

## ANALYSIS

### “The Three-Day Blow” (1925)

Ernest Hemingway

(1899-1961)

“In ‘The End of Something,’ Nick bluntly concludes his serious love affair with Marjorie, evidently by previous agreement with his friend Bill. In ‘The Three-Day Blow,’ while the wind of autumn rises in background accompaniment, Nick and Bill converse on the mature wisdom they showed in having stopped the love affair before it went too far. Despite this wisdom, Nick cannot help feeling uncomfortable about the finality of the termination. Thus when Bill rather cynically guesses that it might not be so final after all, Nick is wonderfully relieved. He can always go into town where Marjorie lives on the coming Saturday night. It is a good thing to have in reserve’.”

Carlos Baker  
*Hemingway: The Writer as Artist*  
(Princeton 1952,1973) 136

“The next story, which follows a peaceful one-paragraph sketch describing more shooting of soldiers who are this time coming over a ‘simply priceless’ barricade, is called ‘The Three-Day Blow,’ and relates among other things how ‘The End of Something’ felt to Nick: the end of his affair with Marjorie felt like the autumnal three-day wind storm that is blowing: ‘All of a sudden everything was over.... Just like when the three-day blow come and rip all the leaves off the trees.’ The story extends the pattern of the previous ones and reveals the lesson Nick learned from the preceding episode. The lesson was not pleasant at the time, and it was also disturbing. Nick accomplished his purpose in ‘The End of Something,’ and got rid of the girl, but he was not at all happy about it.

It is Nick’s friend Bill who reveals the lesson, remarking that after all Nick might get back into the affair again. This thought is surprising to Nick: the end ‘had seemed so absolute.... He felt happy now. There was not anything that was irrevocable.’ And that is about all the ‘point’ there is to this story; Nick is learning things. And now *we* learn—learn why it was that Nick forced that break with Marjorie: she was of the ‘wrong’ class for a doctor’s son. It is again Bill who brings this out. You just can’t mix oil and water, he says; it’s just like it was with Bill and ‘Ida that works for Strattons.’ Here is more perplexity for Nick, and the whole business makes him extremely uncomfortable. He did it, but he doesn’t want to talk about it, as he says, and it is not until this point that we can really understand why he was ‘out of sorts’ in ‘The End of Something.’

‘The Three-Day Blow’—a many-sided story—is also a kind of tour de force, a skillful representation of the conversation of adolescent boys. Nick and Bill discuss sports, drinking, women, and literature while with affected nonchalance they get drunk on Bill’s father’s whisky. Thus the story also effectively documents Nick’s introduction to drunkenness, a condition which is to become important for the Hemingway protagonist and is therefore worth recording.”

Philip Young  
*Ernest Hemingway: A Reconsideration*  
(Penn State 1952,1966) 34-35

“On closer inspection, an almost obsessively patterned set of correspondences begins to emerge. Chapter I, where ‘Everybody was drunk. The whole battery was drunk going along the road in the dark,’ puts us in mind of the callow drinking yet to come in ‘The Three-Day Blow’; the storm in that story, which to Nick signifies his relationship to Marjorie, takes on ominous overtones in view of that battery ‘going along the road in the dark.’ The storm of ‘The Three-Day Blow’ presages the political and moral storms that Western culture was about to experience.”

Thomas Strychacz  
*“In Our Time, Out of Season”*

*The Cambridge Companion to Hemingway*  
ed. Scott Donaldson  
(Cambridge U 1996) 70

Michael Hollister (2015)