

Essay on the lady with the pet dog anton chekhov

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



A Comparative Analysis

Despite the marked differences in the tone and style of these two stories, they do have something strange in common. Only twenty-six years separate the publication of these stories, but the differences in style and tone are enormous. 'The Lady with the Pet Dog' is a classic example of a late nineteenth century realist story, but Hemingway's 'Soldiers Home' is a stylistic experiment in modernism. Even the titles work in different ways: Chekhov's is purely descriptive; Hemingway's, we understand by the end of the story, is deeply ironic, because a soldiers' home can be a house for veterans to help them assimilate back into society. This paper will examine the enormous differences in tone and style, while also showing that the end of the stories represent, in completely different ways, momentous moments for their main protagonists.

The tone and style of each story is very different. They are similar in a superficial way. Chekhov and Hemingway both act as omniscient authors and tell the story of a young man from his point of view. In the stories the two men undergo a change of mind at the very end of the story: Gurov falls completely in love with a woman he has had a casual affair with; Krebs takes the decision to leave home. However, Hemingway only pretends to be an omniscient narrator - he leaves many things unsaid and allows the reader to work them out. Chekhov writes long, descriptive sentences, uses a lot of dialogue and tells us explicitly what Gurov is thinking at certain points. By contrast, Hemingway writes very short sentences with hardly any embellishing adjectives. Krebs remains something of a mystery to us. It could be argued that what Hemingway leaves out is more important than

what he puts in. Tanner writes (246):

To have any significant experience the Hemingway hero must, in one sense or another, be beyond all people. Any peace he makes with the world will be personal rather than social, not communal but separate.

At the end of the story Krebs is almost ready to leave home and be beyond his family.

Setting is used very differently in both stories. It is important in Chekhov that Gurov and Anna Sergeyevna meet in Yalta, because Chekhov as the omniscient narrator mentions that holiday romances and casual affairs are not unheard of in Yalta, a Black Sea resort. But setting is more important than that in Chekhov: because of the realist tradition that he is writing in, the reader is given quite detailed descriptions of the surroundings of Gurov and Anna Sergeyevna which seem to add visual verisimilitude to the story = so we know what the weather is like, what they can smell in the park, what the inside of the hotel in Moscow where they meet looks like. Hemingway is not interested in such details and so we get hardly any visual detail of the world that Krebs inhabits. However, setting is still important in 'Soldiers Home' because, one might argue, it is the narrow sterility of his home and his hometown that encourages Krebs to leave at the end of the story - but we are not told that by Hemingway: the readers are left to work it out, to infer it for themselves. Both stories are told from the point of view of the central male protagonist, but the way Chekhov writes about setting implies that Gurov notices and is curious about setting, just as he notices Anna Sergeyevna at the start of the story; Hemingway hardly mentions it visually, because Krebs

is not interested in detailed observation of the world around him.

Character development is differently presented in each story. The two protagonists are very different anyway: Gurov is garrulous and engaging and seems to function adequately in social situations; Krebs, by contrast is reticent, detached and reserved. Gurov tells lots of lies in order to carry out his love affairs in secret; Krebs hates lies and is disgusted with himself for telling them - whether it is a lie about his experiences in the war or lying to his mother when he says he loves her towards the end of the story. In Chekhov we witness as readers and are privy to Gurov's innermost thoughts, so we watch his development and are shown it explicitly. Gurov's character development reaches its climax at the end of the story. In Hemingway's story Krebs does not really develop: it is more as if Hemingway slowly reveals more about him as the story goes on, so that by the end the sensitive reader can understand why he, like Gurov, makes a momentous decision. In 'The Lady with the Pet Dog' Gurov undergoes a complete change of character: the story charts his progression from a serial philanderer and adulterer to finding true love with Anna Sergeyevna. Krebs does not change, but his frustration, boredom and dissatisfaction with his life, his family and his home town mean that soon he will leave. 'The Lady with the Pet Dog' ends with a love recognized and fulfilled, but ominous sadness because of the difficulties that Gurov and Anna Sergeyevna will face in the future: Chekhov (10) tells us that "it was clear to both of them that they still had a long, long road before them, and that the most complicated and difficult part was only just beginning." 'Soldiers Home' ends on a slight note of hope because Krebs is escaping the restrictions of his home town,

but he too we might infer also has “ a long, long road” ahead of him – but Hemingway lets us work this out for ourselves.

Of key importance in Hemingway’s story is the war, its effect on Krebs and his alienation from civilian life when he returns home. Some editors publish ‘ Soldiers Home’ without the shirt epigraph that appeared in the original edition of *In Our Time*. This is a mistake because in the italicized sections between the named stories Hemingway describes random unconnected scenes for the war which serve to put the stories that follow into perspective, because they show the realities of the First World War which make a character such as Krebs so disillusioned with life and so keen not to lie. This is how the epigraph to ‘ Soldiers Home’ begins:

While the bombardment was knocking the trench to pieces at Fossalta, he lay very flat and and sweated and prayed oh jesus christ get me out of here. Dear jesus please get me out. Christ please please please christ. I’ll tell everyone in the world that you are the only one that matters.... The next night back at Mestre he did not tell the girl he went upstairs with at the Villa Mestre about Jesus. And he never told anybody. (122)

The key to Krebs alienation from his family and his detached attitude to other people and to life is all because of his horrific experiences during the war. “ And he never did tell anybody.”

Works Cited

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Hemingway, Ernest. ‘ Soldiers Home’. From *In Our Time*. 1925. New York: Dent. Print.

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