautious that someone else does not come along and steal you." (Ibid., p. 339). Within Pinin, the major is viewing himself. He had been in service his whole life and fears that he may have lost his love as a result of his duty, something he does not want to happen to Pinin. The major's symbolic words "be cautious that no one else comes along and takes you" signify "do not let the army take your life away" as it did mine. The elderly gentleman has been bitter for a long time and believes Pinin is following in the footsteps of the major; a lonely existence in the army (Wells. 2).

Pinin is taken aback, particularly as he exits the room: "Pinin flushed and walked differently than he had while bringing in the wood for the fire" (p.329). However, the major remains unchanged, indicating that he is a hopeless case; war had robbed him of his life and morality (Williams, 97), "'The little devil,' he thought, 'I wonder whether he lied to me.'" (p.330). Hemingway often stated what war causes to individuals engaged, and Defalco says that wooing a soldier is a clear representation of the fundamental ills of war, while sexual perversion becomes a sign of war's unnaturalness (131-132).

## 2.2. The Seismic Shift

The tale was first published in 1933 in Hemingway's third collection of short stories, *Winner Take Nothing* (Harmon, 116). The defeat of man in the contemporary world has gotten even more brutal in this book. Suicide, castration, shell shock, and homosexuality are all manifestations of man's response to contemporary reality (Bardacke, 347). The narrative has several implicit implications and unresolved tensions within human mind. The plot centers on a guy and a lady conversing in a pub. The lady wants to leave the guy who loves her in order to pursue a lesbian romance. Finally, he agrees, and she departs, leaving the guy alone in the bar.

As the novel begins, one senses an aura of mystery around the events and descriptions of the people's appearances and behaviors. Hemingway begins with the lady, presenting her as a contemporary woman dressed in tweed suits with bobbed hair and living in postwar Paris. All of these characteristics are indicative of a woman's loss of femininity (Bardacke, 347). "The girl wore a tweed suit, her complexion was a silky golden brown, and her blonde hair was cropped short and flowed wonderfully away from her brow" (Ibid: 397). When he replies, "I'll murder her.... I vow to God I will," the first clue to her lesbian affair is revealed (Ibid: 397). Here, the guy discovers her homosexuality. She attempts to take his hand in hers, but he refuses her. "He examined her hands but did not take them in his." (Ibid., p. 398.) The guy is enraged at the girl and remarks, "if it had been a male-" (Ibid., p. 398.) The lady seems to be very sure about her lesbian affair, and she constantly defends herself, saying "I'll return if you want me" and "You're a beautiful guy, and it pains my heart to leave you-" (Ibid., p. 398.) She desires forgiveness, but he is adamant about rejecting everything. He abruptly shifts his attitude and lets her go:

*"Continue," he said, his voice sounding weird to him.... And "when you return, tell me everything about it."*



*His voice was somewhat weird. He was unaware. She gave him a cursory glance. He had found a home. (Ibid., p. 400).*

*When she accuses him of being perverse, his attitude changes (Defalco, 176):*

*"I'd prefer it if you avoided using such language."*

*[perversion], the young lady said. "There is no need to use such a term."*

*"How do you want to refer to it?"*

*"You are under no obligation to give it a name."*

*"That is the correct term."*

*"No," she said emphatically. "We are comprised of a variety of components. You are aware of this."*

*"You've made an adequate use of it. You do not need to repeat that."*

*"Because this clarifies things for you."*

*"That's all fine," he said. "That is correct." (Ibid., p. 400).*

The transformation begins when he orders her to go. "He was not the same guy he had been before he ordered her to leave" (Ibid: 401). Recognizing this transformation in the circumstance is synonymous with acceptance (Defalco, 177). She bolts and flees, like a wild horse yearning for freedom (Wells, 2). While James, the bartender, initially considered a horse, and particularly when the man and the lady were bickering, "he was not thinking about this [the man and the woman's dilemma], but about a horse" (p.399). The male had rejected the woman's sin and then accepted it; as a consequence, he abandons her (Defalco, 178).

The story's title has several significant connotations. The "Sea" in this context refers to both the guy and the lady. It is symbolic of man's unpredictable nature. Occasionally, the man's mentality is subjected to several storms, showers, and black clouds. Human nature is really difficult to comprehend. Thus, the "Sea" here represents man's nature, which is rather peculiar. Because the man's dilemma is a result of his shortcomings, he becomes a victim, yet he embraces his "cause of miseries" (Defalco, 179). The "Sea" also represents the character of women; she seems to have evolved into an alien. She has lost her femininity and forgotten what it is to be a woman. Her lesbianism is like a raging hurricane that is destroying her relationship (Wells, 2). The "Sea" also represents the contemporary world, which has moulded and transformed the woman, and through her, the man, into something other than what they were born to be (Bardacke, 348).

One of the outcomes of the contemporary world, particularly the war, is a significant proclivity towards homosexuality and lesbianism. Specifically, the conflict has impacted a large number of individuals and altered their sentiments toward one another. The lady began to assert her feminism, which is an unmistakable product of the contemporary society. And as a result of the brutal, terrible, and cruel conflicts, man began sexually seeking other men. The conflict has reshaped man and reduced him to animal form. Hemingway's gay tales make the effect of modernity and war abundantly obvious via the employment of diverse symbols, drawing us beyond the surface to uncover the harsh reality.

### 3. Conclusion

Hemingway and symbolism, a relationship that is very difficult, if not impossible, to establish, given his realistic manner of writing. However, his realism is inextricably linked to symbolism, despite the fact that symbolism and realism are diametrically opposed literary approaches. However, dealing with Hemingway is not hard since his genuine concerns are symbolically portrayed via a variety of vibrant images and significant interactions.

Hemingway pays close attention to the lives of his characters, their behavior, and inner problems in his novels via the use of a unique form of psychological symbolism. The short tales centered on Nick Adams, as well as the other short stories in his three volumes, externalize inner attitudes and psychological issues via symbolic reflection. This endeavor to transcend surface manifestations and address primal conditions inspired Hemingway to include some fundamental psychologically symbolic strategies into his work. In his short works, he employs an unusual kind of symbolism, which he refers to as private symbolism. This kind is inextricably related to the writer's imagination and invention, and Hemingway is one of the authors that used this type of symbolism in his short tales.

All of Hemingway's short tales follow this pattern, and only Hemingway is able to stand on the tip of the iceberg.

Hemingway is portraying a whole era, complete with its agony and disappointment, and he is able to do it solely via symbols. His iconography and painting depict the "Lost Generation" and the Jazz Age; a period of societal transformation and postwar despair. The breakdown of communication, a lack of love, a strong proclivity toward homosexuality and lesbianism, a loss of faith, dread, despair, the horrors of war, and all the world's miseries are all present in Hemingway's works. He is able to talk about such subjects due to the agony he has endured throughout his life. He is physically and spiritually there in each narrative; he grins and weeps, he experiences agony and terror, he triumphs and fails; he is Hemingway; the man and the legend.

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