Love and Marriage in Ernest Hemingway's and John Cheever's Short Stories

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Sveučilište J. J. Strossmayera u Osijeku

Filozofski fakultet

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Znanstveno polje: filologija

Znanstvena grana: anglistika

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Scientific area: humanities

Scientific field: philology

Scientific branch: English studies

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Osijek, 2023

Prilog: Izjava o akademskoj čestitosti i o suglasnosti za javno objavljivanje

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U Osijeku, 11.05.2023.

Danijela Vulić, 0130285096

Ime i prezime studenta, JMBAG

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Abstract

Hemingway's and Cheever's short stories represent a fertile ground for an extensive analysis of their stance on marriage and love. Their narratives create a bridge, connecting time periods between and after the two most destructible world wars. Both writers are influenced by their personal experiences connected to their childhood upbringing, the crumbling marriages their parents had, and the war atrocities. Hence, Hemingway and Cheever shift their narrative focus to rejection of love as an emotion with a positive outcome by showcasing corrupted marriages, separations and divorces, and creating characters to mirror their lives and experiences. In addition, Hemingway and Cheever show that there is a connection through their vision of love and marriage which reflects the post-World War I and World War II American state of society. Both authors detect some critical issues tearing lovers and marriages apart. Hemingway's main focus is on wealthy and emotionless men who despise the idea of marriage and reject women who threaten their masculinity, while exploring deeper issues connected to selfishness, solitude, intimacy, parenthood, power, and emotional weakness in men. Cheever's narrative revolves around the upper-middle class and their marital problems, tackling similar issues as Hemingway – weakness, betrayal, solitude, parenthood, and delusion. Both authors even touch upon the suicide in connection to emotions and marriage. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to analyze how Hemingway and Cheever portrayed love and marriage in their short stories and to clarify which issues concerning love and marriage emerge from the background of characters' life situations, based on social conditions of the time, and the writers' personal experiences.

Keywords: love, marriage, sexism, intimacy issues, masculinity, war

Introduction

The concepts of love and marriage have been the topics of discussion in literature since the beginning of time. Love, as one of the most prominent human emotions, often has its place in literature as a main motif, a cliché trope, a driving force of the entire plot, or, in some cases, it leads protagonists to their tragic end. Marriage, in literature as in physical life, is usually a by-product of the aforementioned love between two individuals or characters. In a perfect world, perfect marriages exist. However, the social circumstances change many human-related spheres, including the concept of romantic love and marriage. When studying these concepts, one must focus on other socially important phenomena and processes. General states of social crisis, such as wars, economy collapse, various conflicts, and political instability lead to the crisis in human relations on a micro-basis; intimate relationships and marriages are negatively affected and often end up in separation or divorce. Whatever happens on a grand scale of the world affairs, takes its toll on human relationships.

This hypothesis can easily be observed in literature since every work of fiction bears the marks of the social circumstances that were dominant at the time of its creation. When World War I escalated in 1914, it caused a lot of distress to the social structure and individuals involved on the world's scale. When the United States entered the war three years after it started on the European soil, in 1917, its social structure was based on small towns and farmers. However, the majority of American population had European roots because of the prior migrations, and since the war broke out, they had no faith in international politics ("American Literature" 1071). Many of them wanted to "steer the nation back to prewar modes of life" ("American Literature" 1071), but the damage done on the socioeconomic level played a crucial role in reshaping the American society. The period between the 1920s and 1930s was marked with economic turmoil, leading to the stock market crash which resulted in "an economic depression" ("American Literature" 1071). These hardships shook the foundations of the American society:

> Much social energy in the 1920s went into enlarging the boundaries for acceptable self-expression. Adherents to small-town, white, Protestant values such as the work ethic, social conformity, duty, and respectability, clashed ideologically with newly articulate groups, and, especially, newly affluent young people who argued for more diverse, permissive, and tolerant styles of life. ("American Literature" 1073-74)

Literary works of Ernest Hemingway underline major issues and traits of the post-World War I society, as well as his personal experiences and mental scars earned in the war. As many writers who represent "The Lost Generation," the between-wars generation of writers who were troubled with "the individual loss of identity" due to the breakdown of "the secure, supportive family life" and the loss of moral values (VanSpanckeren 61), Hemingway transferred this sense of identity and stability loss to his literary works. The after-war reality could not support values and ideals, such as honor and true love, which existed in the American society before the war, so Hemingway's short stories are filled with this sense of loss of the stability, which impacted his vision of love and marriage: "Much of modernist literature . . . is actually antimodern; it interprets modernity as an experience of loss" ("American Literature" 1078).

The aftermath of World War II was a particularly prosperous period for many Americans. Their economic situation bloomed for certain layers of society, which resulted in the upper-middle class starting to form in the American suburbs. As Ruland and Bradbury describe this period, "America entered an era of postwar, postatomic and Postmodern culture. War restored the economic base, and since 1945 the American economy, with whatever jitters, has boomed" (370). These phenomena also poured into the works of fiction, with John Cheever being one of the most prominent writers focusing on family lives of upper-middle class citizens in the suburbs, earning himself a nickname "the Chekhov of the Suburb" (Asharudeen 75), which Beuka further explicates:

> His tireless attention to the rites and trappings of post-World War II upper-middle-class life earned Cheever a good deal of unwarranted criticism as the chronicler of a superficial and even monotonous world. But in fact, beneath the veneer of his bourgeois universe, Cheever consistently draws attention to the fractures that compromise the structure of a seemingly placid suburban society. (69)

While depicting the suburban lives of his characters, Cheever dove into their psychological hardships, lack of love, personal betrayal, and crumbling marriages, while giving "a complex critique of postwar class consciousness" (Beuka 69). This class consciousness was most prominent during the presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower from 1953 to 1961, also known as "the Eisenhower years" or "the Eisenhower era" (Huston 24). During the Eisenhower years, the United States and the Soviets got entangled in the Cold War. However, Eisenhower wanted American citizens to focus on the democratic values of "prosperity and progress" he promoted, and his "New America thus included health insurance for the senior citizens, expanded aid to

education, resource conservation, and urban renewal" (Allen 140). However, although those years during his presidency were peaceful and financially prosperous for the American society, or as Huston describes it, "an era between tranquility of times of turbulence" (24), those years were still "the years of almost uninterrupted international crises" (Huston 24).

However, it was not only the world affairs that had an impact on literature and the development of literary characters, including their vision of love and marriage. In the case of these two authors, their upbringing and some major past experiences played a significant, if not the lead, role in their fiction. They shaped their opinions and visions of the world, relationships, and emotions. Ernest Hemingway and John Cheever had similar backgrounds, transferring their experiences and observations into their short stories. Hemingway, whose lifestyle provided great inspiration for his works, led a rather turbulent life, filled with World War I experience, four failed marriages, and a drinking problem. Cheever, too, had his fair share of struggle with alcoholism which was a consequence of his hectic life – his upper-class parents' marriage falling apart when his was a teenager, and later on, getting married and having a complicated marriage himself.

The first part of this paper deals with the literary period of American modernism and social changes and consequences that were caused by World War I. Ernest Hemingway's modernist literary style is discussed in the framework of the post-World War I era, his personal life, and experiences dating from his childhood to his adulthood. Moreover, the main focus is on the concepts of love and marriage, which revolve around the issues of sexism, emotional weakness and dominance, and solitude.

The second part of the paper focuses on the historical and literary period after the Second World War. The main focus is on the upper-middle-class culture of the American suburbs which developed at the time when the American society entered the period of prosperity. Marital situations and love are analyzed in John Cheever's short stories within the frames of social values of the presented period and his personal life and experiences. The issues of class distinction, unhappiness, and detachment are discussed in the selected short stories.

In the first part of this paper, Ernest Hemingway's short stories "A Canary for One" (1927), "Cat in the Rain" (1925), "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife" (1925), "The End of Something" (1925), "Hills Like White Elephants" (1927), "Indian Camp" (1924), "Mr. and Mrs. Eliot" (1924), and "The Three-Day Blow" (1925) are analyzed in the framework of American modernism. Furthermore, John Cheever's short stories "The Country Husband"

(1954), “The Enormous Radio” (1947), “The Fourth Alarm” (1970), “The Geometry of Love” (1966), “The Season of Divorce” (1950), “The Swimmer” (1964), and “The Worm in the Apple” (1973) are analyzed in the second part of the paper.

Thus, the aim of this thesis is to analyze how Hemingway and Cheever portrayed love and marriage in their short stories and to clarify which issues concerning love and marriage emerge from the background of their characters’ life situations. The analysis is grounded on the cultural, political, and social circumstances which emerged in the United States after the First and the Second World War, which, undoubtedly, shaped Hemingway’s and Cheever’s literary styles. Finally, the main issues concerning the vision of love and marriage in the selected stories are analyzed and compared in the last part of the paper.

1. American Modernism

Modernism as a literary genre in the United States emerges at the early twentieth century, and reaches its peak after World War I. Modernist authors shift their focus on the new post-war

conditions in which the society was left. According to VanSpanckeren, many historians have characterized the period between the two world wars as the traumatic "coming of age" of the United States, although the direct U.S. involvement was rather short and lasted only a year, which resulted in disproportionately fewer casualties than those of its European foes and allies (60). However, it was more than enough to initiate a certain rebellious movement among young writers. The younger post-war generation was angry and disillusioned with the war which led to blaming the older generations and holding them accountable for war atrocities and the unstable economic situation in the U.S. that triggered the Great Depression. However, wealthier American youth from the upper middle class (ironically) left the American ground after the war and settled in Europe, living their adventurous lives filled with revelry and new experiences. Hemingway was one of those expatriates, along with the fellow novelist and poet Gertrude Stein, who famously nicknamed their generation "the lost generation." The lost generation of young literary geniuses, including Fitzgerald, Faulkner, E. E. Cummings, T. S. Eliot, and Ezra Pound, among many others, roamed Europe, seemingly living prosperous lives filled with wealth and joy. Yet, the traditional structure of values and the individual sense of identity were lost, signaling the complete break up with the traditional system they had known until then (VanSpanckeren 60-1). In his extensive study *Writing the Lost Generation,* Monk claims that

> American modernism, of which the contribution of expatriate writers is best understood as an essential element, must not be read as synonymous with modernism as an international movement in the arts, now acknowledged as the institutionally sanctioned cultural response to the industrialized world. It is, instead, an important component of that wider movement. (3)

The main distinction lies precisely in the fact that American expatriate novelists living on the European soil embodied a certain "expatriate lifestyle" consisting of travelling, excessive drinking, spending money, and looking for yet another distraction (Monk 6).

Accordingly, American modernist writers incorporated many real-life changes and struggles into their writing styles. Reading, for example, Hemingway, one can notice how devoid of unimportant details his stories and anecdotes are. Many of his short stories begin *inmedias res*, with no apparent introduction, directly delving into the gist of the issue presented. VanSpanckeren states that "the way the story was told became as important as the story itself" (62). Hemingway uses "the iceberg principle," in which "the emphasis on anti-adjectival plainness and colloquial dialogue is abundantly borne out in [his] writing" (Scofield 140). Gifford explains that "the iceberg sits behind the text," and "the majority of its mass is missed

by an observer who sees only above the waterline" (iii), meaning that the reader is expected to relate with the emotional trauma and see beyond the scarce details and fragments Hemingway provides. His narratives are filled with deeper meanings and irony, which require a skilled reader since Hemingway is well-known for "an omission . . . of overt descriptions of some crucial matter around which the emotions or themes of the text pivot" (Gifford ii). Scofield concludes that

> The directness, the artful simplicity, of Hemingway's' style, his unmistakable individual voice, is central to the extraordinary impact his writing has had on American literature, and it is a quality which is seen at its most powerful in the short stories, since it lends itself to a careful focus on precise objects and places and particular situations. (140)

1.1. Ernest Hemingway or Nick Adams?

Ernest Hemingway's lifestyle inevitably emerges as a topic of interest when discussing his literary works. Such an interesting way of living yielded some quite impressive stories. Stewart brings an extensive biography of Hemingway's hectic life in his book *Modernism and Tradition in Ernest Hemingway's "In Our Time,"* stating that Hemingway came to Europe when he was not even nineteen, volunteering as an ambulance driver for the American Red Cross. His job in Italy was to transport wounded soldiers when he became severely wounded himself – his leg got injured in a shell explosion from which the consequences remained through his entire life. Later on, Hemingway's job was to retrieve remains of soldiers who died in an explosion, which would change him as a person, affecting his mental state. The war provided "a young man from Chicago some rapid lessons in growing up modern" (Stewart 1). Except from being wounded physically, living through the shock of war atrocities and being surrounded with the death and gruesome scenes daily, Hemingway experienced another type of pain first-hand. Namely, he fell in love with an eight years older nurse who took care of him after he was wounded. She was his first true love and the affair ended up in a bitter disappointment and heartbreak upon his return to the U.S. (Stewart 2). However, "the war and his first taste of foreign travel had given him experience and confidence and a desire to seek further adventure, but had also affected him in a darker, more troubling fashion" (4). The rest of his life was just as described – after the title of a war hero and an expatriate phase in Paris, he continued to live his life hectically until the sole end. As Reynolds sums it up, "At forty-six, he married his fourth wife.

At fifty-three he won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction and survived two plane crashes in Africa. At fifty-four the Nobel Prize was his" (16).

However, Hemingway's life in the U.S., before the war, was not as breezy as it might seem. His father, a family medicine practitioner, and his mother, a rather pious woman, did not have a happy marriage, at least in Hemingway's point of view. He believed his father to be under a great influence of his mother, which led Hemingway to resent his father and to consider him a weak man. His mother's dominance led him to resent her, as well. His father, driven by depression, ended his life by suicide when Hemingway was twenty-nine (Stewart 3). Hemingway, unfortunately, followed in his father's footsteps and took his own life with a shotgun at the age of sixty-two.

All these facts about Hemingway's personal life can be noted in his stories. The character of Nick Adams, which develops through a series of stories, leads a literary version of Ernest Hemingway's life. Nick is a troubled young man, often choosing his father over his mother, looking up to him and his medical capabilities when we meet him for the first time in a short story "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife." As Moddelmog writes, "Nick Adams is the only male protagonist in Hemingway's fiction whose biological family and upbringing are sketched in some detail" (183). And those details are well known from Hemingway's early life. In several short stories which present Nick Adams as a main character, the readers learn that Nick's father is a doctor, and his mother has a religious educational background. As a young boy, he spends his days in the woods of Michigan, exploring the nature and spending time with his family, just as Hemingway did as a child. Moreover, the relationship Hemingway had with his parents is transferred to the character of Nick, especially when his religious, and probably dominant, mother is concerned, since the readers can gather from the stories that Nick would always rather choose his father's company over his mother's. When Nick reaches his young adulthood, his relationships with the opposite gender tend to model Hemingway's experience and inner battles with love as an emotion and with the concept of a probable marriage. Hemingway modelled Nick and his development after his own life experiences, making Nick Adams "Hemingway's closest fictional alter ego" (Svoboda 157).

2. Love and Marriage in Hemingway's Short Stories

Many of Hemingway's short stories revolve around intimate relationships, and the question of (im)perfect marriage is often presented, either subtly or directly. As already stated, his vision of intimate relationships stems from his personal experiences with the heartbreak and from the

marital relationship his parents had, which was not very balanced in his opinion. He was troubled with his mother's dominance in the relationship, which influenced his future relationships with women. Hence, in every short story, the main protagonist is male; it is usually his alter ego character, Nick Adams. However, he wrote about emotionally independent men, but also about men who are presented as weak and unable to uphold the virtues of a true man, alluding to his father's alleged weakness and the absence of a true manly character. Such male characters are found in his short stories "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot" (1924), "Indian Camp" (1924), and "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife" (1925).

However, the readers can detect another issue as well – the blatant sexism in connection to his female characters. Many of them do not even have a name and are usually referred to as "the girl" or "she." Female characters are intended to be side characters, often uncared-for and disliked, best seen in the short stories "Cat in the Rain" and "Hills Like White Elephants." When analyzing characters' relationships and/or marriages, the readers see that "both Nick-stories and the other narratives focus on similar love relationships of insularity, marriages of incompatibility, or love affairs in agony" (Tucan 429). Hemingway's literary marriages are often seen as an imprisonment of personal freedoms filled with negligence towards the character of the wife, or they represent irreconcilable differences followed by intimacy and communication issues. Tucan rightfully states that

> In general, the critical view on Hemingway's "marriage group" further proves the characters' lack of communication and their inability to express feelings in the intensity of private moments when emotion is persistently restrained. In such stories, the characters are confronted with unsettling dilemmas in dramatic situations whereas their failed relationships yield a variety of emotional effects that only raise the awareness of the discrepancy between their "real" life and their troubling experience of love. (429)

2.1. Women as Inessential

We first meet Nick Adams as a child in "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife." There is a strife happening between his father and a Native American named Dick who came to cut up the big

log which Nick's father illegally appropriated. After the quarrel, the doctor comes into the house and is met with questions from his wife:

> "Was anything the matter?"
> "I had a row with Dick Boulton."
> "Oh", said his wife. "I hope you didn't lose your temper, Henry."
> "No", said the doctor.
> "Remember, that he who ruleth his spirit is greater than he that taketh a city", said his wife. She was a Christian Scientist. Her Bible, her copy of Science and Health and her Quarterly were on a table beside her bed in the darkened room. ("Doctor" 101-02)

It is easily deduced that the doctor's wife is the dominant character in their relationship. Also, it is notable that she is modeled after Hemingway's mother, who was rather pious and stern, which repulsed Hemingway. That exact dynamic is shown in this short dialogue between the two; the wife warns the doctor about his temper, advising him to rule and contain his spirit and he obeys, although his pride is obviously hurt in the row. However, his wife continues to question him about the row, asking what the row was about, and Henry replies that Dick owed him a lot of money for medically treating his wife, using a slur and calling her a "squaw," and that Dick probably deliberately caused a row so not to have to pay him back by doing the log work. However, the wife replies: "Dear, I don't think, I really don't think that anyone would really do a thing like that" ("Doctor" 102). With her reply, the wife establishes her dominant position in the relationship by seeing through her husband's sham and contradicting him. Henry has no answer and takes a shotgun and goes for a walk in the woods. There, he finds young Nick sitting under a tree and tells him that his mother wants to see him, to which Nick replies: "I want to go with you" ("Doctor" 103). This is the first instance in which we see Nick rejecting his mother. He rather chooses to spend his time with his father, who is an emotionally weaker character in the story and who, in this case, is not a representative of a true manhood, according to "the Hemingway hero" standards. Thus, by rejecting his mother and disobeying her wishes, "Nick Adams, who appears in thirteen stories, is a key to the world of the Hemingway hero, the world of 'men without women'" (Whitt 109).

Nick continues not to choose women even in his teenage years when he breaks up with his, presumably, first girlfriend, seemingly without any trace of empathy in the story "The End of Something" (1925). Even "the word 'something' in the title suggests the vagueness of the emotion that Nick feels for Marjorie" (Whitt 109). Marjorie is just another intellectually and

emotionally strong woman from whom Nick is running away. Before leaving her, Nick states: "You know everything. That's the trouble. You know you do. . . . I've taught you everything. You know you do. What don't you know anyways?" ("End" 110). Nick expresses his dissatisfaction with the all-knowing Marjorie, showing how he fears women who tend to show even the slightest possibility of taking the lead role in the relationship. Moreover, he tries to discredit her intellect by stating that he was the one who taught her everything she knows, as if she were not capable of learning on her own. Nick ends their relationship with the conclusion that love is not fun anymore, but at the same time, he is "afraid to look at Marjorie" ("End" 110). Whitt concludes that "Nick sees women either as destroyers of men or as supine primitives" and that "his emotions are dichotomous, a compound of fear-hatred and love" (109). Although, there might be some traces of love Nick feels towards Marjorie and towards other women in the future, he expects love to simply be fun, without any deeper aspects of the emotion, which amplifies the misogyny he blatantly displays both verbally and by his actions. Nick's friend Bill makes a sexist comment, as well, by asking "Have any scene?" ("End" 111) after Marjorie left, expecting Marjorie to have had an emotional and dramatic reaction to the breakup. But Marjorie gracefully left and Nick remained alone with his thoughts.

Moreover, there are other examples of sexism and misogyny in both stories. Henry refers to Dick's wife as "squaw" ("Doctor" 102), which is an offensive sexist and racist term used for Native American women, just to show his fictive power when he could not even verbally prevail Dick's arguments and teasing. In "Indian Camp," Uncle George even goes so far to call a young Native American woman in labor a "damn squaw bitch" (93) when she bites him while in labor. Uncle George's verbal insult of the woman stems from the pain caused by the bite, which cannot even be compared to the pain of the three-day long childbirth. This sexist insult is an indicator of Uncle George's physical weakness in comparison to the woman's strength. Furthermore, both the doctor's wife and Dick's wife are nameless, although every male character is referred to by a full name, even Dick's teenage helpers. This seemingly unimportant and maybe, at first, inconspicuous notion, actually shows how female characters are belittled when juxtaposed to the male characters, even when women are in the position of emotional and mental power as the doctor's wife is.

2.2. Marriage as Imprisonment

When looking closely at Nick's friend Bill, we can rightly say that his attitude towards marriage and love is even more negative than Nick's. "The End of Something" slightly foreshadows the

next story called “The Three-Day Blow” (1925) in which the readers find out that the breakup was planned by Nick and Bill together. However, in “The Tree-Day Blow,” a saga about love and marriage gets its epilogue. Nick visits Bill in his cottage; Bill offers him whiskey, and the casual talk soon intensifies. However, Bill decides to end their meaningless conversation:

> “You were very wise, Wemedge”, Bill said.
> “What do you mean?” asked Nick.
> “To bust off that Marge business”, Bill said.
> “I guess so”, said Nick,
> “It was the only thing to do. If you hadn’t, by now you’d be back home working trying to get enough money to get married.”
> Nick said nothing.
> “Once a man’s married, he’s absolutely bitched”, Bill went on.
> “He hasn’t got anything more. Nothing. Not a damn thing. He’s done for. You’ve seen the guys that get married”. (“Blow” 122)

In this fragment of their conversation, Bill’s stance towards marriage and relationships is more than clear. Disrespecting Marjorie as a person and their relationship in general, he calls it “that Marge business” (“Blow” 122), stating that his opinion on intimate relationships is rather low. He is against marital union and believes that marriage changes the life of a man for the worse. He even uses the term “bitched” for a married man, insinuating that men become overpowered by women in marriage, in a way that men lose control of their freedom, sexuality, and every other trait that, in Bill’s opinion, defines them as men. Metaphorically, in Bill’s eyes, men become castrated after marrying, losing every trace of power they once possessed. Moreover, Bill does not hesitate to add that marriage with a woman inevitably signifies marriage with the woman’s entire family. He focuses on Marjorie’s mother, stating that their mother-daughter relationship would probably be a life-long burden: “Imagine having them around the house all the time and going to Sunday dinners at their house, and having them over to dinner and her telling Marge all the time what to do and how to act” (“Blow” 122). Furthermore, he continues his monologue with the statement that “you can’t mix oil and water” (“Blow” 123), alluding that Marjorie does not suit Nick because of her family background and upbringing. Understanding that Marjorie’s mother is another dominant female presence, the conclusion of their conversation is that it is better to avoid any relationship with Marjorie and her mother altogether, so not to lose the manhood by getting h/bitched.

2.3. Selfishness or Weakness?

When starting the Nick Adams series of stories, we encounter "Indian Camp" (1924) as the first one in which we meet Nick as a young boy, together with his father Henry. However, putting these two characters aside, there is also a male character that is out of focus, but what he does in the story leaves the bitter taste in the aftermath. Namely, Nick follows his father to an Indian camp where a complicated childbirth is in progress. His father continues to perform a caesarean section on a young Native American woman without any anesthetics, saving her and her baby's lives. While the operation is in progress, the young woman's husband is located on a top bunk bed, smoking a pipe ("Camp" 92-3). After the procedure, Henry ironically proclaims that they need to check on the new father because "they're usually the worst sufferers in these little affairs" ("Camp" 94), although his wife is the one in a long, complicated labor which causes immense pain. However, after stating that "he took it all quietly" ("Camp" 94) he finds the new father in an unexpected state: "His throat had been cut from ear to ear. The blood had flowed down into a pool where his body sagged the bunk. His head rested on his left arm. The open razor lay, edge up, in the blankets" ("Camp" 94). Obviously, the new father committed suicide. The possible reason might be that he could not stand his wife suffering through the childbirth. Clearly, his helplessness and emotional weakness prevailed over his love, suggesting both his weakness and selfishness. His wife and child are saved and alive, but his suicide results in their marriage ending as well, leaving his wife alone in physical and emotional pain. He made a choice to sacrifice his family's stability and joy of welcoming a new family member in order to die in his failure. Comley argues that

> Hemingway's men do have feelings and at times they do express them: but mainly to themselves. They operate under a code established by a patriarchal culture, which the author, who has been shaped by it himself, examines in his fiction. The hero is a man who holds on tight to his feelings, believing that if he blabs he will lose everything. (207)

Using Comley's argument, we can also conclude that a man in Hemingway's fiction cannot be a hero if showing emotion and weakness. Showing emotion means breaking the patriarchal heroic code and, ultimately, ending up dead, simply meaning that a man is no good alive if he is not in the possession of the emotional strength. Accordingly, this new father does not "blab" but shows emotion directed only to himself by cutting his throat. On the other hand, Doctor Adams turns out to be a typical Hemingway hero in this story by performing a necessary

caesarean section without a trace of emotion in his words and actions, keeping his composure in front of his son and everyone surrounding him.

Moreover, this incident leaves a permanent trace in young Nick. His reaction to seeing a brutally raw and bloody childbirth and a suicide victim seconds apart is summed up in a couple of questions:

> "Do ladies always have such hard time having babies?"
> Nick asked.
> "No, that was very, very, exceptional."
> "Why did he kill himself, Daddy?"
> "I don't know, Nick. He couldn't stand things, I guess."
> "Do many men kill themselves, Daddy?"
> "Not very many, Nick"
> "Do many women?"
> "Hardly ever."
> "Don't they ever?"
> "Oh, yes. They do sometimes."
> . . .
> "Is dying hard, Daddy?" ("Camp" 95)

From this brief conversational exchange between young Nick and his father, we get the sense that Nick made a mental connection between childbirth and suicide, which might have molded some of his future stances on women, marriage, and offspring. In the conversation, Nick's first question concerns the complexity of childbirth, but almost instantly, his focus shifts on the suicide, asking first what was the reason for this particular suicide and do men often take their own lives. When answering, his father states that the deceased probably was not able to bear the extremely stressful situation that struck his family, alluding to his emotional weakness. After some fatherly reassuring, Nick "felt quite sure that he will never die" (95), deciding to choose the pathway of a true masculine hero.

Interestingly, this new father is not the only one in Hemingway's stories who cannot stand emotional pain and uncertainty. In "Hills like White Elephants" (1927), we meet a young unmarried couple waiting at a station for a train that will take them to Madrid. This story, as many Hemingway's stories, begins *in medias res*, with only a couple of sentences describing the surroundings, before the dialogue between the couple begins. The girl states that the hills in

the distance “look like white elephants” (“Hills” 273), in an obvious attempt to avoid the topic that is in front of them. However, the tension between the two of them is more than detectible and the nervousness increases before they start the painfully gawky conversation:

> “It’s really an awfully simple operation, Jig”, the man said.
> “It’s not really an operation at all”
> The girl looked at the ground the table legs rested on,
> I know you wouldn’t mind it, Jig. It’s really not anything. It’s just to let the air in.”
> The girl did not say anything.
> . . .
> “We’ll be fine afterward. Just like we were before.”
> “What makes you think so?”
> “That’s the only thing that bothers us. It’s the only thing that’s made us unhappy.” (“Hills” 275)

Although it is never directly implied, it is more than obvious that the train ride to Madrid has only one purpose, and it is not travelling and exploring the country. The couple is going there so she could have an abortion. However, the girl named Jig is dodging the topic as much as the man allows her by steering the conversation back to the empty, casual talk. His resilient reassuring that it is just a regular procedure does not seem to have an effect on her. She either does not respond or asks him to stop talking, which signalizes her fear, anxiety, and probably unwillingness to complete the deed intended. He words his wishes in a way that it looks like he is giving her a choice and providing support: “If you don’t want to, you don’t have to. I wouldn’t have you do it if you didn’t want to. But I know it’s perfectly simple. . . . I think it’s the best thing to do. But I don’t want you to do it if you don’t really want to” (“Hills” 275). He emphasizes a couple of times that she is not obliged to do it if she wants to be a mother, but the reality is different. He is clearly aware that she will do it because of him and because of their future as a couple. Wagner describes their conversation as “a marvel of dialogue between the rational male and the distraught woman” (240). This rational male is referring to an abortion as “letting the air in” after which they will be happier, utterly disrespecting Jig’s feelings about it and the fact that she is the one who has to endure the procedure about which he has no knowledge. He only knows that “lots of people have done it” (“Hills” 275). Still, Jig is prepared to fulfill his wishes and neglect herself and her feelings towards the pregnancy. She even says

that she does not care about herself and that she will do it so they can be happy as they were before the unexpected pregnancy ("Hills" 276).

Jig is clearly more emotionally invested in their relationship and sees the world in her partner. However, she subtly expresses her stance on the matter by saying "We could have all this. And we could have everything and anything and every day we make it more impossible" ("Hills" 276). Tucan refers to them as "modern uncommitted partners" (433), which they are, but it seems that Jig is alluding to the chance of marriage, from which they are drifting apart more and more with his choices that she supports. Stein agrees with this point, stating that "Obviously, the girl is positing marriage as a solution to their problem, but her lover clings to the illusion of romance implicit in their clandestine relations. In the latter part of the dialogue, she is thinking of her future child, he of the burden of unwanted responsibility" (239-40). However, Jig is aware of the impossibility of marriage and family because she allows her partner to dominate. Parenting and marriage, in his eyes, represent the end of freedom and happiness he enjoys in an uncommitted relationship. Patterson Miller explains it this way:

> Hemingway knew about the transcendence of being in love. He knew about the silly childlike talk of lovers. He also knew about love's impermanence. As the girl in "Hills Like White Elephants" realized, once they take it away you never get it back again. . . . To the degree that Hemingway's women suffer and are willing to confront suffering, they are alive. His women are not silly, nor are they glib. (10)

However, many of Hemingway's men are selfish and self-centered, living love as an illusion, and portraying and approaching love and intimate relationships according to their own rules of emotionless masculine sternness. However, this sternness, followed with the lack of emotions and desire to dominate, seems to be their coping mechanism to protect their fragility in situations that cause pain. These characters hide behind the façade of verbal aggression and manipulation in order to hide that they, too, suffer.

2.4. Solitude, Intimacy, and Communication Issues as Marital Staples

When discussing love relationships and marriages in Hemingway's fiction, there are a couple of more crucial marital issues that need to be tackled, such as the feeling of solitude that the female partner is exposed to due to the male partner's stance on love and marital obligations, as well as many intimacy issues caused majorly by the lack of communication. In many of his

stories, the dialogue between the characters is filled with tension, despair, and avoidance. The golden examples of such characters battling these issues are found in his short stories "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot" (1924) "Cat in the Rain" (1925), and "A Canary for One" (1927).

Starting the story "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot," Hemingway acquaints the readers with the first problem of the Elliots' relationship: "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot tried very hard to have a baby. They tried as often as Mrs. Elliot could stand it. They tried in Boston after they were married and they tried coming over on the boat" ("Elliot"161). So, the reader is made to believe that the main issue the couple is experiencing in their marriage is infertility. However, as the story progresses, we see that the issues of this particular relationship are much deeper. As Dömötör explains, "the desperate struggle of Hubert and Cornelia Elliot does not suggest a couple with steady strength and hope" (123). Soon in the story, we find out that the twenty-five-year old Hubert was sexually inexperienced until he married the forty-year-old Cornelia, which is an obvious signal for something not quite right in their relationship. Namely, Hubert "wanted to keep himself pure so that he could bring to his wife the same purity of mind and body that he expected of her" ("Elliot"161). Hubert is convinced that they are agreeing on the terms of a desired marital relationship, both of them being sexually inexperienced before marriage, and the next logical step is to have a child. However, the first sentence of the story reveals that they tried "as hard as Mrs. Elliot could stand it" and that she often "was sick and when she was sick she was sick as Southern women are sick" ("Elliot"161). This repetition of the word sick is crucial, sharply pointing out that something might be going on with Mrs. Elliot and that the plans are not progressing smoothly as they should in their marriage, which is allegedly based on the purity of mind and body. Kosecki claims that "Their attempts to have a baby are attempts to achieve unity by following the expected course of a romantic union, when marriage culminates in starting a family. They were unsuccessful, so their marriage is a union mainly in a formal sense. That is why it can be called a partial or attempted unity" (69).

Obviously, they are experiencing serious intimacy issues, which are assured with Cornelia often being sick when the sexual intimacy is initiated. She seems to refuse any type of sexual contact with Hubert, pretending to feel unwell. Since the Elliots are American expatriates living in France, often changing their location, they make many friends who abandon them over time. However, upon Cornelia's American female friend arrival, Cornelia seems to change for the better. She spends all of her free time with her female friend, feeling well and happy. "She . . . prefers a woman to her husband, which potentially both humiliates and exposes Mr. Elliot as a failing husband. Although the female companion has no speaking role, the narration

discloses so much about her that the reader sees her as a surrogate husband for Mrs. Elliot" (Dömötör 124). Cornelia's female friend seems to push Hubert out of both the narrative and the marital focus, which culminates at the end of the story:

> Elliot had taken to drinking white wine and lived apart in his own room. He wrote a great deal of poetry during the night and in the morning looked very exhausted. Mrs. Elliot and the girl friend now slept together in the big medieval bed. They had many a good cry together. In the evening they all sat at dinner together . . . and Mrs. Elliot and the girl friend made conversation and they were all quite happy. ("Elliot"164)

The equation of the Elliots' marriage is simple: they are experiencing intimacy issues, which both of them are unwilling to discuss, but they seem to mutually accept their marital situation as it is. At the sole end of the story, it is clear that Cornelia and Hubert are not even engaging in a simple conversation. As Dömötör states, "the narrative identifies [Cornelia] as the ideal middle-class representation of a lesbian" (124), while Hubert seems to simply continue living this farce of a marriage believing that an expatriate wealthy life in Europe and a child can save it by helping to create a functional unity. However, this final scene ironically shows that all three of them are happy, with Cornelia and Hubert's emotional and physical separation being the source of their happiness.

Speaking of the functional unity, short stories "Cat in the Rain" and "A Canary for One" both present expatriate characters suffering of loneliness in dysfunctional marriages. In "Cat in the Rain," we meet a young married couple who are the only American guests in a hotel somewhere on the Italian cost, freshly after World War I. The nameless wife, referred to as "The American girl" or the "American wife" ("Cat"167-68), is looking through the window when spotting a cat hiding from the rain under the table. On her way to save the cat, she passes by the hotel-keeper and this is the first scene in which we detect some marital problems. When looking at the hotel-keeper, the girl "liked the deadly serious way he received any complaints. She liked his dignity. She liked the way he wanted to serve her, she liked the way he felt about being the house-keeper. She liked his old, heavy face and big hands" ("Cat"168). Presumably, she liked the qualities in him that her husband, George, who stayed in the room reading, does not possess. The hotel-keeper even sent a maid with an umbrella after her, showing the care she never received from her husband. Not being able to locate the cat, the American girl returned to the hotel lobby and "the padrone bowed from his desk. Something felt very small and tight inside the girl. The padrone made her feel very small and at the same time really important. She

had a momentary feeling of being of supreme importance" ("Cat"169). It is instantly obvious that the girl has never felt this important to her husband and that she suffers from loneliness and alienation from him. Their marriage is not a unity; their marriage is just another farce where another, unknown man makes her feel more important than her husband ever made her feel. She is neglected and alone in her marriage. Tyler agrees that "what the woman seeks in 'Cat in the Rain' is recognition and attention; George is either unwilling or unable to provide them" (71). Upon her return to the room, this claim becomes more prominent. The girl leads a conversation with her husband, but he does not seem to hear her on the deeper level; his understanding of her needs is limited. The girl says that she cannot explain why she so desperately wanted the poor kitty, which does not elicit any answer from her husband, not even a simple comment. According to Justice, "The wife is bored and endlessly 'wanting'; she is the canonic 'leader' in the marriage counterpoint, being the one to initiate both dialogue and physical movement. Her husband George is the melodic 'follower,' in that he only speaks when spoken to" (229). We see this when the girl goes on to comment on her hair, asking George about his opinion on her growing it out because she gets "so tired of looking like a boy," to which he replies: "I like it the way it is" ("Cat"169). Although the girl is the initiator of every instance of the spoken conversation, she is not heard, and her wishes are not met, which results in her internal solitude in this marriage. Tyler adds, "Clearly, she wants to be recognized for herself, not as a mere reflection of her husband and his desires" (71). But the reader gets the sense that the girl is tired of pleasing her husband's wishes and meeting his expectation. She desperately yearns for his understanding of her as an individual with certain needs.

Through the entire narrative, she is trying to initiate a conversation with George about her needs, and, near the end, she says: "And I want to eat at the table with my own silver and I want candles. And I want it to be spring and I want to brush my hair out in front of a mirror and I want a kitty and I want some new clothes" to which George replies that she "should shut up and get something to read" ("Cat"170). Tannen claims that "She feels the need for verbal interaction most keenly when he is (unaccountably, from her point of view) buried in the newspaper instead of talking to her" (81). This signals that George is negligent towards his wife, not paying any attention to her as an individual, and she, consequently, loses her identity and separates from herself, as well. However, when analyzing what the cat signifies in the story, Tyler notices how male and female critics seem to disagree on what the cat represents. Many male critics agree that the cat signifies the girl's wish to have a child with George, which he promptly rejects, while female critics seem to agree that the cat represents the girl herself, and

her feelings of solitude and identity loss (73-4). Perhaps, the cat represents her wish to have a child so not to feel this alone and isolated in her marriage, which we gather from her statement that she wants to have "a kitty to sit on [her] lap and purr when [she] strokes her" ("Cat"196), but her expressing that need is not met with any reaction from her husband. Although, this desire for a cat could be read as a simple desire for someone to whom she can give her attention, since we also gather from their conversation that George is not even keen on receiving any attention from her. All he directly says to her is that he likes the way she looks and that she should close her mouth because she is a distraction to his reading. Her need to take care of something or someone is not met in this marriage, not even the need to take care of herself the way she wants, so the cat could also be a metaphor for her wanting to get the sense of her self-being back. Hence, this story brings out on the surface the issue of solitude and the lack of intimacy between the spouses.

In "Cat in the Rain," the girl is (metaphorically) looking for a cat, while in "A Canary for One," an American mother is bringing a canary from Europe for her single daughter after she has demolished every chance of her marriage with a European man. At the beginning of the story, the narrator depicts the landscape seen from the train from Marseilles to Paris but focuses on the older American lady on the train. Soon, we find out that her daughter is in love with a man from Switzerland, but the loving mother did everything in her power to separate them and bring the girl back to the United States. Her reason for destroying the relationship and making her daughter unhappy is because "American men make the best husbands" ("Canary" 339) and "no foreigner can make an American girl a good husband" ("Canary" 340). The repetition of basically the same statement, putting the emphasis on the pertinence and perfection of the ideal American husband, foreshadows the unexpected end of the story. It is of importance to note that there are two more characters in the story – the male narrator and his wife, both American as well. Somewhat unnoticeable at first, the dialogue is set between the older lady and the narrator's wife and the main topics of their conversation are the daughter's broken heart, her former lover from Switzerland, and the good qualities of American husbands. Upon learning that the former lover's hometown is Vavey, the narrator's wife says that it is a very lovely place, especially in the fall, and that she and her husband spent their honeymoon there ("Canary" 341). Then, the train stoppes at the Paris train station, reaching the final destination of their travel, but also signaling the end of their life together. The final sentence of the story points out the unexpected as the narrator states that they are "returning to Paris to set up separate residencies" ("Canary" 342).

Analyzing the story from the final sentence forwards, two things become obvious; firstly, the narrator and his wife's marriage is over, and it was over throughout the entire train ride, although they are referred to as husband and wife, and secondly, the irony of the statement that American men are the best husbands for the American girls becomes obvious toward the end of the story. The American marriage has fallen apart; however, the marriage between the American girl and the Swiss man was never even an option for the older lady because of her belief in the supremacy of the American husband. Hemingway here masterfully depicts the deceit of the perfect marriage, depriving the narrative of the evident details which could suggest any marital issues. Even the narrator's wife, who is travelling to Paris to divorce her husband, agrees to the older lady's claim that American husbands are the best, keeping the reader in the dark until the sole end. Although, there is a trace stretching through the story, signaling that something might be rotten in this perfect American marriage, the entire conversation is held by the older American lady and the narrator's wife, with a sentence or two coming from the narrator, addressing the lady, never his wife. Tucan makes the same observation stating that

> During the journey, the conversation is not between the unnamed couple as it may be expected, but between the wife and an American lady. The end of the journey is also the end of their marriage—the physical gate at the end of the platform is the final physical location in which the partners act as a couple, and behind that gate their paths diverge as two separate residences await them. (431)

The reasons for their separation are not known, but the lack of communication is more than present in the already failed marriage, and the intimacy between the spouses is non-existent. However, there is one instance in the story when the American lady is a bit confused and asks the narrator's wife the following:

> "Is your husband American too?" . . .
> "Yes", said my wife. "We're both Americans."
> "I thought you were English"
> "Oh, no."
> "Perhaps that was because I wore braces." ("Canary" 339)

This conversational exchange might be a subtle hint to why the marriage is falling apart. By asking the narrator if he is American and by being convinced that he is English, the old American lady might know more than the reader knows. She starts her conversation by praising the American men and claiming that they make the best husbands, while not seeing and

recognizing those qualities in the American narrator. This observation the old lady makes in the story alludes to the loss of the identity of the individual, which came along with the loss of traditional values and moral code that supported family and marriage as synonyms for stability in the pre-World War I American culture.

As seen in the selected stories, Hemingway's vision of love and marriage is influenced by his traumas and it is, hence, connected with the many issues he experienced or noticed in relationships and marriages of the post-World War I period. Love relationships described in the selected stories happen between men who are hiding their emotional weakness behind the verbal aggression and tendency to dominate and women who are usually lenient towards their partners, although emotionally stronger. Marriage is seen as a metaphorical castration by the male characters, while some female characters yearn for the marital unity. However, Hemingway portrays marriage through the array of issues which burden the relationship – the lack of true love, intimacy, and communication issues, the feeling of solitude, and the identity loss – which are portrayed by the omission and fragmentation techniques typical for his narratives. His literary marriages represent personal traumas and experiences as well as the state of American society in the period after the war.

3. Beyond Modernism

When the political and national tensions erupted in Europe in the form of World War II, many countries joined the war. The war took place on three continents, thus making the American involvement grander than during World War I. As stated before, the times of social instabilities and loosening up the social structure and its boundaries have the direct impact on the micro-sphere of the society, meaning that the individuals and their personal beliefs and values are highly challenged and impacted. This was the case with World War I, but especially with the gruesome and bloody World War II. However, the first half of the twentieth century brought about some positive changes – the technology started to develop, and the television and radio

took their stand after the long-term dominance of written media such as newspapers. The new technologies created a starting point of making the world a global village and fairly contributed to sharing the American lifestyle with the rest of the world.

However, when the U.S. joined the Allies in World War II, the country was coming out of the Great Depression of the 1930s, during which the American society suffered through the horrendous living conditions. Since World War II actually helped American economy to stabilize after the Allies won the war, the quality of life of an average American citizen improved, pushing the American society into the new era of late Modern capitalism: "American society and American experience seemed placed well in advance of the experience of most others in the world" (Ruland and Bradbury 370). While the rest of the world suffered the fatal consequences of the war, many American citizens lived in financial abundance, slowly but surely forming a new upper-middle class. However, the new oral media partially spread the illusion of that immaculate American lifestyle filled with prosperity and happiness. As Ruland and Bradbury describe,

> For the fifty years following the Second World War, America has been the world-shaping superpower. Its citizens are thought by many in the world to lead typically Postmodern lives and to represent the essential principles and life-styles of late Modern capitalism. American culture, aided by possession both of the English language, the main world language, and the newer languages of communications technology, reaches everywhere, whether it is popular, serious, seriopopular or any mixture of both. (370)

The world's narrative changed, which inspired writers to take a slightly different direction than after World War I. VanSpanckeren states that "Narrative in the decades following World War II resists generalization: It was extremely various and multifaceted. . . . The spoken word on television gave new life to oral tradition. Oral genres, media, and popular culture increasingly influenced narrative" (97). VanSpanckeren also notes that writers started to reject traditional modes finding them ineffective, which resulted in finding inspiration in newly available materials seeping in from the media. Post-World War II times brought in new sensibility which resulted in different social and literary points of view. Writers of the post-World War II era kept their focus on the individual, closely inspecting their communities and family relationships (97), delving deeper into the social expectations and social reality which majorly differed. Many American writers of that time stepped in to cast a light on many problems the American upper-middle class was facing, majorly focusing on their wealthy

family dynamics of working husbands and stay-at-home wives, crumbling marriages, spoiled children, infidelity, and the overall lack of love in the relationships. One of the best examples of such writers whose entire life and writing career revolved around the American elite suburbs is John Cheever, who exposed that white picket fence was a border of an illusion.

3.1. John Cheever and the Perfect Suburbia

John Cheever rightfully earned himself a nickname "the Chekhov of the Suburbs" (Asharudeen 75) for his fascination with the lifestyle of wealthy upper middle-class citizens residing in American suburbs. It can be rightfully said that he is one of the most prolific short story writers of the second half of the twentieth century, although he published a couple of novels as well. However, Cheever is known for his "elegant, suggestive stories, which scrutinize the New York business world through its effects on the businessman, their wives, children and friends", earning him another nickname – "a novelist of manners" (VanSpanckeren 105). His distinctive style of writing and the topics he presented in his stories gather a lot of attention from literary critics to this day. His stories abound with everyday human problems, mostly focusing on spoilt love relationships and matrimony troubles, such as infidelity, betrayal, solitude and delusion of a perfect life. Cheever's fictional families are more than wealthy, seemingly happily married with well-behaved children, living the dream in the American suburbs. But his stories show the other side of the suburban reality – husbands working long hours, wives spending their days tending to the children and taking care of their homes, and their marriages being in the process of falling apart for years before anything significant happens. His short stories certainly suggest that money can buy neither love nor happiness.

Unfortunately, Cheever drew the inspiration for his fiction and all those fictional troubles from his personal life. Donaldson wrote quite an interesting biography after a series of interviews with Cheever, before his death in 1982. In the book, simply called *John Cheever: A Biography*, many interesting facts about Cheever's life came to surface. It seems that, his whole career, Cheever tried to present his childhood more glorious than it actually was, starting with the probable illusions he had about his father and his father's ancestors. He was born into a wealthy family, believing that his father was a shoe factory owner, for which there is no evidence whatsoever. However, later on he admitted that his father was rather promiscuous in his bachelor years, a trait he preserved well into his marriage with Cheever's mother. Delving

deeper into Cheever's biography written by Donaldson, it is easily gathered why his narrative was focused on the wealthy families living in suburbia. When he was a child, he lived in the suburbs of Boston with his parents and his brother. His father was absent most of the time with the excuse of working too much, while his mother never liked the idea of being a typical housewife. As Cheever described, she was there for anyone who needed help, except for him, insinuating that her work for charity organizations was more important than her children. He grew to resent his mother for her rejection of the role of a caring mother and a housewife, often describing her as impatient and cold, which resulted in modeling many of his cold-hearted female characters after her. In short, as Donaldson writes, "things were less sunny than [Cheever] stated publicly." Filled with infidelity, reproach, financial turmoil, and non-fulfillment of their parenting duties, unsurprisingly, his parents' marriage did not survive, which left a huge imprint on Cheever during his formative years.

Moreover, his adult life was filled with many turnovers. Cheever's own marriage was on rocky foundations throughout the forty years it lasted, even though he and his wife never divorced. For some time, they were expatriates in Italy, and Cheever got to experience World War II beforehand. His life was filled with many dark moments; the sense of not belonging, occasional financial problems, and his battle with alcoholism were a constant in his life. Furthermore, being married with three children never stopped him from having bisexual affairs, although he never publicly came out or divorced his wife. It is safe to say that Cheever's adulthood was not sunny either.

4. Love and Marriage in John Cheever's Short Stories

All of the presented life circumstances undoubtedly influenced and shaped Cheever's unique writing style and topics that consumed his works. O'Hara writes about how Cheever's engagement with World War II influenced his style of narration. Namely, he was in the U.S. Army for three and a half years but had not actually experienced real combat; however, he saw the atrocious consequences that war left, resulting in him taking "advantage of the opportunity to sharpen both his artistic viewpoint and narrative voice, gradually breaking out of the hard-cased shell of objectivity he had earlier favored" (50). Leaving the stern objectivity behind, Cheever ventures into the world of slightly cynical and parodied fantasy, combining existing human emotions, interpersonal conflicts, and family disputes of middle class with unexpected situations in which his characters find themselves. Mahameed and Farhadiba explain that

> His short narratives are collages of techniques, integrating bits and pieces of the realistic and the fabulous with the mythical, the mystical and the allegorical into a seemingly cohesive whole which, although it runs coherently, defies and debunks natural rhythms. Cheever's stories dwell largely on the suburban middleclass—the zoning laws, the apartment houses, elevator men, weekend parties, air planes and commuter trains and their commitment evils. (2)

Cheever's short stories are filled with symbols and descriptions of the characters that evoke the feeling of uneasiness in the reader, often leaving the reader in a complete suspense and perplexity until the sole end of the story. Béghain claims that "Cheever is far more interested in building up symbolic spaces than in the realistic portrayal of modern life or social satire. Thus, Cheever's suburbs are always imaginative constructs, a choice territory for the elaboration of parabolic narrative and allegories" (74). His wealthy suburbs are places where almost every scenario is possible, ranging from normal daily occurrences to unusual and unexpected events which shape the character's destinies. However, the problems Cheever describes in his stories, concerning their family lives, or better said, concerning their failing marriages and bottled-up unhappiness which suddenly surfaces, are more than realistic. As previously stated, his family history, upbringing in the suburbs, and his own far-from-perfect marriage ravaged with alcoholism and extra-marital activities play a main role in shaping his narratives, filling them with characters that are living in discomfort while looking for a solution to their marital problems in affairs or similar distractions.

4. 1. Unhappiness and Detachment as a Cause of Disintegrating Marriages

"The Enormous Radio" (1947) is considered to be Cheever's breakthrough story for which he gained the praise from many literary critics. O'Hara states that it is "one of the most frequently anthologized of Cheever's stories, and has become a certifiable classic" in which he "set the pattern for most of the realistic fantasies that would follow" (52). "The Enormous Radio" is a story in which the reader meets the Westcotts, a family of four. The first two sentences of the story inform the reader about, what seems to be, essential information about their family life:

> Jim and Irene Westcott were the kind of people who seem to strike that satisfactory average of income, endeavor, and respectability that is reached by the statistical reports in college alumni bulletins. They were the parents of two young children, they had been married nine years, they lived on the twelfth floor of an apartment building near Sutton place . . . . ("Radio" 37)

On the outside, it seems that the Westcotts are living the ordinary suburban life. We even get the hint of parody of their perfect life with the line that "they went to the theatre on an average of 10.3 times a year" ("Radio" 37). They have been married for quite some time; having two children enriches their lives, although the maid takes care of them, and their living conditions seem more than comfortable. However, the key phrase in this description Cheever provides is that they are "the kind of people who *seem to*" ("Radio" 37, italics mine), which, if unnoticed, leads the reader into a fallacy and leaves them there until the end of the story. The Westcotts are nothing what they seem to be, but what distinguishes them from other couples in their apartment building is their love for classical music they listen to every day on their old radio. When the old radio breaks down, Jim buys a new one, more modern than the previous one, as fast as possible, in order to keep his wife happy.

However, one evening, Irene realizes that the new radio has an unusual feature – through it, she can hear conversations led by her neighbors in their apartments. Although they try to repair the radio, its unusual feature seems to be beyond repair, allowing Irene to enter her neighbor's personal lives on an unimaginable level. Irene invests herself in listening to their private conversation so much that it starts to interfere with her own personal life. She sadly learns that her neighbors do not lead lives as happy as she believed. Namely, they are struck with many misfortunes – some of them are going through financial hardships and health crisis; there is even a case of domestic violence, all problems pointing to the lack of love in their relationships or to the troubles that weaken their marriages. As Cheever even comically writes, "She overheard demonstrations of indigestion, carnal love, abysmal vanity, faith, and despair. Irene's life was nearly as simple and sheltered as it appeared to be, and the forthright and sometimes brutal language that came from the loudspeaker that morning astonished and troubled her" ("Radio" 42-3).

Simply said, Irene overheard every instance of her neighbors' lives that was meant to stay private. But, prying into other people's lives did not come without a price. This secret hobby of hers overtook her rational senses and entrapped her so much that even during a real-life conversation, "she looked searchingly at her friend and wondered what her secrets were" ("Radio" 43). Irene turns into a "compulsive peeper" (Mahameed and Farhadiba 5), detached from her husband and children, even detached from reality, spending every free moment listening to the radio. Moreover, she craves reassurance from her husband, and asks him: "And we're not hypercritical or worried about money or dishonest, are we?" ("Radio" 46), to which Jim replies that they are perfectly happy. Because of the fascination with secrets of known and

unknown people, Irene loses herself and a true vision of her marriage, believing that she is protected from those types of marital problems, until the Westcotts' secrets come to light. Namely, Jim is fed up with Irene's obsession with the radio and her fear that the neighbors can hear the two of them. In his anger, he reveals everything that is wrong in their marriage, starting with the financial problems, and asks Irene to stop spending money on herself in order to financially support the kids, which opens a portal to even deeper secrets which have been rocking the foundation of their marriage. Jim reveals that, in her past, Irene was a thief who stole jewelry from her own mother, took her sister's money, psychologically abused an acquaintance, and had an abortion without a speck of remorse ("Radio" 47).

Jim's shouting leaves Irene "disgraced and sickened" ("Radio"47), but what is more important, it leaves the readers shocked and raveling in their own uneasiness when they realize that at this moment, they as readers become Peeping Toms, scrutinizing the Westcotts' secrets with great interest, revealing that the Wescotts are unhappy and dishonest, exactly as Irene fears. O'Hara explains that:

> The radio takes on tremendous symbolic value when we realize that the particular form of voyeurism the Westcotts have fallen into is really no different from the "normal" reader's own, supposedly more respectable vice: looking over the narrator's shoulder into the turmoil of his characters' lives. Cheever, or any storyteller, is our enormous radio, and we are the Westcotts. (52-3)

In this story, the readers get the chance to experience what Irene is experiencing when getting involved with her neighbors' lives. However, the perspective changes and the Westcotts and their secrets, which turn out to be more shocking than the neighbors' secrets, suddenly become the main interests of the narrative. In a couple of sentences, Cheever manages to turn the story around, showing that no suburban marriage stays intact, no matter how ordinary and oblivious the protagonists seem to appear.

Another interesting story covering the issue of inner unhappiness and emotional detachment, "The Season of Divorce" (1950) quite openly announces the topic with the title, although it does not get the credit it deserves, with literary critics tending to disregard its existence. At the beginning of the story, the reader gets acquainted with the narrator's wife of ten years, Ethel. The narrator describes her having "brown hair, dark eyes, and a gentle disposition" ("The Season"161). What we get at the sole beginning of the story is a simple description of her physical appearance and nothing about her character traits, virtues or flaws,

except that she probably "spoils the children"("The Season" 161). Moreover, the narrator states that "[their] marriage has always seemed happy and resourceful to [him]" ("The Season" 161). At the beginning of this story, we again encounter the key phrase that the marriage *has seemed* happy, which presents a direct overture into a web of many marital problems that are being swept under the rug by one of the partners, in this case, Ethel. Reading the story, the reader soon finds out that Ethel is a highly educated woman, having finished her studies in France. However, her husband, the narrator, states the following:

> She once hung her diploma above the kitchen sink, but it was a short-lived joke and I don't know where the diploma is now. Ethel is cheerful and adaptable, as well as gentle, and we both come from that enormous stratum of the middle class that is distinguished by its ability to recall better times . . . Because our lives are confined by my modest salary, the surface of Ethel's life is easy to describe. ("The Season"161)

He then continues to describe what Ethel's days look like. In short, she awakes pretty early, makes breakfast for the children and gets them ready for school. Then, housework, cleaning, and cooking are next on her schedule. After the children return from school, she takes them to the park, and later, she prepares the diner to wait for her husband upon his return from work. Her days are monotone, repetitive, and limited. Still, she seems happy in her husband's eyes.

However, Ethel is reaching her breaking point as the story develops, and the reader even senses that the tension and dissatisfaction Ethel feels are becoming tangible. Ethel is on the verge, and everyone except her husband can see it. Ethel's breaking point is represented by a platonic relationship she develops with Dr Trencher, who is also married. She and her husband met the Trenchers through mutual friends during one of their house parties. Since that day, Dr Trencher courted Ethel, paying attention to her, buying her roses, giving her compliments, and, most importantly, spending time with her every day at the park while her children played, which she calmly admitted to her husband on several occasions. However, he does not seem to mind it and concludes that "the picture of the well-dressed, pink-cheeked doctor losing his heart to Ethel in this environment was hard to take seriously" ("The Season" 164). He belittles his wife so much that he does not even believe that the other man could find her attractive, even stating that "[he] could think of Trencher's declaration only as a comical mistake" and "accidental revelation" ("The Season" 164) because he knows how his wife usually looks as "she wears an old tweed coat, overshoes, Army gloves, and a scarf is tied under her chin" ("The Season" 163). The narrator again focuses solely on her physical appearance, as the character traits and virtues

she possesses as a person are completely unimportant. This instance most prominently shows how detached they are as a couple. The husband's main concerns are his work and their financial situation, which is far from what it used to be. Because of his worries about "taxes and bills" ("The Season" 164) and him being the breadwinner of the family, he does not think of Ethel as an equal partner who yearns for his love and affection. On the contrary, he humiliates her by stating that her diploma is a joke and denying a possibility of her being attractive to other men. He even forgets Ethel's birthday but finds "a lot of roses in the living room [which] were a birthday present from Trencher" ("The Season" 164), solidifying his complete detachment from her as his wife with needs and emotions, which presents a great contrast to Trencher's attention and affection.

Moreover, he tries to blame Ethel for the attention she receives from doctor Trencher by claiming that she provoked him with "an inestimable and wayward passion that Ethel shares with some other woman – an inability to refuse any cry for help, to refuse any voice that sounds pitiable" ("The Season" 166), reducing both Ethel and doctor Trencher to simple emotional beings – her being a typical woman with motherly instincts to provide care for anyone who seems to need it, and him being a weak emotional man who feels a primal, delusional love towards his wife. What the husband did not assume is that Trencher would come to their house one day to ask Ethel to leave with him, offering her marriage and financial support. Ethel's husband throws flower pots at him, forcing him to leave their home without Ethel. Ethel stays behind, but all of the issues and emotions that she was burying deep come to surface after that incident. Ethel repeatedly states that her mother's servants had a better life and, most importantly, they had autonomy of their work and life choices ("The Season"168).However, her husband does not register what she is saying; he is focused on Trencher's visit until he asks her whether she wants to leave, to which Ethel replies:

> I don't know. He may be a fool. He may be insane but the things he's told me have made me feel marvelously, he's made me feel marvelously. . . . What harm would it do? What good would it do? Who knows. I love the children but that isn't enough, that isn't enough. I wouldn't hurt them, but would I hurt them so much if I left you? Is divorce so dreadful and of all the things that hold a marriage together how many of them are good? ("The Season" 168)

During this conversation, Ethel verbalizes her unhappiness and dissatisfaction with her marriage for the first time. The reader can feel the tension through narration, to which,

ironically, the narrator is oblivious because Ethel never speaks about her feelings until this unfortunate event with Trencher.

However, Ethel voicing her stance on their marriage and her position in that marriage has little to no avail since her husband does not understand what she means when she says: "I don't have the time to follow any newspaper, and I am ashamed of my incompetence, ashamed of the way I look. Oh, I guess I love you, I do love the children, but I love myself, I love my life, it has some value and some promise for me and Trencher's roses make me feel that I'm losing my self-respect" ("The Season" 169). She clearly states her feelings and that she is taking the last position in their marriage, and that she is only sure about her love towards herself and the children, but her husband admits that he does not understand her feelings, showing how actually separated their lives are in a unity that is marriage. Ethel is a character filled with unhappiness and suffering because of their bad financial situation and her husband's focus on work and money, which resulted in such a detachment from each other that Ethel never refers to him by his name, leaving the reader wondering. At the end, Ethel stays with her husband, putting her life and her needs in second place once again. The patriarchal structure of the society won over Ethel's desires, reclaiming the stereotypical gender roles of husband's dominance and wife's obedience.

4.2. Love as a Delusion

Another less known Cheever's short story, called "The Geometry of Love" (1966), also never attracted much attention from the literary critics. On the contrary, the only attention it received was not positive. Even William Maxwell, who worked as Cheever's editor at the time, thought that the story was a failure, blaming Cheever's alcoholism for destroying his talent (Donaldson). Moreover, Donaldson describes the story with a great dose of critique:

> In the story an unhappy husband attempts to counteract the tyrannies of his wife by reducing them to understandable geometrical theorems. . . . On the literal level, "The Geometry of Love" does not present a convincing picture of reality. The basic idea—that Euclidean geometry can ameliorate a bad marriage—is preposterous, and whether intentionally or not, the episodes are strung together with a conspicuous lack of coherence.

As seen, many agree that "The Geometry of Love" does not show Cheever's true talent and style, labeling the story as incoherent and ridiculous. The story is quite hectic but bears more value than it is recognized. As Haas states, "With literary critics perhaps finding any connection of geometry to love too esoteric or absurd to credit, and mathematical commentators perhaps lacking the literary background for full appreciation, the story seems to me never to have been properly understood" (4). The reason for misunderstanding the story might be found in its dual plot structure – the reality is opposed to the main character's delusion, but they are happening at the same time.

Namely, the story focuses on Charlie Mallory, who is married, with two children, in a typical Cheeveresque manner. However, the opening of this story is slightly different than the beginning of other Cheever's stories, starting with the narrator describing a rainy afternoon and women in the toy department of some store, but on a pretty misogynistic level; they are described as "comely, fragrant, and well dressed – but with the pained air of women who have recently been undone by some cad in a midtown hotel room" ("Geometry" 702). However, the narrator insists that "there was no morality involved" and that "Mallory hit on this generalization mostly to give the lassitude of a rainy afternoon some intentness and color" ("Geometry" 702). He closely scrutinizes those women to find "affirmation of his fantasy" ("Geometry" 702). This is the first hint that Mallory's fantasies are affecting his ability of rational thinking. During his afternoon stroll through the store, feeding his fantasy with unfaithful women, he sees his wife, recognizing her a bit later than he should have, practically accusing her to be just one of those women from his fantasy, engaging in infidelity. When he speaks to her, she unexpectedly responds with an accusation that he is following her and spying on her. She firmly states: "I am going to leave this store now, and if you follow me or harass me in any way, I shall have you arrested by the police and thrown into jail" ("Geometry" 703). At the beginning of the story, the reader gets an insight in the Mallorys' marriage, and the picture of that marriage is far from perfect. Charlie seems to be harassed by his wife, not the opposite, which the rest of the story confirms.

On his way home from work, Charlie saw some advertising, which reminded him of Euclid's geometric analysis of triangles, making him wonder if that mathematical theorem could be applied to his marriage and the issue of love. He drew a triangle, each side representing a member of his family and their problems – one line, the base one, represented his children, and the two opposing lines represented him and his wife, Mathilda, concluding that the most critical element in her line "was the fact that she had recently taken a phantom lover"

("Geometry" 704). Many literary critics believe that the involvement of the Euclid's theorem with the story is a complete lunacy; however, it precisely shows the main character's despair and delusion. Charlie is trying to mend his relationship with Mathilda in any way possible, fixating his mind on the matter, burying himself deeper in his delusions as days go by. Even the passing of time in the story is quite confusing for the reader, which puts emphasis on the fact that Charlie's state of mind is not in connection with reality. Haas believes that "Mallory's work has instead affected his own perception of physical reality. He has found a way to use geometry for its psychological effect on himself, where it perhaps acts on his brain in a way similar to such other treatments as alcohol, psychotherapy, or electroshock" (14).

Charlie decides to expand his work on other marriages after being a witness to a comical incident at his work colleague's house, where the colleague's wife greeted Charlie with a drink in her hand, crying, and claiming that she was leaving. But, Mathilda's merciless behavior towards him never ceases, not even on their holiday in Italy, where she was prone to sudden mood changes, often wanting not to be in Charlie's company, while "he could find in all of this no source for the sorrow and bitterness in her face" ("Geometry" 709). She continued to treat him as her enemy even when he ended up in a hospital, having a major surgery. Mathilda told him that no one missed him at home, and Charlie took it as "a clumsy expression of love" ("Geometry" 711). However, during the last conversation with her, Charlie came to a realization that his beloved Mathilda possesses "self-interest that no force of love could reason or soften" ("Geometry" 711). As Haas puts it, "Unfortunately the final scene suggests that Mallory engaged in a program of poorly-planned self-experimentation that proved disastrous (15). His theorem calculations suggested that he was the problem in the equation, which resulted in him taking his own life. Charlie was in a marriage he filled with delusions of reciprocal love, and when delusions dispersed for a second, he understood that he might be the source of Mathilda's unhappiness and decided to sacrifice his life as the ultimate omen of love towards her. Moreover, Haas firmly believes that this story is an excellent example of a lot of autobiographical elements – Cheever's marriage hit rock bottom because of his alcoholism and numerous affairs, resulting in him and his wife going to therapy in an attempt of reconciliation. Cheever blamed his wife, Mary, for their problems, insisting that she treated him badly; however, the psychiatrist concluded that actually he was the one who had been experiencing defensive illusions (Haas 8).

Another interesting story which deals with delusions as part of a love relationship is a well-known story "The Swimmer" (1964). In this story, we meet Neddy Merrill as the main

protagonist, attending a pool party with his wife. The reader is informed that their lifestyle is quite lavish, the residents of Neddy's County spend their time enjoying drinks and socializing, in a true upper middle-class suburban manner. Neddy thinks of his life as "non confining" ("Swimmer" 714), gracing him with the possibility to do whatever comes to his mind. Therefore, he decides to take an unusual route home, swimming in every pool leading to his home, leaving his wife at the party. In his mind, "He had made a discovery, a contribution to modern geography; he would name the stream Lucinda after his wife" ("Swimmer" 714). In this simple sentence, the reader can notice two very important things – Neddy's feeling of superiority and the love for his wife. Neddy thinks of himself as "a pilgrim, an explorer, a man with destiny and he knew that he would find friends all along the way" ("Swimmer" 715). At the beginning of his journey, Neddy enjoys the midsummer, swims filled with enthusiasm and energy. As İşçi states, "it can be clearly seen that a neighborhood atmosphere is reflected in a realist fashion without much surprise; however, when the story goes on, Cheever shifts the atmosphere around Neddy to deliver a distinctive communication" (30). The weather suddenly changes for the worse, the clouds appear, and a strong storm hits Neddy. But he finds that stormy winds bring "the unmistakable sound of good news, sheer, glad tidings" ("Swimmer" 717). This will turn out to be one of many Neddy's delusions. While continuing his trip during unstable weather, Neddy notices apparent changes in his neighborhoods which he did not seem to notice earlier; many houses are abandoned or put up for sale, leaving Neddy wondering whether "his memory [is] failing or had he so disciplined it in the repression of unpleasant facts that he had damaged his sense of the truth" ("Swimmer" 718).

Approaching closer to his home, Neddy's friends seem to treat him differently, unfriendly at times. The turning point happens when he greets his imminent neighbors and they express their sorrow for his misfortunes, informing the reader that Neddy sold his house because of financial problems and that his poor children went through some troubles, as well. However, Neddy does not recall any of those misfortunes, always talking about his wife, Lucinda, as if she were still at the pool party he left ("Swimmer" 720). It is obvious that Neddy's point of view and the image of himself and others around him are skewed and distorted. Thus, Neddy Merril's image of his marriage fell victim to this disillusionment, as well – when he finally reached his home, he realized that it had been abandoned and that no one was there.

Cheever, in his mock-narrative, depicts the decay of one's love relationship and marriage using the symbols of the weather change and flaky friendships, accompanied with the sense of psychological decay and delusional feelings. When real love with his wife, Lucinda,

dried up and the marriage fell apart, Neddy found consolation is his made-up world where he was still married, loved, and respected, similarly to Charlie Mallory in "The Geometry of Love," highlighting the need for being loved that many Cheever's characters feel in spite of their marriages failing.

4.3. Class Distinction and Tradition as Marital Foundations

As already stated, Cheever's narratives revolve around the American middle-class, a new social layer which surfaced after the Second World War. Members of that newly-risen class share some common traits in every Cheever's story. They are all married, with usually two children; the husband works in the city while the wife stays in the suburbs with the children until the husband returns home from work. However, almost all of Cheever's upper-class families face the same issue – once very wealthy, they end up facing major financial problems that tend to cause other marital troubles.

One of his stories is slightly different concerning the issue of wealth. In "The Fourth Alarm" (1970), we also meet a typical Cheeversque family consisting of a husband and a wife with two children. However, in this story, the wife, Bertha, has left behind her family and everything the family stood for – security, stability, and wealth, to join a theatre company which performs nude. Bertha was not happy with her life; even her husband described her as "peevish" ("Alarm" 763) when the children were little. Her peevishness continued, and she found the job when the children started school, although it is a rarity for Cheever's female characters to be working mothers. This may be taken as a sign that Bertha wanted to remove herself from the typical patriarchal roles as she had never had a desire to be a housewife and a mother. Although the nameless narrator lets her wife pursue her dreams, he is the complete opposite of happy: "I guess I should've hit her. I said she couldn't do it. She said I couldn't stop her" ("Alarm" 764). These simple sentences express the narrator's dissatisfaction because of the lack of control over his wife, pointing to the stern traditionalism he favors, even regretting not physically punishing her. He even asked for the divorce, but Bertha would not give it to him, stating that "she saw no reason for divorce", leaving her husband wondering how "adultery and cruelty have well-marked courses of actions but what can a man do when his wife wants to appear naked on the stage" ("Alarm" 764-65). Bertha overpowered her husband with her choices, left the limitations of the suburban white picket fence and chose the life of unlimited freedom, rejecting everything in connection with traditional marriage and middle-class wealth.

Collins describes narrative situations as this one as comical but states that they might yield some tragic outcomes for society. He wonders if the institution of marriage "is obsolete because of its traditional exclusivity; because it shuts the bedroom door to the rest of mankind" (263). Indeed, Bertha opened the door to her monogamous and monotone marriage by joining the naked theatre and performing in the play that involves naked actors, even one of them "writing something obscene on [her] buttocks" ("Alarm" 766). As it seems, in this story, "Cheever apparently goes beyond the picture of marriage as a trap to propose, implicitly, a more radical modern condition; that is, he seems to be questioning traditional mating practices at the very core. Marriage no longer serves the case; his figures move beyond it" (Collins 264). Bertha moved past her traditional marriage by her wanting to achieve more in life; she yearned to expand her horizons, in spite of her husband being against it. Bertha said to him: "Oh, how wonderful and rich and strange life can be when you stop playing out the roles that your parents and their friends wrote out for you. I feel like an explorer" (Cheever 264). Suddenly, Bertha's life becomes imbued with a sense of liberation from traditional marital roles forced upon society; she renounces her role as a traditional wife and mother. The main protagonist of "The Swimmer" also felt as an explorer, which led him to an utter delusion about his life; however, Bertha does not seem to be the victim of the same trouble, and she seems to truly explore her new life after stripping away her expected social roles.

When her husband finally gathered the courage to see the play, he was not prepared for what awaited him. Namely, the play had a part where the audience was expected to undress and join the actors on the stage. Bertha's husband was reluctant to do so, but after some persuasion from the actors, he caved in and took off his clothes. However, he would not let go of his wallet, watch, and car keys and decided to bring them on stage, showing his attachment to his physical possessions, to his wealth, while the actors urged him to leave them behind.

> The sense of being unwanted has always been for me acutely painful. I suppose some clinician would have an explanation. . . . I held my valuables in my right hand, my literal identification. None of it was irreplaceable, but to cast it off would seem to threaten my essence, the shadow of myself that I could see on the floor, my name. I went back to my seat and got dressed. ("Alarm" 767)

Him leaving his valuables behind, on the theatre seat, meant that, in his mind, he is casting his life away, everything that determines him as a person. He sees himself through his physical possessions and wealth, everything Bertha decided to renounce. In addition, he saw his marriage as determined by wealth, leaving him wondering how Bertha could give it up all. He even with

less emotional pain came to terms with the fact that Bertha left him and the children – but leaving his possessions behind is where he drew the line and rejected the possibility of liberation from traditional social values determined by wealth.

In "The Worm in the Apple" (1973), Cheever parodies the life of the suburban traditional upper-middle class, as well. As Beuka explains, "his affluent suburbanites live their lives against a numbingly materialistic backdrop, and even as they yearn for stronger connections to both landscape and community, they engage in a near-constant struggle to maintain the appearances of class distinction" (106). The perfect example of those affluent suburbanites are the Crutchmans from Shady Hill who are "very, very happy and so temperate in all their habits and so pleased with everything that came their way that one was bound to suspect a worm in their rosy apple" ("Worm" 338). The entire premise of the story consists of the narrator's search for a fault in the Crutchmans' life and their marriage. The narrator scrutinizes their physical appearances, their children's looks and choices, even their hobbies, in a search for the worm in a rosy apple, which represents their immaculate upper-class lives. He offers many possible problems that invade their marriage, insinuating that Larry Crutchman might show "a tendency to infantile exhibitionism" ("Worm" 338) or that he might be impotent, while his wife Helen was both labeled as a nymphomaniac and a frigid woman ("Worm" 340), showing the unmistakable satire and irony that decorates all Cheever's narratives. Moreover, the Crutchmans were described as having everything possible in both material and emotional sense:

> Two cars? Yes. Did they go to church? Every single Sunday they got to their knees and prayed with ardor. Clothing? They couldn't have been more punctilious in their observance of the sumptuary laws. Book clubs, local art and music lover associations, athletics and cards – they were up to their necks in everything. ("Worm" 339-40)

Throughout the story, the narrator reveals some challenges the Crutchmans went through but also reveals that they resolved every issue they had and that everything turned out perfectly for every member of the Crutchman family. The story ends with Larry and Helen retired and both of their children happily married. Neither Larry nor Helen changed much; they kept their hobbies and good physical shape in their retirement. As the narrator concludes, "the touchstone of their euphoria remained potent, . . . and through the prudence and shrewdness of Helen's broker they got richer and richer and richer and lived happily, happily, happily, happily" ("Worm" 342).

> This ecstatically happy ending . . . satirically reinforces the persistence of a continuing class hierarchy in Shady Hill. In putting his wealthy neighbors under the microscope, looking for faults that perhaps resemble his own, the narrator reveals the real "worm in the apple" of Cheever's world, after all: It is the paranoid fear of losing one's place in society - of falling through the cracks. (Beuka 106)

The Crutchmans' marriage might be perfect on the outside, but it is based on a traditional social stratification set by the upper-middle class and they, as a married couple, are determined to keep their place in society. If anything remotely bad happens to them, they lose the social respect they enjoy, so Cheever satirically paints them as perfect parents whose marriage, in reality, is reduced to multiplying the wealth to multiply the happiness.

4.4. The Probability of Divorce

Cheever occasionally mentions the possibility of divorce in his stories, but it is almost never completed, leaving his characters in crumbling and loveless marriages. Leaving the divorce out of the framework of his narratives might have something to do with his personal life – in spite of his numerous affairs, alcoholism, and a marriage which was far from fulfilling and successful, he remained married to his first wife until his passing. Likewise, his male protagonists almost always stay married, as well as their wives, who never leave, even when they have every right to do so. The rare exceptions might be Neddy Merrill from "The Swimmer," whose wife left him and took the children away after his affair with the neighbor and the financial fiasco that followed. The rest of the stories focus on the typical Cheeveresque dysfunctional families in which love no longer exists between the partners and numerous affairs are present, usually accompanied with many other issues. Many of his protagonists do not even consider a divorce as a solution for their problems. For example, in "The Fourth Alarm," the husband wanted a divorce, but his wife saw no reason for it, although she left him and their children. However, he did not want to divorce his wife because the official divorce would provide a solution to their marital problems; he wanted to divorce because they had already been separated and he was ashamed and uncomfortable that his wife had left him to act nude in the theatre. Cheever approaches divorce in his satirical manner, depicting his characters as yearning for freedom, but evading separation from their spouse because of a possible loss of social status and co-dependency issues.

In “The Country Husband” (1954), the reader meets Francis Weed in a challenging situation – he almost died in an airplane crash, but, upon his arriving home, no one seems to care much. His four children fight, fuss, and cry while his wife blames him for creating disarray in their home. We gather from the story that Frances was in the war, and sometimes, memories from the war haunt him. However, the social stratum he belongs to is quite superficial – his wife, Julia, only cares about their social reputation and “the people . . . seemed united in their tacit claim that there had been no past, no war – that there was no danger or trouble in the world” (“Husband” 392). However, Francis got himself into a lot of trouble by falling in love with the underage nanny who took care of his children while he and his wife partied. He is tormented by envisioning the future with that girl; it is all he can think about. However, he is aware of the fact that infidelity with the underage girl might get him incarcerated for sexual offense. Frances tries to push away the thoughts about the young nanny, but nothing seems to help: “His spirits were feverish and high. The image of the girl seemed to put him into a relationship to the world that was mysterious and enthralling” (“Husband” 395). Frances is not content with his marriage and the relationship he has with Julia and their children, and the simple thought that his life could change excites him.

At some point, Frances actively begins to consider divorcing Julia and explores the possible repercussions:

> At a conversational level, the mores of his friends were robust and elastic, but he knew that the moral card house would come down on them all – on Julia and the children as well – if he got caught taking advantage of a baby sitter. Looking back over the recent history of Shady Hill for some precedent, he found there was none. There was no turpitude; there had not been a divorce since he lived there; there had not even been a breath of scandal. Things seemed arranged with more propriety even than in the Kingdom of Heaven. (“Husband” 397)

In a couple of sentences filled with sarcasm and mockery, Cheever explains the social rules and mores of Shady Hill, which apply to every middle-class American suburban area. The rules are simple – whatever issues happen between the spouses, they either resolve them internally or simply sweep them under the rug, since their social reputation will be damaged in case of the divorce. Cheever even parodies the suburban morale, comparing it to the highest Christian belief in the Kingdom of Heaven, while letting the reader know that extra-marital affairs are the usual phenomenon of the suburbs. Thus, no one recalls the last time someone in Shady Hills divorced, even the death of a spouse labels the family as different and unfit for the

neighborhood. Frances mentions one such family and describes it as “the only family that lacked a piece; all the other marriages were intact and productive” (“Husband” 400). With the death of a husband, this family was marginalized and financially unstable, not fitting in Shady Hill.

Collins describes Frances as “boozing, unhappy mindbound fellow [who] drifted into new worlds searching for a real image to correspond with his continuing need” (264). In the process of drifting into the world of newly founded love towards the young girl, Frances even strikes his wife in the face after an argument. Julia then decides to leave him, realizing that he does not love her anymore. However, they get into a heated argument in which their social reputation is discussed and their co-dependency revealed. Frances pities her because “she didn’t understand that most of her friendships existed within the framework of their marriage,” and Julia replies that he would not survive without her because she takes care about him and the household (“Husband” 405). During this argument, they realize the strength of their co-dependency. Francis decides to see a psychiatrist (which might be autobiographical) to help him resolve his lust towards infidelity, and he and Julia continue their life together as if no bumps in the road ever happened, no divorce in sight. It is clear that, in all of his stories, as in this one, Cheever often autobiographically points out the imperfectness of perfect marriages, satirically narrating about lives and troubled marriages of the upper-middle class that will suffer through unimaginable problems just to keep the social status they enjoy.

Conclusion

Love and marriage are universal literature tropes, appearing as focal themes in many narratives. The works of Ernest Hemingway and John Cheever are no exception; moreover, their narratives abound with questioning and exploring the meaning of love and the social pertinence of marriage. Both Hemingway and Cheever never hesitated to express their personal stances on marriage through the narratives and the characters they created. Although their best works come from different literary periods, they create a bridge that connects the first and the second half of the twentieth century by focusing on the same themes and issues that marked the periods between two most significant wars which changed social perception and structure.

Hemingway was the most famous American expatriate who roamed through Europe on a quest for the meaning and fulfillment that the intimate relationships add to life. He spent a couple of years in World War I as an ambulance driver, and the consequential awareness of the human capabilities to mutilate and destroy scarred him both psychologically and physically, leaving him with a war injury and alcoholism that followed him through the rest of his life. His childhood and adulthood experiences shaped his narrative to the point that one of his recurring characters, Nick Adams, is heavily autobiographical, with Hemingway following his development through all stages of life throughout a series of short stories hosting Nick as the main character. Cheever's works also bear autobiographical features – his childhood trauma of being born into a middle-class family with an absent working father and a mother who, in his opinion, was emotionless and uncaring, shaped his distinctive narrative style and crystallized the topics he deals with. He also spent some time in Europe, during and after World War II, also seeing first-hand the atrocities of the war. Although neither of them was in the actual combat, the wars both traumatized and influenced their lives and work. The post-war periods were hard on both of them, especially concerning the understanding of love and their visions of marriage, which were largely formed during their primary socialization. However, after the two world wars, political and social structures changed, causing changes on the individual level, as well. The world that existed prior to these wars never returned, and social coherence and values metamorphosed, directly impacting both Hemingway's and Cheever's lives. Hemingway married four times before he ended his life, and Cheever spent over forty years in an unhappy, failed marriage. As seen, although representing different literary periods, both authors share

similar personal backgrounds and experiences, which influenced their obsession with putting emphasis on loveless relationships and pointing out the incongruity of what marriage should represent and what it really represented.

It is important to highlight both authors' relationship with their mothers since it heavily shaped their narratives and build-up of their female characters. Hemingway builds his narratives around male protagonists with typical masculine traits, such as emotional strength and firmness, egocentrism, and power, known as the "Hemingway hero" character type. He often approaches his female characters from a sexist standpoint, depicting them as submissive to men and ruled by their emotions. He does not refrain from sexist and racial slurs when it comes to women, too, and despises female characters who exhibit even a trace of possible dominance over their male partner, often leaving them nameless, which points out to re-living his negative feelings towards his own mother. On the other hand, Cheever's female characters are acknowledged as unhappy in their marriages, often trying to rebel against the traditional system, but usually to no avail. Their rebelliousness reflects in treating their husbands with contempt and creating tension in their relationship.

However, Hemingway often depicts men as emotionally weak too, modeling them after his father whom he perceived as such. While touching upon the topic of emotional weakness in men, he also touches upon the sensitive topic of suicide in the short story "Indian Camp," writing about it as the ultimate flaw; interestingly, he ended his turbulent life by shooting himself. However, many years later, Cheever, although satirically, explores the same topic, when his male character in "The Geometry of Love" finds solution to his marital troubles in suicide. It is safe to say that Hemingway and Cheever explore the issue of emasculation; of occasional loss of the power granted by the patriarchal system, which was a sore spot for both of them. Moreover, their stance on marriage is somewhat similar and connected to the phenomenon of emasculation. Hemingway's male characters usually shy away even from the slightest notion of marriage, believing that marital union imprisons them by taking their freedom away, which is best seen in his short stories "The Three-Day Blow" and "Hills Like White Elephants." If married, he depicts the partners as highly dysfunctional, with the wives always getting the short end of the stick. His married couples without exception experience communication and intimacy issues, which lead to failed marriages or separations. On the other hand, the protagonists of Cheever's short stories are always married, but their marriages are crumbling and depressive, filled with many issues mostly connected to the financial turmoil they found themselves in. Cheever often comically depicts his heroes as working fathers with

wives who do nothing but socialize with the neighbors. His permanent focus is on class distinction, creating a suburban landscape filled with upper-class marriages that look perfect on the outside, but his marital unities are battlefields between husbands who work many hours and views who are alone and unhappy, best seen in his short stories such as “The Enormous Radio,” “The Season of Divorce,” and “The Fourth Alarm.”

To conclude, both Hemingway’s and Cheever’s shorts stories are products of their personal experiences and life situations, which were quite similar in some aspects. Both authors drew their inspiration from their childhood traumas, two world wars, the relationship their parents had, and the relationships they experienced personally. Although, their narrative styles and character portrayal somewhat differ, their stances on love and marriage, heavily influenced by their life experiences, ooze out of their narratives, usually depicting the negative side of marital relationships filled with loneliness, despair, unhappiness, depression, infidelity, and the constant battle for the possession of the power to execute the free will. Although created decades apart, their characters are confined by doing what is expected of them in order to abide by the patriarchal social norms or to keep the social position they enjoy. Hemingway and Cheever masterfully create narratives in which the often hidden issues of the modern world relationships and marriages became apparent, while also shedding a light on how social circumstances shape personal experiences and individual responses to (un)expected issues.

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