

Bloom's Modern Critical

# INTERPRETATIONS

Edited and with an Introduction by HAROLD BLOOM

## Ernest Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea

NEW EDITION



## *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations*

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Ernest Hemingway's  
*The Old Man and the Sea*  
*New Edition*

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*Edited and with an introduction by*  
Harold Bloom  
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**Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations: The Old Man and the Sea—New Edition**

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## *Editor's Note*

My introduction rather sadly judges *The Old Man and the Sea* a period piece, an involuntary self-parody, and an unfortunate allegory in which Santiago is Christ is Hemingway.

Almost all the essayists gathered here seem to me to have read some book other than the one they purportedly discuss. P.G. Rama Rao praises *The Old Man's* skill in narration, while Wirt Williams finds nothing grotesque in Hemingway's other tepid allegory, in which the sharks are unfriendly critics.

James H. Justus does see the psychological strain reflected by Hemingway's later fictions, after which Gregory S. Sojka praises *The Old Man's* heroic pathos.

Faulkner's "The Bear," far superior aesthetically to Hemingway's *The Old Man*, is juxtaposed with it by David Timms, while Peter L. Hays sees that the story is thin and weak yet commends its prose.

Gerry Brenner improbably terms *The Old Man* "a masterpiece," after which Eric Waggoner invokes the Tao as appropriate to Hemingway's allegory.

Camus is contrasted to *The Old Man* by Dwight Eddins, while Susan F. Beegel refreshingly offers an enlightened feminist reading.

Thomas Strychacz finds a dialectic of masculine and feminine strains in the narrative, after which Edward O. Ako traces a possible influence of *The Old Man* upon Derek Walcott.





HAROLD BLOOM

*Introduction*

Hemingway's greatness is in his short stories, which rival any other master of the form, be it Joyce or Chekhov or Isaak Babel. Of his novels, one is constrained to suggest reservations, even of the very best: *The Sun Also Rises*. *The Old Man and the Sea* is the most popular of Hemingway's later works, but this short novel, alas, is an indeliberate self-parody, though less distressingly so than *Across the River and into the Trees*, composed just before it. There is a gentleness, a nuanced tenderness that saves *The Old Man and the Sea* from the self-indulgences of *Across the River and into the Trees*. In an interview with George Plimpton, Hemingway stated his pride in what he considered to be the aesthetic economy of the novel:

*The Old Man and the Sea* could have been over a thousand pages long and had every character in the village in it and all the processes of the way they made their living, were born, educated, bore children, etc. That is done excellently and well by other writers. In writing you are limited by what has already been done satisfactorily. So I have tried to learn to do something else. First I have tried to eliminate everything unnecessary to conveying experience to the reader so that after he or she has read something it will become part of his or her experience and seem actually to have happened. This is very hard to do and I've worked at it very hard.

Anyway, to skip how it is done, I had unbelievable luck this time and could convey the experience completely and have it be

one that no one had ever conveyed. The luck was that I had a good man and a good boy and lately writers have forgotten there still are such things. Then the ocean is worth writing about just as a man is. So I was lucky there. I've seen the marlin mate and know about that. So I leave that out. I've seen a school (or pod) or more than fifty sperm whales in that same stretch of water and once harpooned one nearly sixty feet in length and lost him. So I left that out. But the knowledge is what makes the underwater part of the iceberg.

*The Old Man and the Sea* unfortunately is too long, rather than exquisitely curtailed, as Hemingway believed. The art of ellipsis, or leaving things out, indeed is the great virtue of Hemingway's best short stories. But *The Old Man and the Sea* is tiresomely repetitive, and Santiago the old fisherman is too clearly an idealization of Hemingway himself, who thinks in the style of the novelist attempting to land a great work:

Only I have no luck anymore. But who knows? Maybe today. Every day is a new day. It is better to be lucky. But I would rather be exact. Then when luck comes you are ready.

Contemplating the big fish, Santiago is even closer to Hemingway the literary artist, alone with his writerly quest:

His choice had been to stay in the deep dark water far out beyond all snares and traps and treacheries. My choice was to go there to find him beyond all people. Beyond all people in the world. Now we are joined together and have been since noon. And no one to help either one of us.

Santiago's ordeal, first in his struggle with the big fish, and then in fighting against the sharks, is associated by Hemingway with Christ's agony and triumph. Since it is so difficult to disentangle Santiago and Hemingway, this additional identification is rather unfortunate in its aesthetic consequences, because it can render a reader rather uncomfortable. There is a longing or nostalgia for faith in Hemingway, at least from *The Sun Also Rises* until the end of his career. But if *The Old Man and the Sea* is a Christian allegory, then the book carries more intended significance than it can bear. The big fish is no Moby-Dick or Jobean adversary; Santiago loves the fish and sees it as his double. What can we do with Santiago-as-Christ when we attempt to interpret the huge marlin?

William Faulkner praised *The Old Man and the Sea* as being Hemingway's best work, but then Faulkner also considered Thomas Wolfe to be the greatest American novelist of the century. The story, far from Hemingway's best, cannot be both a parable of Christian redemption and of a novelist's triumph, not so much because these are incompatible, but because so repetitive and self-indulgent a narrative cannot bear that double burden. Sentimentality, or emotion in excess of the object, floods *The Old Man and the Sea*. Hemingway himself is so moved by Hemingway that his famous, laconic style yields to uncharacteristic overwriting. We are not shown "grace under pressure," but something closer to Narcissus observing himself in the mirror of the sea.



P. G. RAMA RAO

*Dynamics of Narration: Later Novels*

*Green Hills of Africa* marks the turning point in Hemingway's narrative technique. It is a first-person narration of Hemingway's African safari approaching fiction in its form. But the total absence of invention, and the reportorial nature of narration disqualify this book from being treated as a novel. The book, however, reflects Hemingway's awareness of new dimensions to be achieved in prose-writing and may be described as a watershed in Hemingway's development as a novelist.

We have seen how the stories arising out of his African safari demonstrate this change in the artist's technique. The most important development is the employment of the third person viewpoint of narration. In a sustained narrative like the novel, Hemingway does not use the third-person viewpoint in his pre-safari novels and we find him using it invariably in each of the post-safari novels. He must have become acutely conscious of the limitations of the first-person method and the advantages of the third-person method. Hemingway answered one of John Atkins' questions, on this subject, as follows:

When I wrote the first two novels. I had not learned to write in the third-person. The first-person gives you great intimacy in attempting to give a complete sense, of experience to the reader. It is limited, however, and in the third-person the novelist can work

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From *Ernest Hemingway: A Study in Narrative Technique*, pp. 187-223. © 1980 by S. Chand and Company.

in other people's heads and in other people's country. His range is greatly extended and so are his obligations. I prepared myself for writing in the third-person by the discipline of writing *Death in the Afternoon*, the short stories and especially the long short stories of 'The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber' and 'The Snows of Kilimanjaro'.<sup>1</sup>

In the first-person method, "the field of vision is defined with perfect distinctness, and his story cannot stray outside it. . . . It is rounded by the bounds of the narrator's own personal experience". The narrator's defined position has its advantages. It contributes to the intensity and total effect of the story. But as Percy Lubbock points out, it need not be forfeited if the first person is changed to the third:<sup>2</sup>

The author may use the man's field of vision and keep as faithfully within it as though the man were speaking for himself. In that case he retains this advantage and adds to it another, one that is likely to be very much greater. For now, while the point of view is still fixed in space, still assigned to the man in the book, it is free in *time*; there no longer stretches, between the narrator and the events of which he speaks, a certain tract of time, across which the past must appear in a more or less distant perspective. All the variety obtainable by a shifting relation to the story in time is thus in the author's hand; the safe serenity of a far retrospect, the promising or threatening urgency of the present, every gradation between the two, can be drawn into the whole effect of the book, and all of it without any change of the seeing eye. It is a liberty that may keep the story indefinitely, raising this matter into strong relief, throwing that other back into vaguer shade.<sup>3</sup>

The new dimensions Hemingway mentions in *Green Hills of Africa* may have something to do with the new possibilities in the manipulation of point of view in its newly achieved freedom in time. An interesting case of Hemingway's experimentation in this new direction is his *To Have and Have Not*.

#### *TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT*

*To Have and Have Not* suffers from the disability of not having been conceived as a novel. The first two parts of this novel had been published as long short stories<sup>4</sup> before Hemingway thought of writing a third part and putting the three together to make a novel. He was in a hurry to go to Spain where the civil war had broken out meanwhile, and he could not pay

as much attention to this novel as he wanted. He is reported to have told Maxwell Perkins that he did not consider it “a real novel” though possibly the Morgan story alone would make a good novelette.<sup>5</sup> Hemingway was right in thinking so. The Gordon story runs parallel with the Morgan story and Hemingway planned to revise it further upon his return from Spain but could not do so.<sup>6</sup> Most of the story takes place on the Gulf Stream and the rest on its shores.

Part One, entitled “Spring”, is told by Harry Morgan, the protagonist, in the first person. It shows how Harry, who had the honesty and fear of law to turn down an offer of three thousand dollars to smuggle three men from Cuba to the States, turns not only a man-runner but also a murderer and crook into the bargain, when he is cheated by a wealthy man who has chartered his boat and lost his fishing tackle. The social theme of how an honest have-not is corrupted and made into a criminal by the haves is effectively presented in the first part which, ironically, is the “spring” in the life of a criminal created by society. The first-person narration gives us an immediacy of experience and contributes to the compactness of narrative in the manner of the two early novels. But, as we go through the novel and find that Harry dies before the end of the novel, we begin to wonder how and at what point he tells the story. This is one of the most serious problems the first-person method can give rise to. Even a narrator’s madness at the end can be explained by the argument that a distance in time separates the narrator from the time when he was mad, and he might have made a complete recovery before telling the story. But it could not be argued that the narrator rose from his grave to tell his story.

Part Two of the novel, entitled “Autumn”, is told in the third person. The narration is convincing and effective. In this part we find Harry turning into a rum-runner and losing an arm in the process. It is clear that he will lose his boat also. He has become a hardened criminal now and this part is the autumn, the season of “mellow fruitfulness” in a criminal’s life. This irony is underlined by the fact that Harry was a member of the police force up in Miami (*To Have and Have Not*, p. 44), and by nemesis overtaking the criminal in “Autumn” for the crime committed in “Spring”. Harry broke Mr. Sing’s arm before killing him. Harry has already started paying for it by losing his arm, and we know that he has only the final instalment to pay—arm for arm and life for life.<sup>7</sup>

Part Three, “Winter”, opens with Albert’s narration in the first person. Albert dies even before the third part is half way through and his first-person narration is as serious an offence as Harry’s which follows Albert’s, in the next chapter. Hemingway may have meant them to go as interior monologues in the manner of Chapters XXXVII, XXXVIII, and XXXIX of *Moby Dick*. If so, he did not follow a worthy model for the manipulation of point of view. The author of *Moby Dick* is careless in his use of this technique,



and employs these interior monologues in what is apparently a first-person narrative, beginning and ending as such (the bulk of the narrative in between being omniscient in character). In the third chapter, Hemingway adopts the third-person method of narration which leaves him free to enter into the consciousness of different individuals and shift the point of view in accordance with the exigencies of narration.

This chapter describes a criminal's end—the “winter” of a criminal's life. Harry agrees to smuggle four Cubans across the Gulf not knowing that they are trigger-happy bank robbers and revolutionaries. He kills all four of them and is fatally wounded in the fight. The novel thus describes the growth and death of a criminal made by a corrupt society, and, throughout, the corrupting influence of big money is felt. The paradox of the Haves being Have-Nots in regard to manliness and morality as contrasted with the Have-Not Morgan, who is rich in them though forced by circumstances to do illegal things, is developed in the third part by alternating Morgan's story with the Gordons' and other Haves'. The domestic felicity of the Morgans' is set off by the nasty mess the Gordons and the Bradleys and the Hollises have made of their marriages. The sexual fulfillment of the Morgans is set off against the background of the illicit sexual intimacies and perversions of the rich in their yachts on the Gulf Stream. The ironic framework for this antithesis can be found in the nineteenth chapter where Gordon bicycles past Marie Morgan in the street and sees “in a flash of perception the whole inner life of that type of woman” (p. 177), constructing a mental picture of her matrimonial misery, and the twenty-fifth chapter where Marie Morgan mistakes Gordon for “some poor goddamned rummy” pitying him even as she pities Eddie Marshall at the end of the first part.

The nightmarish scene of the punch-drunk veterans at Freddy's, which concludes with Richard Gordon's abortive attempts to hit Professor MacWalsey, reads like a highly condensed presentation in one chapter of the social corruption and brutality which the novel attempts to portray on a larger canvas. It also facilitates Gordon's fall, adding a physical dimension to his already effected moral fall, and leads to the situation in which Marie pities him as a poor rummy. She is more justified in thinking so of him than he in his “flash of perception” concerning her life.

Carlos Baker says: “Strong aesthetic grounds exist for the belief that the novel would have been better without the figure of Gordon. For the story of the writer suffers, perhaps unduly, when it is placed beside the story of Morgan's downfall”.<sup>8</sup> Baker's emphasis on the writer's story is not justified by the montage of the novel. The Gordon story represents the faked values and the superficial glamour of the Haves in a more organized way than the sketches of the tourists and of the yachts given at the end. But it is important only as a foil for the Morgan story which is the main story. It is obvious that Hemingway intended the Gordon episode to be an important element in the

novel to bring out the full force of the main story. But his failure to develop this episode properly makes the third part look like a potpourri. Gordon enters the story rather late, in page 138, as he enters Freddy's bar, disappears in page 141, makes a brief appearance in page 150, reappears after a long hibernation in page 176, and by this time the main story of Harry Morgan is almost over. The chapter, in which Gordon and his wife quarrel, holds out a promise of interest and provides dramatic relief at the end of the intensity involved in the Morgan story. But as Gordon goes to Freddy's, instead of being in the focus, he remains in a shadow and the vets claim all our attention until Gordon too tries to act like one of them and is promptly "cooled". The story moves unsteadily like Gordon plodding his weary way homeward like "a poor goddamned rummy". The third-person narrator, after a great deal of shifting about from the objective method to the oblique and back again to the objective, occasionally slipping into the manner of first-person narration,<sup>9</sup> finally grows omniscient, and hops from one consciousness to another setting forth the moral degeneration of the Haves in their yachts in a series of interior monologues, taking every care to include the exception to the general rule in the case of Jon Jacobson and his family in their yacht, *Alzira III*.

As E. M. Halliday points out

In *To Have and Have Not*, however, the point of view flips back and forth so capriciously that the reader suffers from a kind of vertigo of the imagination which blurs the illusion. And there is something disconcerting about meeting the hero first as the story-teller, and then having to readjust our conception of him in the light of his impression on an unknown 'omniscient' narrator. No doubt the alteration can be managed, and for valid ends (one thinks of Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*); but it calls for more care than Hemingway has exercised.<sup>10</sup>

Authorial intrusions alternate with scenes of realistic immediacy in the omniscient narrator's survey of the yachts doing considerable violence to the artistic illusion. The rounded perfection of the circular pattern which is a distinguishing feature of all the other novels is absent in *To Have and Have Not*. The novel begins with the narrator-protagonist recounting the temptation offered to him and ends with the omniscient narrator describing a large white yacht coming into the harbour and a tanker's profile against the blue sea. Immediately preceding this conclusion is Marie Morgan's long interior monologue which reads like an echo of Molly Bloom's in *Ulysses*. The tragi-comic scene of Mrs. Tracy's grief, which precedes the scenes of Marie's dignified conduct at the hospital and her grief, looks to be an artificial device

deliberately planted there as a foil, and this takes away much of its effect. In the midst of all these technical exercises Hemingway does not lose sight of his basic contrapuntal theme. The floating degeneration of the yachts and the last sentence of the novel describing a tanker “small and neat in profile against the blue sea, hugging the reef as she made to the westward to keep from wasting fuel against the Stream” remind us of the Gulf Stream passage of *Green Hills of Africa*.<sup>11</sup>

The protagonist is presented at the end as learning a truth and struggling hard to express it before his death. This is very uncharacteristic of Hemingway, though it reveals his consciousness of the problems plaguing American society. But there is no logical connection between the events of the novel and the last words of Harry. As Philip Young rightly observes: “Just how all these things lead to Harry’s final pronouncement is Hemingway’s business, and it is not skilfully transacted”.<sup>12</sup>

But confusion of theme is not one of the factors contributing to the failure of this novel.<sup>13</sup> The subject of the novel is social injustice, which creates a criminal and destroys him, involving the Have-and-Have-Not paradox. But in his eagerness to find new dimensions in prose-writing and to work in other people’s minds in the third-person method of narration, Hemingway changes his narrative technique and makes certain experiments.<sup>14</sup> He allows himself to be distracted by the Spanish civil war meanwhile, with the result that the novel bears the mark of careless writing and fails to express its subject satisfactorily in terms of art. The emotional rhythm of the first two books is marred by the careless manipulation of the parallel story of Richard Gordon in the third book. While Halliday is right in saying that Hemingway is “betrayed into unhappy technical tricks”, he is not right in suggesting that his “groping for his theme” is responsible for it.<sup>15</sup> The manipulation of the point of view is an unfamiliar technique for Hemingway in serious and sustained fiction. In this ambition to achieve novel effects, he bites off more than he can chew in this novel.

#### *FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS*

The marlin which eludes Johnson and Harry in the first part of *To Have and Have Not* seems to symbolize the prize which has eluded Hemingway. But in his next novel, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, this symbolic marlin is successfully hooked, and the artist, caught in the Key West depression, bounces back into his element in this novel.

Based on the Spanish civil war and Hemingway’s knowledge of Spain and its people, this novel has the same basic structure as *A Farewell to Arms* in that there is a parallel movement of the themes of war and love here. The war-theme is limited to the guerilla activities and their mountain hide-out is the

theatre of operations for the most part. Thematically, the novel arises in part from the last words of Harry Morgan, “No matter how a man alone ain’t got no bloody f-ing chance.” But this point should not be stressed too much, for there is some subtle difference between Harry’s last words which emphasize collective action or the futility of individual action and the Donnean theme of the oneness of mankind which is used as an epigraph for the novel:

No man is an *iland*, intire of itself; every man is a peece of the Continent, a part of the *maine*; if a *clod* bee washed away by the *Sea*, *Europe* is the lesse, as well as if a *Promontorie* were, as well as if a Mannor of thy *friends* or of *thine owne* were; any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in *Mankinde*; And, therefore, never send to know for whom the *bell* tolls; it tolls for *thee*.

This is related to the war-and-death-theme; and the love-theme as it is developed in the novel is also related to the Donnean conception with its reference to the “Phoenix riddle”:<sup>16</sup>

Our two soules, therefore, which are one,  
Though I must goe, endure not yet,  
A breach, but an expansion,  
Like Gold to ayery thinnesse beate.<sup>17</sup>

The paradox of the one and the many being one, and of the lover and the beloved being one, is at the centre of the novel like the bridge which joins the two sides of a gorge and makes them one. Robert Jordan and Maria are one, but when wounded Jordan tells Maria to go away with Pablo’s band, Maria is both of them: “The me in thee. Now you go for us both. Truly. We both go in thee now” (*For Whom the Bell Tolls*, p. 464). Robert W. Lewis Jr. puts it in the form of a convenient formula when he says that one plus one equals one, but when eros combines with agape, one minus one equals one also.<sup>18</sup>

The novel has the usual circular structure. It opens with Robert Jordan, the dynamiter, whose mission is to blow the bridge, lying flat on the brown, pine-needled floor of the forest, “his chin on his folded arms”, watching the bridge. The focus shifts from Jordan to the bridge and keeps on shifting between them, until both come into focus at once, as Jordan blows the bridge; and when the bridge is no longer there, the focus is there on Jordan at the end, as he lies behind the tree, “his heart beating against the pine-needle floor of the forest”, watching Lt. Berrendo whom he is going to blow next. The two postures of Jordan at either end of the story indicate the usual structure of a Hemingway novel with a greater than usual attention given to it, which contributes to the structural perfection of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.

Carlos Baker's comments on the structural form of the novel are illuminating:

The form is that of a series of concentric circles with the all-important bridge in the middle. The great concentration which Hemingway achieves is partly dependent on his skill in keeping attention focussed on the bridge while projecting the reader imaginatively far beyond that center of operations. Chapter One immediately establishes the vital strategic importance of the bridge in the coming action. Frequent allusions to the bridge keep it in view through the second chapter, and in Chapter Three Jordan goes with Anselmo to make a preliminary inspection. From that time onwards until its climactic destruction, the bridge continues to stand unforgettably as the focal point in the middle of an ever widening series of circles.<sup>19</sup>

The action of the story takes place in the vastness of a pine forest and the Guadarrama mountains. We are made aware of it at the commencement of the novel—the pine-needled floor of the forest, the wind blowing in the tops of the pine trees, the mountainside sloping gently where Jordan lay, the steepness below, the dark of the oiled road winding through the pass, the stream and the falling water of the dam. The vista is panoramic. We are not allowed to forget it at the end, when we come back to the vastness of the forest. Jordan feels his heart beat against its pine-needle floor; and he reminds us of Helen in “The Snows of Kilimanjaro”, who cannot hear the howling of the hyena for the beating of her heart. In both the cases, their excited preoccupations make them oblivious of the abiding earth on which they are acting out their little dramas. But the reader is aware of it, and the author provides him with the necessary objective correlatives.

The most elastic of all Hemingway's novels in texture and structure, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* has a story which moves back and forth, into the past and the future, even as it moves across forests and mountains, and travels great distances. But the actual story occupies a span of less than three days. The intensity of the story and the technical excellence, which takes us across distances in time and space and packs the experience of a number of years into less than three days, give us the impression that Hemingway has moved through algebra into calculus in this novel itself. The highly skilful foreshortening of time and the unity of place which are important characteristics of this novel remain the chief features of his next novel, *Across the River and into the Trees*, which the author compared to calculus.<sup>20</sup> The various techniques tried in the two stories and the novel, following his African safari, have stood him in good stead in writing *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. The alternation between memory and

actuality, which is the structural pattern of "The Snows of Kilimanjaro", is skilfully used here in scenes like Pilar's memories of Finito during the course of her conversation with Jordan, Pablo, Primitivo and others (pp. 182–190). The technique of flashback to tell part of the story concerning the past and that of entering different consciousnesses, which play an important role in "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber", are repeatedly, and with great success, used here. The device of foreshortening of time, common to both the stories, is found in the novel. The frequent shifts of point of view which mark *To Have and Have Not* are used here with great success.

*For Whom the Bell Tolls* evinces great control in the manipulation of the technique of point of view. Here Hemingway steers clear of the pitfalls which are evident in *To Have and Have Not*. The main point of view is third-person "oblique" with Robert Jordan serving as the central intelligence or "reflector", for the most part. But wherever necessary the "implied author", who has a superior knowledge, makes comments and gives information, which the character in question cannot do. This can be seen in the scene in which Anselmo keeps watch over the road. The author from his point of view, slightly above Anselmo's and closer to the object, tells us about things which the old man does not know, and notes that if Robert Jordan had been there, he would have appreciated the significance of Fords, Fiats, etc., of the staff of the Division and the Rolls-Royces, Lancias, etc., of the General Staff (p. 192). A little later, the scene shifts from Anselmo and the road to the inside of the saw mill and the soldiers' talk, and back to Anselmo again. The shift, back and forth, is smooth, since we are conscious of a superior point of view operating, using both summary and scene for effective narration. Lubbock describes the advantages of this method thus: "The seeing eye is with somebody in the book, but its vision is reinforced; the picture contains more, becomes richer and fuller, because it is the author's as well as his creature's, both at once. Nobody notices, but in fact there are now two brains behind that eye; and one of them is the author's, who adopts and shams the 'position' of his creature, and at the same time supplements his wit".<sup>21</sup>

Interior monologues are used to a much greater advantage in this novel than in Hemingway's earlier fiction. They not only present the character's thought processes and throw light on his character, memories and dreams, but reveal some of the basic ironic patterns reflecting the vanity of human plans and efforts. Robert Jordan's belief that "the bridge can be the point on which the future of the human race can turn" (p. 43) is finally reduced to total insignificance in the context of the war, and all the efforts and the sacrifices involved in blowing it are vain. Jordan's interior monologues help in bringing out the tragedy of the story—a tragedy of which he seems to be aware throughout. It is a tragedy of action unlike the first two novels which are tragedies of helplessness. Right from the beginning Jordan has his fears

that the attack is doomed to failure, being aware of the composition of the Republican leadership. But he is a disciplined soldier and his business is to carry out his orders. "Neither you nor this old man is anything. You are instruments to do your duty. There are necessary orders that are no fault of yours and there is a bridge and that bridge can be the point on which the future of the human race can turn. As it can turn on everything that happens in this war" (p. 43). The tragedy is Jordan's personal tragedy at the primary level, and involves Golz's attack and the Spanish civil war at the secondary level. But there is no justification for the argument that Hemingway intended it to be "a moral and political tragedy which would suggest and embody the tragedy of the Spanish war".<sup>22</sup> Jordan's personal tragedy and Golz's attack may form part of the general picture of the tragedy of the Spanish war. But the dramatic focus in the novel is on Golz's attack in general and Jordan's involvement with the bridge, with the guerilleros, and with Maria in particular. Whatever may be said about the Spanish civil war in general is only incidental and is of background importance only. Pilar's account of Republican brutality and Maria's account of Falangist brutality are couched in flashback narration as unpleasant memories and do not form part of the onward-moving narrative. Jordan's interior monologues are all purposive and contribute to the total effect. Even his memories of the Gaylord's and Karkov, besides giving us an idea of the international complexion of the civil war, show the importance of people like Karkov, which has a special significance in the context of Andres' mission. Several chapters later, Karkov helps Andres overcome the frustrating obstacles put in his way by Andre Massart.

For the first time, we find Hemingway take a personal interest in his characters as people with lives and views of their own apart from their part in contributing to the total effect of a novel. An approach in this direction is to be found, though in an elementary form, in *To Have and Have Not* in which the writer shows us Harry Morgan's home and his daughters. But the pace of the narrative in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is leisurely enough to indulge an interest in characterization. The protagonist's mind is given a great deal of importance in this novel, and a sizable slice of the novel concerns his reflections. W. M. Frohock observes: "And at the end, his understanding of the story becomes one with the reader's, so that the tragic irony—the discrepancy between the hero's understanding of his misfortune and the audience's understanding of it—is resolved. The reader has no trouble in identifying himself satisfactorily with Jordan through their common humanity; he admits that, in true fact, this man's death diminishes him; pity and terror are legitimized".<sup>23</sup>

Hemingway's interest in the characters and lives of his people can be seen in his attempt to justify Maria's character by making Jordan comment, "Spanish girls make wonderful wives" (p. 164), and, later, in his making Maria dwell with a sense of pride on her mother's death. Her father shouted: "Viva la

Republica” when they shot him, but her mother shouted “‘Viva’ my husband who was the Mayor of this village” when they shot her, and “this was in my head like a scream that would not die but kept on and on” (pp. 350–351).<sup>24</sup> Hemingway seems to take precautions against the possible charge that his women characters are unrealistic, which he has not done with reference to Catherine who is equally submissive and devoted to her man. The best example of critical opinion in this connection is Edmund Wilson’s description of Maria as “the amoeba-like little Spanish girl”, and Jordan’s love-affair with her as having “the all-too-perfect felicity of a youthful erotic dream”.<sup>25</sup> Even minor characters like Golz, Anselmo, Pilar, Pablo, Karkov, Lt. Berrendo, and El Sordo are presented with a lively interest in their humanness.

The emotional rhythm in the novel depends upon the alternation of the tension in the progress of action and the relaxation afforded by the love-scenes, the interior monologues and flashback narratives. The tension rises higher and higher after each spell of relief until the parallel action of Andres’ mission commences, from which point the tension keeps on rising on both the planes till the end, and is at its highest as Jordan lies—waiting for Lt. Berrendo to come into the sights of his machine-gun.

Apart from the emotional structure of the narrative, it is interesting to observe the building-up of tension in a character’s mind, which may be characterized as psychological tension, as he waits for, or is engaged in an important action. As Jordan waits for the sound of bombing in order to commence his work on the bridge and as his psychological tension starts mounting, his senses get sharp. He watches the movement of a squirrel. “He would like to have had the squirrel with him in his pocket. He would like to have had anything that he could touch. He rubbed his elbows against the pine needles but it was not the same” (p. 433). Without mentioning it, Hemingway indicates the nervous tension preceding serious action, especially during a wait. He sees a motor-cyclist and, some time later, an ambulance crossing the bridge. He smells the pines, hears the stream, and sees the bridge clear and beautiful in the morning light. “He lay there behind the pine tree, with the submachine gun across his left forearm, and he never looked at the sentry box again until, long after it seemed that it was never coming, that nothing could happen on such a lovely late May morning, he heard the sudden, clustered thudding of the bombs” (p. 434). The onomatopoeic “thudding” with its significant double ‘d’ (making one think of dooms-day) is preceded by long phrases signifying time hanging heavy, especially the heavy parenthesis “with the sub-machine gun across his left forearm”. As Jordan draws in a long breath and lifts the sub-machine gun “from where it lay”, the tension is lifted. He looks at the man in the sentry box who stands in the road “with the sun shining on him”. In a six-sentence description of the man ‘the sun’ recurs three times. This makes us conscious of the slightly higher view of the omniscient



narrator who wants us to know that the sun shines on the sentry for the last time now, though the point of view is ostensibly Jordan's.

As Jordan works under the bridge, tension mounts higher and higher without any prospect of relaxation. His psychological tension also reaches an unbearable point, and he starts shaking like "a goddamn woman". He has to take his mind off the job for some time to calm himself and here we have a free-associative interior monologue which reflects the under-current of psychological tension. "Roll, Jordan. Roll! They used to yell that at football when you lugged the ball. . . . This is a place here under this bridge. A home away from home. . . . As Maine goes so goes the nation. As Jordan goes so go the bloody Israelites. The bridge, I mean. As Jordan goes, so goes the bloody bridge, other way round, really" (p. 438).

This shows that the use of interior monologues is more subtle and skilful in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* than E. M. Halliday finds it to be. Halliday objects to the frequency of its use and asks: "Does not the preponderance of subjective passages in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, by the shift in emphasis away from the solid specifications of the outward world, make that novel less eminently realistic than Hemingway's first two books"?<sup>26</sup> The interior monologues which have so far contributed to relaxation of tension come to reflect rising tension towards the close of the novel where it is all one upward curve of tension without any relief. The last pages of the novel contain a highly dramatic interior monologue reflecting the narrative tension, Jordan's psychological tension, and the pain of his leg, which gets worse and worse. The moments of excruciating pain in the course of this monologue are expressed by italics. Summary and scene (or picture and drama) are both skilfully used in these pages. Jordan, summoning up all his energies to suppress his pain, says: "*And if you wait and hold them up even a little while or just get the officer that may make all the difference. One thing well done can make—*" (p. 470). The narrator then tells us that Jordan "lay very quietly and tried to hold on to himself", and that his luck held very good because he saw, just then, the cavalry ride out of the timber and cross the road.

As the officer came trotting now on the trail of the horses of the band he would pass twenty yards below where Robert Jordan lay. At that distance there would be no problem. The officer was Lieutenant Berrendo. He had come up from La Grania when they had been ordered up after the first report of the attack on the lower post. . . . Robert Jordan lay behind the tree, holding onto himself very carefully and delicately to keep his hands steady. He was waiting until the officer reached the sunlit place where the first trees of the pine forest joined the green slope of the meadow. He could feel his heart beating against the pine needle floor of the forest (p. 471).

The narrator's summary about Lt. Berrendo makes the scene very effective and meaningful. The final confrontation between Robert Jordan and Lt. Berrendo, the two men in the story with whom we greatly sympathize, emphasizes the Donnean paradox which governs the framework of the novel: "And therefore never send to know for whom the *bell* tolls; it tolls for *thee*". It tolls for Lt. Berrendo as well as for Robert Jordan, for the Fascist as well as for the Republican, for the victor as well as for the vanquished, because they are both "involved in Mankind". The minor ironies in the novel like that of Joaquin, who quotes Passionara's slogan that "it is better to die on your feet than to live on your knees", but switches in the end to a prayer to Virgin Mary as the drone of the planes approaches, and dies on his knees (p. 321), and that of Captain Mora, who shouts "Shoot me! Kill me!" and strides up the hill only to join El Sordo and his friends as a "comrade voyager" (pp. 317-319), subserve this larger paradox that "any man's death diminishes me", which is supplemented by the other important paradox in the novel, "As long as there is one of us there is both of us" (p. 463).

*ACROSS THE RIVER AND INTO THE TREES*

*Across the River and into the Trees*, of which Hemingway thought very highly, is an impressive narrative gimmick rather than an effective novel. The novel is cast in the usual circular, mould, beginning and ending with a duck-shoot, which gives the false impression of two different duck-shoots. Peter Lisca is, perhaps, the only critic to stress that it is only one duck-shoot and "the intervening two hundred and seventy-eight pages make up an uninterrupted interior monologue during which the shooter recreates in his mind not only the actual events of the last two days, Friday and Saturday, since the medical exam on Thursday, but also the particular memories which had concerned him during those two days".<sup>27</sup>

This accounts for the singularity of the novel. The novel begins as an omniscient third-person narrative and slides into third-person oblique narration in the third chapter, with the action viewed from the Colonel's point of view for the most part. Peter Lisca's view that only the short first chapter and the last thirty pages originate in an omniscient third person, who occasionally tells us, especially in the last chapter, of things the Colonel cannot know,<sup>28</sup> is not correct. The omniscient narrator's intrusions in the rest of the book are not only frequent, but mostly unnecessary. For instance, when Colonel Cantwell looks at his face in the mirror, it is the omniscient narrator that comments: "He did not notice the old used steel of his eyes nor the small, long extending laugh wrinkles at the corners of his eyes, nor that his broken nose was like a gladiator's in the oldest statues. Nor did he notice his basically kind mouth which could be truly ruthless" (p. 112). The same kind of authorial

intrusion as is purposive and effective in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (p. 192) falls flat here and reads like an unsuccessful imitation of the intrusion in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.

But there are authorial intrusions of a worse kind in the novel in which the author speaks directly to the reader in a figurative style as follows: "Have to?" the Colonel said and the cruelty and the resolution showed in his strange eyes as clearly as when the hooded muzzle of the gun of a tank swings toward you. . . . He smiled and his eyes were as kind as they ever were, which was not too kind, as he knew" (p. 143). The point of view in such cases is, as E. M. Halliday rightly observes, "outside the narrative, and whether you like or dislike the simile, its effect is one of distraction".<sup>29</sup> The Colonel is not looking at his reflection in a mirror here and so cannot have seen the cruelty and resolution in his eyes. These are the words of the intrusive commentator who wants to enlighten the reader about some aspects of the Colonel's personality. The reader's knowledge and appreciation of a character which should be built up impression by impression through action, dialogue, and monologue by a subtle manipulation of the narrative perspective suffers greatly from these unwarranted authorial intrusions.

The story between the duck-shoot of the first chapter and the duck-shoot at the end of the novel is not an "interior monologue" as Peter Lisca calls it, but a flashback in the third-person oblique method, with the omniscient narrator's voice being occasionally heard. The use of the third-person narrator who projects a point of view which, though for the most part identical with the Colonel's, is occasionally independent of and slightly above his, makes it impossible for us to consider it as an interior monologue. Besides, the flashback contains long accounts of the Colonel's war-memories as told to Renata and they would look absurd in an interior monologue being twice removed from the time of action in the novel. There is no textual support for Peter Lisca's view that "the novel is really a first-person narration of events in the past, like *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms*, but disguised as third-person narration through the device of using the shooter as a 'persona' through whom the Colonel thinks about himself".<sup>30</sup>

In the duck-shoot of the opening chapter we find a lack of understanding between the shooter and the boatman and we know the reason for the boatman's hostile attitude only when the duck-shoot is over in Chapter XLIII, and Baron Alvarito explains that the boatman is allergic to Allied uniforms as his wife and daughter were raped by the Moroccans. When we come to the end of the first chapter, we know only that the shooter is angry with the boatman but controls himself: "Every time you shoot now can be the last shoot and no stupid son of a bitch should be allowed to ruin it. Keep your temper, boy, he told himself" (p. 7). The next chapter opens with the third-person narrative telling the story of the shooter: "But he was not a boy. He

was fifty and a Colonel of Infantry in the Army of the United States and to pass a physical examination that he had to take the day before he came down to Venice for this shoot, he had taken enough mannitol hexanitrate to, well he did not quite know what to—to pass, he said to himself” (p. 8). The point of view is clearly established here as the third-person omniscient narrator’s. In the next chapter, it slips into the ‘oblique’ which is maintained, for the most part, in the subsequent chapters until it is resumed by the omniscient narrator at the end when the Colonel dies: “That was the last thing the Colonel ever said. . . . ‘They’ll return them all right, through channels’, Jackson thought, and put the car in gear” (pp. 307–308).

The subject of the novel is Colonel Cantwell’s last visit to Venice, the city he loves most, and his preparedness for death, which comes at the end of his visit. He visits Venice for the duck-shoot and for a meeting with Countess Renata, his nineteen-year-old beloved, and his old friends. The duration of the visit is two days, or to be exact, less than two days for, at the end, the early darkness of the second day begins. The story of the visit begins two hours before daylight on the first day and ends, perhaps, an hour or two after daylight fades on the second day. But when we include the Colonel’s medical examination, the time of action will be three days. It starts with the Colonel giving death and ends with his taking death. There is an attempt at observing the three classical unities in a greater measure than in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. The new techniques of alternating memory with actual experience, shifting of point of view, flashback, and interior monologue, which have been repeatedly used since “The Snows of Kilimanjaro”, are used in this novel too.

The actual experience, in the flashback narration, is the Colonel’s visit to Venice and his meeting with his beloved Renata. The memories deal with his experiences in the second world war—“the sad science” of soldiering. He feels better, “purging” his bitterness as he tells Renata about the war. Throughout, he makes a conscious effort to get the better of his temper, to be understanding, forgiving, and kind. He tries to convert his disappointment into a positive effort to satisfy and please Renata. They both know that the Colonel’s end is near and their last meeting, while it brings a serious disappointment, reveals the selfless love of the Colonel who finds his pleasure only in giving it to Renata. But the alternation of memory with actual experience, which contributes to the emotional rhythm of “The Snows of Kilimanjaro” and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* does not achieve any purpose here and the memories tend to weary the reader though they do not bore Renata. Some of them may have great personal poignancy for the Colonel, but, as he goes on recapitulating them, they lose that poignancy for the reader. The most intriguing part of it comes when the Colonel continues his narration even when Renata is asleep. The whole narration of his war-memories seems to be an ironic sequel to his knowledge of “How boring any man’s war is to any other man” (p. 21). These reflections on the war together

with the occasional quotation from or allusion to literature<sup>31</sup> and art serve only to show off the Colonel's knowledge and taste, if not the author's. He sounds like a war-veteran being interviewed,<sup>32</sup> rather than like a lover recounting some of his experiences to his beloved. The style is unnecessarily figurative at places and there is a monotony about the way the figurative expressions are used. As the Colonel looks at Renata's profile, he feels his heart turn over inside him, as though some sleeping animal had rolled over in its burrow and frightened, deliciously, the other animal sleeping close beside" (p. 83). This Homeric simile comes out elsewhere, like the strange animal coming out at another opening of the burrow, in the following sentence: "I understand', the *Gran Maestro* said and he looked at Renata, and his heart rolled over as a porpoise does in the sea. It is a beautiful movement and only a few people in this world can feel it and accomplish it" (p. 203). This kind of writing is a violation of Hemingway's own theory and practice as a writer.<sup>33</sup> The Colonel and Renata sound not only unconvincing but amusing, as they discuss war in bed from Chapter XXVII to Chapter XXXVI.

The oblique point of view which is employed in the flashback narration is not shifted to the omniscient at the end of the flashback when the duck-shoot is resumed, and the Colonel's point of view is maintained almost till the end and is changed only when the Colonel dies. Besides, there is a brief flashback, again, about how the Colonel punished the two sailors, who whistled at Renata, in the course of the resumed duck-shoot. It is this inartistic manipulation of the point of view that confuses the reader and clouds the fact that the actual action of the novel is the duck-shoot followed by the Colonel's death and the rest of the story is only a flashback.

*Across the River and into the Trees* is flawed in lesser respects too. We know that the Colonel is a perfectionist who does everything carefully and well including the shutting of the car-door before his death. But when Andrea is described in the same way we are perplexed: "He walked out after waiting carefully for his coat, swinging into it, and tipping the man who brought it exactly what he should be tipped plus twenty per cent" (p. 81). Andrea seems to mimic the Colonel here, but that is not likely, since the voice is the omniscient narrator's and there is no suggestion of mimicry. It is obvious that Hemingway confuses Andrea with Cantwell.

In page 82 the Colonel asks Renata her age and she replies, "Nearly nineteen, Why?" In page 96, during the course of the same chapter the Colonel repeats the same question and Renata replies, "I will be nineteen." It is not probable that the Colonel, who is presented as extremely correct in doing things, could be guilty of such a mistake or that Renata does not draw his attention to it in that event.

Philip Young, referring to the view that the marlin of *The Old Man and the Sea* is *Across the River and into the Trees*, which was torn to pieces by reviewers

and critics, and Hemingway's own description of it as his calculus, comments: "It is not safe to dismiss such a statement [that he had moved into calculus] as simply pretentious. Years before, when he wrote of the 'fourth and fifth dimension that can be gotten' in prose, it turned out that he had something in mind. Perhaps some day it can be shown how the calculus, which is often described as a symbolic means of "grasping the fleeting instant", throws a more attractive light on the novel than has yet been observed."<sup>34</sup>

*Across the River and into the Trees* demonstrates an obvious attempt at grasping the fleeting instant. The novel is, in a way, an enlargement of the Colonel's fleeting impression of his two-day visit to Venice in the midst of his duck-shoot. The author who is conscious of the *Othello* parallel might have in mind the fleeting instant before Othello's death when his memory recaptures for a moment all the romance and tragedy of his life.<sup>35</sup> *Across the River and into the Trees* is an attempt at catching hold of such a fleeting instant before the Colonel's death and working back towards a narrative pattern involving the preceding two days and the memories generated during those two days. The ambitious symbolic construct, verging on the allegorical, which he builds upon the narrative with Dantesque overtones and Christological references, adds a new dimension to the novel. But since the basic aspect of emotional appeal suffers on account of the many defects in the narrative, the symbolism does not have the desired effect.

The title derives from Stonewall Jackson's words before his death and sounds slightly ironical as the Colonel who does everything "carefully and well" repeats the words, "Let us cross over the river and rest under the shade of the trees" (p. 307), to the General's namesake, driver Jackson, and finally dies in his car. He shares the General's ill-health and badly injured right hand, and for him it is "across the canal and into the car" as he says, "Good. I'm now going to get into the large back seat of this god-damned, oversized luxurious automobile" (p. 309).

An important feature of this novel is the narrative focus which is on the Colonel from beginning to end. It is not shifted even for a moment. This is an important shift in technique from *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, where it is shifted from Jordan and the bridge to Pilar and her story, Maria and her story, Andres and his adventures, Golz and his predicament, and other situations. The narrative situation is reduced to the simplest terms, and the protagonist is the only character who counts and his mind becomes a kind of stage, as when the Colonel's mind briefly becomes the scene of a dialectic between fun and love (p. 71). This dialectic is taken up two hundred pages later, when the Colonel reveals the Supreme Secret of the mysterious Order to Renata: "Love is love and fun is fun. But it is always so quiet, when the gold fish die" (p. 271). The Colonel, who is the supreme commander of the order, has had his share of fun as seen in his activities in Venice including the duck-shoot and learnt

his lesson in love as revealed in his relations with Renata ("You have no fun when you do not love" [p. 71]), and what remains now is that he should die a quiet and graceful death. This technique of uninterrupted narrative focus on a single character is exploited to the best advantage in Hemingway's next novel *The Old Man and the Sea*.

The main weakness of *Across the River and into the Trees* is its deficiency in narrative tension and emotional intensity owing to the fact that a large chunk of the novel is recollected action wrapped in a flashback. This divests the events of their emotional quality and what remains is a lyrical, literary style bordering on sentimentality at times.<sup>36</sup> The Colonel's forgiveness of the boatman even before learning of his "over-liberation" by the Allies, which forms part of the main action of the story, points to the central paradox of the Colonel's sexual disappointment resulting in a triumph of love and compassion. At one level the Colonel fails to find fulfillment in his life. Renata disappoints him in a way; and his duck-shoot is spoiled by the boatman. But at another level, more important because subjective, he has no regrets at the time of death. In fact, his feeling is one of fulfillment: "I've always been a lucky son of a bitch" (p. 307).

#### *THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA*

Just as Hemingway's experiments in *To Have and Have Not* lead to the success of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, his experiments in *Across the River and into the Trees* lead to the effective narration of *The Old Man and the Sea*. The symbolic marlin which is lost in *To Have and Have Not*, hooked and killed and lashed alongside his skiff in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and lost for the most part to the sharks in *Across the River and into the Trees*,<sup>37</sup> is finally brought home in *The Old Man and the Sea*. The damaged condition of the marlin, when it is brought ashore, is a mark of the struggle endured by the artist in the process. A composite statement of this metaphor is made by Mark Schorer:

It is an old man catching a fish, yes; but it is also a great artist in the act of actually writing about the struggle. Nothing is more important than his craft, and it is beloved; but because it must be struggled with and mastered, it is also a foe, enemy to all self-indulgence, to all looseness of feeling, all laxness of style, all soft compositities.<sup>38</sup>

The Gulf Stream which is the scene of most of the action in *To Have and Have Not* is the locale of the entire action here, bringing back to our minds Hemingway's statement about it in *Green Hills of Africa* in relation to his art: "... or when you do something which people do not consider a serious

occupation and yet you know, truly, that it is as important and has always been as important as all the things that are in fashion, and when, on the sea, you are alone with it and know that this Gulf Stream you are living with, knowing, learning about, and loving, has moved, as it moves, since before man . . ." (pp. 148–149). This theme is dramatized in *The Old Man and the Sea*.<sup>39</sup> The old man, who lives with, knows, and loves the Gulf Stream, is alone on it struggling with the marlin and the sharks and the stream. He is beaten at the end "finally and without remedy" (p. 131), and his furred sail more than ever looks "like the flag of permanent defeat" (p. 9). All the while, the stream is there, and the old man's struggles on it form a brief episode. The tourists at the Terrace "looking down in the water among the empty beer cans and dead barracudas" represent the flux of life outside the drama of the old man's heroic struggles on the stream. The contrapuntal theme, which Hemingway has kept in the background so far, finally confronts him and becomes the main subject of a novel. This theme is clearly indicated by the title of the novel.

The narrative situation is reduced to simpler terms than in *Across the River and into the Trees* with only the old man, the sea, and the denizens of the sea as characters, for the most part, and the narrative focus is almost continually on the old man except for one or two minor shifts as in the description of the Mako shark (pp. 110–111). The magnitude of the subject which involves the "one single, lasting thing—the stream" necessitates the omniscient point of view of narration. The classical unities are observed here, especially the unity of place, which is the Gulf Stream throughout the main action, and that of action, which is continuous and is remarkably free from any subordinate plot or action. The undeviating focus on the protagonist, and the intensity of action and emotional tension make the division of the novel into chapters not only unnecessary, but virtually impossible, and give it the look of a long short story rather than of a novel.

The story is completely dramatized. Hemingway presents the old man, the boy, and the sea in the beginning of the novel and allows the story to unfold itself. As the tempo of the story rises, the omniscient narrator's voice is no longer heard; it becomes the means of showing the action. We become oblivious of the narrator and concentrate on the action. This near elimination of the narrator in the interests of dramatization is an important feature of *The Old Man and the Sea*.

Santiago is a greatly improved version of Cantwell in some respects. Both Cantwell and Santiago are given to dreaming and romanticism. Santiago's dreams are similar to Cantwell's. Both dream mostly about places (*Across the River and into the Trees*, p. 123, and *The Old Man and the Sea*, p. 27). But Santiago's dreams are given greater importance and they form part of the artefact of the novel. His dreams are described in detail in pp. 26–28; in the midst of his struggle with the marlin he dreams of a vast school of porpoises,



of his village, and of the long yellow beach and the pride of lions (pp. 89–90); and the novel concludes with the old man dreaming about the lions. This quality of dreaming and romanticism is linked up with their “informed illusion”. Carlos Baker refers to Cantwell’s “informed illusion”,<sup>40</sup> and Bickford Sylvester demonstrates that it is present in Santiago also by quoting from the first dialogue between the old man and Manolin, and the omniscient narrator’s comment that “they went through this fiction every day”.<sup>41</sup>

Cantwell’s monologues to the portrait and to sleeping Renata are incongruous with his character and sound ludicrous, because his dreams and informed illusion are not properly stressed in the narrative, but only briefly referred to *en passant* in the course of dialogues. But the omniscient narrator takes care of this aspect of characterization in *The Old Man and the Sea* and tells us during the course of the first dialogue between Santiago and Manolin: “There was no cast net and the boy remembered when they had sold it. But they went through this fiction every day. There was no pot of yellow rice and fish and the boy knew this too. . . . The boy did not know whether yesterday’s paper was a fiction too” (p. 18). A little later, when the boy brings supper, wakes up the old man, and says: “I have not wished to open the container until you were ready”, the old man replies that he is ready: “I only needed time to wash” (p. 22). The boy wonders where he washed. The omniscient narrator describes his dreams in vivid detail and comments: “He no longer dreamed of storms, nor of women, nor of great occurrences, nor of great fish, nor fights, nor contests of strength, nor of his wife. He only dreamed of places now and of the lions on the beach. They played like young cats in the dusk and he loved them as he loved the boy. He never dreamed about the boy” (pp. 27–28). He never dreams about the boy because he does not have to. It is the boy in him that watches the lions on the African beach: “When I was your age I was before the mast on a square rigged ship that ran to Africa and I have seen lions on the beaches in the evening” (p. 24).

This youthful experience is permanently enshrined in his dream-memory. The boy in him thus stays with him and this explains the camaraderie between him and Manolin. Manolin is an outward manifestation of the boy in him, who remains an invisible observer of the beach and the lions and other things in his dreams. During his ordeal, Santiago expresses the wish that he had the boy with him at six different times, and the last time he repeats the wish thrice over with considerable emotion. This happens after the marlin jumps and makes him fall onto the bow with his face in the cut slice of the dolphin. He has been dreaming of the lions on the yellow beach, when the fish jumps and wakes him up rudely.<sup>42</sup> His wish for the boy is thus associated with the boy in him too—a romantic yearning for his youthful strength. This romanticism, coupled with his dreams and informed illusion, lends credence to his idiosyncratic way of talking aloud to himself, to the bird, to the marlin

and the sharks, and even to his left hand. Besides, the fact that he is all alone on the limitless expanse of waters also explains his desire to hear human voice, albeit his own, and to have some company on the skiff even if it is a bird. Santiago himself reflects on this matter when he realizes that he is talking aloud (p. 43).

It is interesting to note that Santiago stops wishing for the boy after killing the marlin, which fills him with a sense of guilt, almost fratricidal: "I am a tired old man. But I have killed this fish which is my brother and now I must do the slave work" (p. 105). But occasionally he thinks of DiMaggio, until the scavenger-sharks come and put an end to it. Thus the two images from which he has drawn his supply of inspiration and confidence are no longer available to him in the uneven struggle which follows even as his knife and club, his only weapons, are taken away from him during the course of his fight with the sharks. But he has his tiller left when his other weapons are lost and, when the tiller breaks, he can still use the splintered butt. So has he got his ability to take punishment and the Christological references continue to the end. These references originate from his sense of identity with the marlin. His thought "I wish I was the fish. . . ." is followed by "He settled comfortably against the wood and took his suffering as it came . . ." (p. 71). This is the first in a series of Calvary references. Like the protagonist of "Today is Friday", Santiago is "pretty good in there".

The mechanics of narration in this novel chiefly consist in giving the reader a clear, objective view of the drama taking place on the sea, while allowing him to involve himself emotionally with what the protagonist thinks and does. As the novel opens, the narrator tells us that Santiago, an experienced old fisherman whose hands bear the marks of handling heavy fish, has gone without a fish for eighty-four days and "everything about him was old except his eyes" which were sea-blue, cheerful, and undefeated (p. 10). This significant exception is related to the existence within Santiago of the boy, who sees the pride of lions on the African beach, and a romanticism which explains his 'informed illusion' and well understood and innocuous pretension. We learn from Santiago's reflections early in the book that he loves the sea and her denizens and is gifted with an unusual understanding and compassion. He is sorry for the small birds "that were always flying and looking and almost never finding", wonders why such delicate birds are made when the ocean can be so cruel, and then shows a rare understanding of the cruelty of the ocean also: "But the old man always thought of her as feminine and as something that gave or withheld great favours, and if she did wild or wicked things, it was because she could not help them. The moon affects her as it does a woman, he thought" (p. 33). He has overcome the weakness of anger and this is made clear even earlier when we are told by the omniscient narrator that many of the fishermen on the Terrace "made fun of the old man

and he was not angry” (p. 11). Cantwell is shown in the process of overcoming this weakness and Santiago as completely free from it. Even in his fight with the sharks there is no rancour. He fights like a soldier, admires even the *dentuso* “who is beautiful and noble and knows no fear of anything”: “I killed him in self-defence’, the old man said aloud. ‘And I killed him well’” (p. 117). When the old man does not know what he has against him (p. 51), and wonders if it is a marlin or a broadbill or a shark (p. 57), we already have the superior knowledge that it is a marlin one hundred fathoms down in the sea (p. 45). The omniscient narrator gives us a panoramic view of the vast scene as Santiago lies forward “cramping himself against the line with all of his body”, and dreams of porpoises and lions: “The moon had been up for a long time but he slept on and the fish pulled on steadily and the boat moved into the tunnel of clouds” (p. 90). As Santiago looks at the marlin constantly to make sure that it is true and is blissfully ignorant of the approaching Mako shark, we keep track of the movements of the shark as he comes up from deep down in the water, and swims fast and hard on the course of the skiff, sometimes losing the scent and picking it up again (pp. 110–111). It is this superior point of view that makes us aware of the tragic irony of Santiago who compassionates the flying fish and the bird that have little chance. We know that neither marlin nor dolphin nor shark nor Santiago has any chance against the “one single, lasting thing—the stream”.

The emotional tension, which starts rising when the old man feels the pull on the line for the first time, keeps on rising, punctuated by a brief spell of relaxation after each peak, only to be followed by a higher peak of tension. The peaks of tension throughout his struggle with the marlin find their dramatic correlative in the line joining the fisherman and the fish, which becomes so taut that beads of water jump from it and sometimes reaches the very edge of the breaking point and pulls down the old man (pp. 49, 52, 59, 61, 91, 95). For some time, Santiago’s cramped left hand also serves as a dramatic correlative for the emotional tension in the narrative. When tension reaches its last and highest peak in his struggle with the marlin, Santiago reaches a point when he does not care “who kills who” (p. 102). The brief interlude which follows the kill sees the old man lashing the marlin to his skiff, dining on shrimps and convincing himself that it has all truly happened and is not a dream. But the interlude ends when the first shark appears and from this point onwards the emotional tension shows an upward curve. The curve does not decline, as it normally does, after rising to a peak of tension here, but pauses for a while in its upward journey as the old man waits for more sharks. As the old man shouts “Ay,” like one feeling the nail go through his hands, watching the two *Galanos*, the emotional curve resumes its upward journey. It pauses briefly again when the two sharks are killed and the old man waits for more to come. In this way, the curve shows only brief pauses in its upward motion until it

reaches its climax when Santiago fights the sharks desperately, in the dark losing his knife and club and breaking his tiller, his only remaining weapon, and knows that he is beaten finally and without remedy. Carlos Baker thinks that “the basic rhythms of the novel, in its maritime sections, are essentially those of the groundswell of the sea”.<sup>43</sup> But the emotional rhythm of the novel is not a matter of mere “stress-yield, brace-relax alternation”.<sup>44</sup> Each stress is followed by a more intense stress unlike the groundswell, which does not have a steadily rising tempo punctuated by brief declensions. The basic rhythm is more like the circles made by the marlin, each circle shorter and at a higher level than its predecessor, until, at the end, the marlin rises high out of the water and hangs in the air above the old man before falling dead into the water. The narrative rhythm in *The Old Man and the Sea* is modelled on concentric circles at different, rising levels culminating in the tension rising higher and higher, without any declension but only brief pauses, until Santiago’s dark, desperate battle with the sharks is over.

Hemingway superimposes a paradox<sup>45</sup> over the obvious ironic pattern of this novel. Santiago catches a giant marlin after eighty-four days of unsuccessful fishing on the high seas only to lose most of him to the sharks. His great triumph is reduced to a miserable failure and what he brings home is only the skeleton of the magnificent fish lashed to his skiff. But this basic irony is transformed into a paradox, when we consider how the old man fights the sharks with an indomitable will and brings home his prize, though in a bad shape, realizes his “hubris”, takes the punishment and achieves true humility,<sup>46</sup> admitting to himself as well as to the boy that he is beaten (pp. 131, 136).<sup>47</sup> Material failure is transmuted into moral and spiritual triumph and Santiago suffers a victorious defeat.

The prize that he brings home finally is regret. The novel presents the spirit of man struggling not only against the marlin and the sharks, but against pride which is ultimately overcome. The contrapuntal framework of the old man contending against the vast sea and her denizens far out “beyond all people in the world” helps in giving a powerful expression to this thematic paradox. Hemingway makes a skilful use of the techniques of point of view and interior monologue in giving an effective expression to his subject. *The Old Man and the Sea* may be described as a composite expression of Hemingway’s basic contrapuntal theme, and presents the narrative technique of the post-*Green Hills of Africa* fiction at its best. The story yields to a variety of symbolic interpretations,<sup>48</sup> but these are all new dimensions which the perceptive critic sees. Even if we are prejudiced against symbolic writing and dislike the habit of reading all kinds of meanings into a writer’s work, we still find that the story, by itself, has an absorbing interest and a powerful appeal. The novel is the best example of Hemingway’s unobtrusive art which, without showing itself, does its work on the reader.<sup>49</sup> As Robert

P. Weeks points out, Hemingway confers on a seemingly routine experience affecting ordinary people a cosmic significance.<sup>50</sup> This is nowhere else more true than in *The Old Man and the Sea*.

#### NOTES

1. Atkins, pp. 72–73.
2. Lubbock, p. 257.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 257–258.
4. The first part appeared as “One Trip Across” in *Cosmopolitan* (April 1934), and the second part as “The Tradesman’s Return” in *Esquire Magazine* (February 1936).
5. Carlos Baker, p. 205.
6. *Ibid.*, Hemingway’s letters dated 26th August, 8th November, and 15th December, 1936.
7. Cf., Brett in *The Sun Also Rises*, p. 26: “When I think of the hell I’ve put chaps through. I’m paying for it all now.”
8. Carlos Baker, p. 213.
9. See E. M. Halliday, “Hemingway’s Narrative Perspective”, *Modern American Fiction*, p. 223.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Supra*, p. 39.
12. *Ernest Hemingway*, p. 15.
13. Halliday, “Narrative Perspective”, p. 224, thinks that in this novel “the technical confusion is matched by a confusion of theme”.
14. This disproves the view that in this novel “Hemingway has shifted his literary situation without changing or modifying his style and method at all”, expressed by Delmore Schwartz, “Ernest Hemingway’s Literary Situation”, *The Man and His Work*, p. 127.
15. Halliday, “Narrative Perspective”, p. 224.
16. John Donne, “The Canonization”, *The Poems of John Donne*, ed. Sir Herbert Grierson (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 14, line 23.
17. John Donne, “A Valediction: forbidding mourning”, *Ibid.*, p. 45, lines 21–24.
18. Lewis Jr., p. 170.
19. Carlos Baker, pp. 245–246.
20. Harvey Breit, “Talk with Mr. Hemingway”, *New York Times Book Review*, LV (September 17, 1950), 14, reports Hemingway as having made this remark: “I have moved through arithmetic, through plane geometry and algebra, and now I am in calculus”. Hotchner, p. 69, reports Hemingway making the same claim: “In this book I moved into calculus, having started with straight math, then moved to geometry, then algebra; and the next time it will be trigonometry”.
21. Lubbock, p. 258.
22. Lionel Trilling, “An American in Spain”, *Critiques*, p. 79.
23. Frohock, pp. 189–190.
24. Cf., Milton’s view of the relationship between man and woman. “He for God only, she for God in him”. *Paradise Lost*, Bk. IV, line 299.
25. Wilson, *The Wound and the Bow*, p. 194.
26. Halliday, “Narrative Perspective”, pp. 225–226.
27. Lisca, p. 235. Lisca notes the confusion caused by identifying the day of the Colonel’s medical examination as “the day before he came down to Venice for this shoot” in

Chapter II, and as “day before yesterday” in Chapter III, and concludes that the latter must be an oversight on the part of Hemingway or the Colonel.

28. *Ibid.*

29. Halliday, “Narrative Perspective”, p. 227.

30. Lisca, p. 236.

31. See, for example, pp. 149, 171, 211 and 213.

32. Young, *Ernest Hemingway*, p. 18, accuses Hemingway hero of acting “as though he were being interviewed”.

33. *Supra*, pp. 28–29.

34. Young, *Reconsideration*, p. 275.

35. Then must you speak

Of one that lov'd not wisely, but too well;

.....

And say besides, that in Aleppo once,

Where a malignant and turban'd Turk

Beat a Venetian and traduc'd the state,

I took by the throat the circumcised dog,

And smote him—thus

(*Complete Works*, p. 1153, Act V, Sc. II, lines 346–359).

36. Carlos Baker, p. 264, describes its intrinsic form as “that of a prose poem with a remarkably complex emotional structure, on the theme of the three ages of man”. But the artefact of the novel is not an effective expression of this or any other theme owing to the defective mechanics of narration.

37. *Supra*, p. 80.

38. “With Grace Under Pressure”, *Critiques*, p. 134.

39. The novel is based upon an old fisherman’s experience. See Ernest Hemingway, “On the Blue Water: A Gulf Stream Letter”, *By-Line: Ernest Hemingway*, p. 208.

40. Carlos Baker, p. 273, quotes the Colonel: “Every day is a new and fine illusion. But you can cut out everything phony about the illusion as though you would cut it out with a straight-edge razor” (*Across the River and into the Trees*, p. 232), and comments that “the necessary thing to retain, after the loss of any illusion, is the capacity for belief which made the original illusion possible”.

41. “‘They went through this fiction every day’: Informed Illusion in *The Old Man and the Sea*”, *Modern Fiction Studies*, XII (Winter 1966–67), p. 473.

42. Carlos Baker, p. 305, notes that the boy-image, the Di Maggio-image and the hand-game-image are used by Santiago to gain confidence, but he returns to the image of the boy most often.

43. Carlos Baker, p. 309.

44. *Ibid.*

45. Bickford Sylvester, “*The Old Man and the Sea*: Hemingway’s Extended Vision”, *PMLA* LXXXI (March 1966), 130–138, points out that Hemingway extends his essential vision, finding in paradox and symbolism the artistic means to do so.

46. See *The Old Man and the Sea*, p. 10: “He was too simple to wonder when he had attained humility. But he knew he had attained it and he knew it was not disgraceful and it carried no loss of *true* pride [Italics mine]”. The complete conquest of this pride is described in the story.

47. Cf. “‘But man is not made for defeat’, he said. ‘A man can be destroyed but not defeated’” (*The Old Man and the Sea*, p. 114). This is Santiago’s mood after killing the first shark.

48. *Supra*, Chapter V, last paragraph.

49. Sean O’Faolain, “A Clean Well-Lighted Place”, *Critical Essays*, p. 113, and Robert P. Weeks, “Introduction”, *Ibid.*, pp. 15–16, refer to this quality of Hemingway’s art as being responsible for the charge that he has no art. O’Faolain, p. 113, observes that no art can be more successful than this kind.

50. Weeks, pp. 15–16.

WIRT WILLIAMS

The Old Man and the Sea:  
*The Culmination*

*The Old Man and the Sea* was started and more than half-finished during the visit of Adriana Ivancich and her mother with the Hemingways in Cuba in late 1950 and early 1951. Making his own life imitate his art, not unlike the impotence he produced after *The Sun Also Rises*, Hemingway was delighted to fancy he generated a remarkable rebirth of creative energy from Adriana's presence. He started the novel just after Christmas and completed it on February 23, though he still had to revise to achieve its full "implicaciones." It was his fastest stretch of writing on a major book: eight weeks.

As Baker details the history of composition, the author first perceived this novel as part three of his long novel.<sup>1</sup> When another section was written immediately after, he changed this part three to part four, envisioning it as a coda to the earlier sections. But more than a year later he decided to pull it from the big book and publish it by itself. Many circumstances had pushed him glacially to this decision: the intense enthusiasm of those who read it, Leland Hayward's urging of a one-issue publication in *Life* magazine, perhaps a desire to "show" critics and reviewers with a book more powerful, less vulnerable, and easier to understand than *Across the River and Into the Trees*. But doubtless his best reason was his deep perception that the coda was so much better than the rest of the novel that it had to stand alone. In early 1952, he informed Scribner's of his decision and the long publishing

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From *The Tragic Art of Ernest Hemingway*, pp. 172–197. © 1981 by Louisiana State University Press.



process began. As part of the tetralogy, the novella had been called "The Sea in Being"; a phrase that Hemingway and Charles Scribner used casually to describe it in letters became its final, famous title. No other novel brought Hemingway such instant acclaim from both reviewers and formalistic critics, as well as bringing—at last—Pulitzer and Nobel prizes.

The rest of the long novel, finally *Islands in the Stream*, scarcely impinges upon this severed portion; almost all insights it brings to *The Old Man and the Sea* illuminate only the chronicle of composition. Yet contrarily, the shorter book powerfully illuminates the one that it left and so reduced, and *Islands in the Stream* is immeasurably strengthened when viewed in the perspective of its lost, best part.

That part has been seen as a paradigm of the human experience; in it, certainly, are compounded and transmuted its author's deepest psychic ordeals and triumphs. Consequently, it is almost bizarre to note that the work had its *donnée* in an incident told Hemingway by a friend in 1936 and casually noted by him in an *Esquire* article.<sup>2</sup> The friend had seen an old Cuban fisherman beating sharks off a big fish tied alongside his skiff. His weapon was the oar of the boat.

Immediately on publication, it was perceived that the book was layered with meanings beside the naturalistic, which was itself an overpowering universal. In attendant reviews and essays in books, Baker, Breit, Schorer, and Young considered all of the cardinal interpretations.<sup>3</sup> These were the naturalistic tragedy, the Christian tragedy, the parable of art and artist, and even the autobiographical mode. Baker saw the realistic and Christian tragedies as almost inseparable and the dominating aspect of the book; he pointed also to the art-artist and autobiographical strands. Young felt that the triumph of the work was the triumph of classical tragedy and saw it as the ultimate fusing of Hemingway's personality and art; he too saw the art-artist implication and the autobiographical elements as closely linked and noted the Christian symbology. Breit was most impressed with the universality of the realistic tragedy, and Schorer with the work as a drama of the artistic struggle, a struggle by no means confined to the author.

Most subsequent criticism, and it has been voluminous, has proceeded essentially from those lines set down so immediately. However, the possibility that the novel is a deliberately constructed, three-tiered (and possibly four-tiered) fable perhaps should be considered. The view here is that the naturalistic, the Christian, and the art-artist modes are all constructed carefully enough to stand alone, yet are so tightly laminated that no joining shows, and that the autobiographical is intuitive. Together these are, in final aspect, an unbroken unity. And the commitment to fable that Hemingway exhibited in *Across the River and Into the Trees* is consequently even more in evidence here.

Yet the first level, the naturalistic, is not a fable at all, and its realistic strength enhances and is enhanced by the fabulistic narratives. It *is* tragedy, the most complex Hemingway has written, and all the fables built upon it are equally tragic and are tragedy cast in that same design.

For it intersects many species and variations of tragedy, the Aristotelian being only one. These include: (1) the tragedy of the fatal flaw of *hubris*, in the sense of overreaching (Aristotle); (2) the tragedy of fatally conflicting imperatives or states of being (Hegel); (3) the tragedy of the fateful choice (Heilman-Bradley); (4) the special case of Aristotelian tragedy in which fatal flaw and supreme virtue are the same. As always, the different conceptions finally merge into a unity. The novella is much less weighted toward the concept that dominated the earliest novels—that man is reasonlessly punished by a hostile universe. Santiago acknowledges himself as the author of his own ruin: he knows that he has tried to go beyond the limits of human possibility in making his choices and obeying his imperative, and he knows that he must be punished for it. His overpunishment is one of the eternal of tragedy.

His serene acknowledgment of his responsibility inevitably recalls that of Oedipus in *Oedipus at Colonus*, and though there is no evidence whatever to suggest the play as even a minor source, another vital resemblance exists. Santiago is first encountered after the fall, and some time after; he is not only in a cast-down state but an accursed one. No longer champion, eighty-four days without a fish, he is “salao”—the worst kind of unlucky. His beginning in these depths makes his rise to the pinnacle of taking the fish more thrilling, the catastrophe of its loss more heartrending—and his victory of spirit inside and after that catastrophe more life-enlarging and transcendent.

The tragic action that starts in those depths clusters about certain dominant elements. These may be seen as (1) the magnitude and implicitly ordained quality of the struggle, (2) the heroism of the protagonist in that struggle, (3) the power of the forces arrayed against him and the inevitability of catastrophe once those forces are set in maximum motion, (4) the unalterable operation of a great and harmonious order. Fate as a presence is always powerfully felt, but Santiago is never displaced as the generator of his own tragedy. In the Hemingway sonata-allegro conflict of key areas, his will is home key, and all that drives against him is the opposing key.

In the necessarily rough parallel between novel and sonata-allegro, the magnitude of Santiago's struggle, its fated quality, and the sense of order that invests it serve as a rich, dense harmony between his heroic resolve and the forces arrayed against it. Intimations of all these tragic elements appear in early passages, before the collision of keys. The power of the enemy is evoked in lines that set forth Santiago's continuing undeserved punishment. He has gone eighty-four days without a fish, but there is a careful comparing to forty

days in a fishless desert, a clear link to the Eucharistic fable, and his patched sail seems the “banner of permanent defeat.”<sup>4</sup> His is old and has old scars, and he is a failure in the eyes of his fellow fishermen; he has no food until the little boy begs some for him. But immediately posed against these manifestos of cosmic hostility are those of his own heroism: his sea-blue eyes are “cheerful and undefeated” (2); he maintains a ritual of dignity against his poverty and hunger; he insists he is still strong enough for a huge fish. When the old man says with prophetic confidence that the greatest fish come in September, he is forecasting both magnitude (the size of the fish) and order (September: life’s autumn: a time of harvest).

The old man himself has perceived the working of order almost from the outset. He does not complain or indulge in even secret self-pity about his eighty-four days without a fish; he remembers that he has gone eighty-seven empty days once before. Both numbers are crucial to the Christian interpretation, but he simply feels such vacancies are part of a great cosmic cycle. When he wakes and prepares to go to sea, he follows a ritual that is his private order; he joins the larger order of community in carrying his mast to the harbor in the progress of all the fishermen, then rowing to sea to the accompaniment of the oars of his fellows. Now he is entering the largest order, the order of the sea and of the universe, and the novel clearly advances it as divine order. Yet already Santiago intuitively he will transgress that order: he knows he is “going far out” (13).

The hooking of the fish is not only the first climax of the composition: it is a passage of definition, an objective correlative, and it has a complex, if compact, unity. The keys come to full collision for the first time. They pound each other in an almost regular alternation, and in the repeated shocks many of the tragic conceptions of the work are urgently set forth.

The old man’s “yes, yes” as he feels the fish take the hook at a great depth is the signal that it has happened: the anticipated has become the reality. He has found the fish by his knowledge of the order in which he lives. He has steered intuitively by the birds and fish he sees; among the lines he has conscientiously put out at varying depths, he has been sure that one goes very deep, and that it is skillfully baited on a strong hook. And he is always aware, in his reflections, that he is “far out” (13, 21), that he is pushing the margins of that order. The awe he feels at the weight and strength of the fish is the first undisguised declaration of the magnitude of the action, a magnitude made even larger by the first major reversal of the work—the fish’s taking command of the skiff and commencing to tow it. In the old man’s soliloquy, he makes clear that he and the fish are incarnations of different states of being, that each is noble, and that each is dominated by a single imperative of existence. It is equally clear that the old man has made the choice that sets the tragic action in motion. He reiterates that it has been his decision to go far out;

to overreach, but an equally strong, if implicit, choice is his automatic and unspoken decision not to cut the line. "His choice had been to stay in the deep dark water far out beyond all snares and treacheries. My choice was to go there to find him beyond all people. Beyond all people in the world. Now we are joined together and have been since noon. And no one to help either one of us. Perhaps I should not have been a fisherman, he thought. But that was the thing I was born for" (26).

Thus the Aristotelian *hubris* of overreaching, the Hegelian war of imperatives, the fateful choice of Heilman and Bradley are all openly in operation. So are the ideas of magnitude and order, and strongly suggested is the idea of fate, not impossibly preordination. Now the battle of the keys has been fully joined, and for a time the fish is to be the dominant voice in the opposing key: it is the old man's will and strength against his. After the fish is taken, however, he will be in effect transposed to home key, and the conflict will then be between the fused nobility of the man and the fish against all the destructive forces that attempt to negate their now shared achievement.

From this point, the key battle maintains a steady intensity, rising imperceptibly, sometimes striking minor climaxes, always developing the conceptions now revealed. The motifs of magnitude-order-imperative-resolve-ordeal make a densely textured pattern in the conflict, one in which they cannot be cleanly separated from one another. Yet an arbitrary and approximate division may be useful.

Santiago knows his ordeal has begun the moment the fish demonstrates that he, not Santiago, is in control: a continuing element in Santiago's heroism is his knowledge that he is up against a force far more powerful than himself, and his attendant resolution to fight it anyway, and to the death—his own or his adversary's—"I do not care who kills who" (31). But pain by pain his sufferings mount, and they bring the naturalistic tragedy ever closer to the Christian fable: the agony of his back braced against the line (in the New Testament reference Jesus' back against the cross); the easing of the contact with a burlap sack (the cloak or robe); the raw rim his straw hat makes on his forehead under the scorching sun (the crown of thorns); the bleeding hands (the nail wounds); the forcing of his face into the raw dolphin (an act of communion); his hunger and thirst and the need to eat and drink to keep sufficient strength.

But he is always aware that the fish is suffering, too, that the fish is weakening from hunger, that the fish is as heroic as himself. In the ordeal he suffers and knows the fish is suffering, he sees them as fated brothers, as heroes foreordained to fight: in the Christian fable, they will emerge as twin Christs.

But the entire battle remains a demonstration that the old man knows that both the fish and himself are fulfilling their imperatives with absolute

fidelity. Not only is his determination to prevail constantly affirmed: so is his growing love for the fish, and an almost mystic desire to identify, to become one with him. Thus Hegelian imperatives indeed clash as external physical entities, but they have now also taken shape inside Santiago's mind as opposing components. They're of a somewhat different shape, however, as Santiago's love for the fish struggles sadly with his determination to achieve it by the death triumph. The issue is never in doubt, but it thrusts upon Santiago a whole new complex of emotions. He is sorry for the fish even as his resolve to kill him remains steady. Because of the fish's "behavior and great dignity" (41), no one is good enough to eat him. But Santiago's fateful choices have been made, and he stays with them.

The magnitude of the struggle—dimly foreseen at the outset, exploding into shape when the fish strikes and takes command of the boat—is constantly expanding. Aristotle's "action of a certain magnitude" has been triumphantly established; the old man's daring in going out so far and winning will emerge more and more clearly as Aristotle's fatal flaw after the killing of the fish; his violation of the ordained order then is to receive its inescapable punishment.

One of the beauties of the book is that steady unfolding of the order, image by image: each thing has its place in a giant symbiosis—sometimes kind, often cruel, but decreed and immutable. One by one, before the joining, Santiago has encountered its manifestations: flying fish, birds, dolphins, in their interrelationships; the Portuguese man of war, a poisonous intimation of evil; the comic turtles with their usefulness; the schools of fish in movement. Santiago notes lovingly that they are in their proper place, so to speak—even as he is proceeding to go beyond his own place. When he is being towed by the fish, having transgressed, the harshness that is part of the order is illuminated by the little bird that rests briefly on the taut line, before it proceeds landward to encounter the predatory hawks and likely its death. The episode of the two marlin fixes not only that harshness, but seems deliberately presented as a compaction of the universal fate. In retrospect, Santiago catches and butchers the female marlin "as quickly and as kindly as possible" (27), while her mate refuses to leave the area of the boat. His commitment and fidelity, like Frederic Henry's, has brought him in the end grief and loss: the universal catastrophe, says the author, comes to all living beings. It, too, is part of the order, and the order is clearly established as the governor of the world well before Santiago comes to the killing of the fish.

Order's most intense compaction may be the stars. Santiago looks at them three times to be sure of where he is, to reassure himself of the unchangeability of things, and, finally, to identify himself in a close kinship with them, "the stars that are my brothers" (92). Inevitably, the appearance of the stars at the end of each of the three parts of *The Divine Comedy* asserts

itself; though there is nothing in this work proper to support the deliberate parallel, there is an abundance of evidence in the parent novel, *Islands in the Stream*, where Dantean references are heavy. So the stars here do seem invocations of Dante, and as Dantean manifests of eternal, even divine order, they are not accidental.

The first part of the battle of imperatives ends in the killing. In that drama, the power of those commitments, the intensity of ordeal for man and fish, the magnitude of fish and event reach their greatest intensification and become most awesome when the fish jumps high out of the water as the harpoon is killing him. Both the jump and the first rush of blood are decisive incidents in the Christian fable, but they add a less explicit mystery to and thus increase the magnitude of the naturalistic tragedy; so does the circumstance of the marlin circling the boat three times, after the third sunrise, before he succumbs and takes the spear.

The fish has been a tragic protagonist, too, though an observed one, in its own Hegelian drama, and it is reasonable to consider that this secondary tragedy has had its catastrophe in the death of the fish: it has lost its fight for life. Yet the fish is to suffer mutilation even after death, and it may be equally reasonable to conclude that this mutilation is the final phase of its catastrophe and so coincides with the prolonged catastrophe of Santiago. At that point, Santiago is viewing himself and his catch as one.

The dying leap of the fish has underlined the highest point in Santiago's quest and struggle: here, he has apparently won the war of imperatives and achieved the fish. It seems for a moment that he has indeed won. But he fears he has not; knowing his violation, he already has forebodings of approaching nemesis: "If sharks come, god pity him and me" (37).

The sharks do come. Now he and the fish are to be their covictims: the fish has been transposed to home key, at last in complete unity with Santiago, and the dominating image, or phrase, in the opposing key has become the sharks. In the design of one species of tragedy, they *are* nemesis; the old man's violation of order has called them up in an obvious and inevitable stream of causation. If he had not gone further to sea than his proper limits, he would not have caught a fish big enough to tow him to sea for three days; if the fish were not so big, he could have put it, butchered, inside the boat and kept it safe from sharks; if it were not big enough to pull him to sea for three days, the sharks would not have had time and space to destroy it completely. The end was in the beginning, when he first went "too far out"; the stream of blood that went a mile into the ocean and drew the shark was simply a step in an inexorable process more than well advanced. All this is the ultimate implication of the sentence, "The (first) shark was not an accident" (56). He is not: he is an inescapable part of both natural and tragic orders.

Santiago's suffering up to this point has not yet been catastrophic in this perspective; it has been, rather, a great ordeal that he must and does withstand to achieve a triumph on that same material plane. With the coming of the first shark, his true catastrophe begins in the naturalistic mode of the story—in the Christian fable, it is hard not to consider that he has completed one cycle of crucifixion and is beginning another. Even as he is battling them with mythic courage, he reflects often on his violation, his going “out too far,” and is aware that this retribution is part of the order and ultimately just. He knows his fight is lost from the start; he strikes at the sharks “with resolution and complete malignancy” but with little hope. Yet even without hope, he is defining himself by the force of his struggle *against* catastrophe: he is not, like Jake, simply *enduring* bravely and gracefully. He is fighting back with all his personal resources, and his battle is the more heroic, and the more defining, because he knows it is lost from the start. Two incidents join catastrophe to crucifixion beyond doubt: when he sees approaching sharks, he makes a sound “as a man might make, involuntarily, feeling the nail go through his hands and into the wood” (60). And having broken knife and oar and striking with his unshipped tiller—the number three again—he feels something “break” in his chest and he spits out blood to mix with water, just as the blood from the fish so mixed. When the fish is devoured and destroyed, except for the head, the catastrophe is done and reconciliation may begin.

Santiago pronounces not only his understanding but his acceptance of what has happened to him when he acknowledges, “You violated your luck when you went out too far” (66). In spite of the great overpunishment it has inflicted on him, Santiago accepts the order whole and still pronounces it good. “The wind is our friend anyway, he thought. Then he added, sometimes. And the great sea with our friends and our enemies. And bed. . . . It is easy when you are beaten, he thought. . . . I never knew how easy it was. And what beat you, he thought. ‘Nothing’ he said aloud. ‘I went out too far’” (68). He has reflected, too, that many will worry about him, that he lives in a “good town” (65). When he sees and then enters the glow of Havana—a more decisive event in the Christian fable, where he is entering blessedness—he is entering, here, reconciliation and acceptance.

The fish itself is destroyed, but nothing can destroy his heroic action in having taken it and endured so much with it. The greatness of this triumph is underlined by the shift to the point of view of the little boy, who understands all, the measuring of the skeleton by the other fishermen, the conversation with the boy. Both the physical finality of the destruction and the ineradicable triumph of his act are possibly intimated in his final trip up the hill with his mast, his cross, in which he falls seven times. He looks back from the hill and sees by the street light the great tail and the head of the fish “with all the nakedness between” (68).

He has won the triumph of the spirit in the deed itself, though its physical substance has been destroyed. That triumph is both clarified and intensified by his plans to go out again with the boy, using renewed parts of scrapped machines as tools. He has risen from physical defeat to transcendence: we know he will always go out again as long as his body obeys him. He has already defined the core of himself and provided us with one variant of the theme of the tragedy in his pronouncement, "A man may be destroyed but not defeated" (58)—that well-known Hemingway *double-dicho* that means almost the same if it is reversed. And he has attained the final crown of the tragic hero: awareness.

The whole theme of the literal tragedy, as well as each of the other modes, is concentrated into a double final image: the skeleton of the fish, waiting to go out on the tide with the other garbage, and, shortly afterwards, the old man's dream of lions, the last line in the book. The first, so like the image of man's coffin and bull's ear in *The Sun Also Rises*, objectifies once more the impermanence of all physical beings and states. The second, the lions, suggests that deeds once done are fixed forever in memory, and not impossibly, somehow in time.<sup>5</sup> They are man's only real monument against defeat, and death.

The most visible fable beneath the naturalistic tragedy of the book is the Christian fable, and it seems so much a part of the first that division may be a violence. It, too, is unambiguously tragic, and it is so in the face of a continuing cogent argument that Christian tragedy is impossible.<sup>6</sup> Baker, Burhans, and Waldmeir have convincingly interpreted crucifixion and resurrection as the heart of this tragedy.<sup>7</sup>

However, the novel as Christian tragedy is a complex vision, and those who come to it are apt to give it final shape for themselves. The links between Santiago and Christ—literal events and things made symbolic representations of events and things in the New Testament—are as profuse as they are unmistakable. They have been deeply explored, and each reading is apt to discover new, quite real, and obviously intended correspondences. At this point, it might be enough to accept that Santiago is established as a parallel of Christ, whatever else he might be, and go on from there. A less crudely perceived function of Santiago is that he plays a double representational role. As well as Christ figure, he is also in the elaborate fable a follower of Christ, an acolyte. He is aspirant to the priesthood, to an *earned* communion with the Eucharist, and finally to a species of Christhood himself. These two roles—that of functioning Christ and of man aspiring to spiritual Christhood—ultimately fuse. As Christ figure, he repeats the ordeal of the Crucifixion; as acolyte, he invokes the apparatus and ceremony of the Catholic church in the same order, culminating with the rite of priestly ordination. Each Santiago is



indispensable to the other in the final equation of meaning. He becomes at last both human and divine, and tragic in both roles in his spiritual victory over crushing physical disaster. At the end, indeed, he stands as a figure of all men, his experience the universal human experience at its highest.

This view of the double identity of Santiago may be one of two compatible explanations as to why he completed parallel periods of trial. The first is an eighty-seven-day span without a catch, mentioned as having taken place at an earlier time; the second is his present eighty-four-day stretch of similar bad luck. The eighty-seven-day period may be the sum of Jesus' forty days in the desert, the forty days of Lent, and the seven days of Holy Week. The second, eighty-four-day period needs the three days of Crucifixion to match the first: Santiago as acolyte must pass the three-day test of his "crucifixion" to become the peer of Santiago as Christ. A simpler and yet completely complementary view is that the two long periods present the view of life as an ordeal that eternally repeats itself.

Less numerous than the linking of Santiago to his role as Christ, the situations that identify him as acolyte are nonetheless convincing. It is widely noted that his name is Spanish for St. James—a *disciple*. He eats raw fish several times, communion acts a man would perform. He invokes "the great di Maggio" (6, 37) as a man would invoke a saint. As disciple, he eats food that he himself has divided—possibly but not certainly a simultaneous appearance in both roles. When the big fish pulls him down in the skiff so his face is buried in the flesh of a raw, small fish, he is performing both an act of communion, eating a representation of the Body, and the preliminary obeisance of the priest at ordination. The washing of his hands in the ocean is like the washing of the ordinate's hands with holy water so they may be fit to administer the sacrament. The climax and culmination of the development of Santiago as ordinate is focused when he lies collapsed and prone on the bed covered with newspapers, arms "out straight and the palms of his hands up" (69). The author carefully avoids saying whether they are stretched forward in the manner of the priest at ordination, or to the side in the crucifixion posture. The ambiguity must be deliberate and it points to the simultaneity of both positions: of Christ and tested priest.

There is another Christ figure in the fable—the great fish—and his symbolic identity is developed equally systematically if less fully. He and Santiago become twin Christs, and Santiago makes increasingly more of their oneness. At the end his body becomes the Host, the Eucharist, the physical substance of the faith itself. When Santiago as acolyte brings him in and later eats his flesh, he has *achieved* the Host by ordeal and by persevering in an ever-strengthening faith.

Thus Santiago as acolyte and the fish as Eucharist have merged. Santiago and the fish as twin Christs have merged in the consummation of

the fish's death and joining to the skiff. Both Santiagos merge, certainly no later than the simultaneous image of crucifixion and ordination at the end. And the three identities have merged and inevitably become the Trinity, though the relationship between the parts is suggestive rather than precise.<sup>8</sup> It would seem that Santiago in part of his identity is Father and, in the other part, Son. The fish is the Holy Spirit.<sup>9</sup> Other interpretations are at least equally feasible.

One of the most important ideas in the story is that life is cyclical—and that the cycle is one of unending crucifixion ordeals.<sup>10</sup> It is hard not to be convinced that two cycles of crucifixion are completed by Santiago between the time he catches the fish and when he walks back up the hill with the mast. The first seems to end when the line—the cross—is removed from his back, after he takes the fish and has the mystical moment of seeing him rise in the air, followed by the more prosaic one of bringing him alongside. But when he sees the sharks, he makes the kind of sound a man might make “feeling the nail go through his hands and into wood” (60)—a crucifixion *beginning*. Yet the cross already had been on his back almost three days before it was removed. The ordeal of the sharks has to be another crucifixion, one that ends when Santiago spits out blood and it mixes with water. Here his bleeding matches the fish's bleeding into the water from the harpoon wound he has inflicted, and the gush of blood and water from Jesus' side when the soldier's lance pierces it. His acknowledgment of termination—that he is “finished” (68)—equates with Jesus' “It is accomplished,” though necessarily reversing chronology with the spear thrust.

Two crucifixions. But how many more? Certainly the fish has undergone one, completely documented symbolically right up through his ascension—the great leap in the air. But Santiago's long dry spell before he hooks the fish, the significant eighty-four fishless days and his attendant humiliation, may reasonably be seen as something of one. It has, incontestably, been a trial and an ordeal for him though not a match for the three days. And when he starts *up* the hill on his return, carrying his mast again, the implication is powerful that he is beginning yet another crucifixion. And the key to the cyclical concept is presented early in the story, when it is revealed that Santiago has earlier endured that eighty-seven-day ordeal, which he repeats in the story, and, it seems, will go on repeating forever.

The last few pages have several culminating images that focus themes, each a powerful example of meaning through poetic concentration, but none more powerful than that of life as a cycle of trial by pain. The first is that of Santiago ascending the hill with the mast. This is as agonizing as his first trip with it was routine, and itself becomes a minidrama of the entire crucifixion, though its more obvious reference is to Jesus' identical task. But an image within the passage is even more concentrated and thematic than

the whole. In a pause, he looks back and sees the skeleton of the fish still lashed to the skiff. The fictional camera has frozen on one Christ with his cross on his shoulder, another a maimed corpse bound to his. Beginning and end are juxtaposed: Christ starting to Golgotha, Christ dead and lashed to the cross. The image is at once an illumination of the commonality of all living creatures, the crucifixion as the shaped pattern of life experience for all, the cyclical and unending nature of that experience. It even suggests the simultaneity of time.

The next major image in the section is one already cited—of Santiago with his arms so ambiguously extended—in which both human and divine in Christ and, by extension, in all men is declared. It is followed by the view of the fish's bones become floating garbage, with its intimation that all that is physical is doomed to physical destruction, and that only acts and the memory of acts survive. In the last image of all, the last line of the book, the lions of the dream are as lions have always been, an emblem of life at its strongest and finest, suggesting youth, great deeds, sometimes wonderful to dream about and to long *to return to*, to possess again. In this context, they make a splendid resurrection symbol, unlikely as they might seem for it. Just as, a few moments earlier, the plans of Santiago and Manolo to use part of a junk-yard Ford to make a new lance also make a fine miniature of renewal and resurrection: the ultimate triumph over mortality.

The Christian base of the tragedy has developed at length the theme that the Christ experience is the concentrated representation of all experience—and that that experience is tragic. All who follow their appointed mission with total commitment and dedication will suffer the irreversible catastrophe but will also achieve a spiritual, transcendent victory over it. And they will come through tragedy to a knowledge of their unity with the universe and know that all things are only different aspects of that unity. All is ordered; God exists; through suffering man becomes a part of him.

The art-artist fable has less urgent and unmistakable identifications than the Christian. Rather, it declares itself by the cumulative force of its connotations. And like both the naturalistic and Christian modes, it functions as tragedy by itself, though naturally all are stronger perceived as one unified tragic work than as an addition of separates.

Seen as such a separate, the art-artist drama, however, is simple and direct. The fisherman is the artist, fishing is art, and the fish the art object.<sup>11</sup> Santiago the archetypal fisherman becomes Santiago the archetypal artist. Even more uniquely, this fish is the great work of art, and Santiago's struggle with it is the agony of the artist attempting to achieve the masterpiece. Forces destructive of art inevitably mutilate the masterpiece and block the artist from deserved recognition. But he has already won his triumph of the self

over this material catastrophe in the performance of the great artistic act, and he reinforces it in his achievement of serenity in his abiding creative vision. The act is indestructible, and transcendence is built into it.

Simultaneous with this generic mythos is an autobiographical one, which makes Santiago a projection of Hemingway himself. It is only half-developed, sometimes almost ostentatiously visible, finally almost submerged in the larger design. That it may be intuitive and unplanned simply makes it more intriguing. In this, Santiago is Hemingway, once the greatest of all in his *métier* but now fallen and derided; Hemingway of scrupulous craft *and* burning personal vision; Hemingway, who has not been destroyed by his economic activity—journalism—but has used it both to survive and to nourish his real work; Hemingway, who will come back from scorn and again defeat all others with a master achievement; Hemingway, who considers he has done it and sees his just prize wrested from him by a hostile reviewing establishment; Hemingway, who is still the tragic hero, serene in the knowledge of his feat and comforted by his vision. So Santiago is thus Hemingway as artist—and champion—as well as the universal artist.<sup>12</sup>

This pattern is absorbed by the larger generic pattern, however, and that larger one makes certain fairly distinct assertions about the process of art and working at art. These may be conveniently, if a little Teutonically, seen as grouping into a few cardinal categories.

*Imperative and isolation.* Both of these are first sounded in the very first line—Santiago fishes, and he fishes alone—though their import begins to emerge forcefully only when the voyage begins. At sea, he reflects repeatedly that he was “born” to be a fisherman and that he must think of no other purpose; when the fish is towing him far out to sea, he reflects that he has no help in the challenge of the masterpiece except what comes from himself, and the surrounding sea reminds him of his aloneness. He asserts that he will prove his commitment to his work again though he has proved it many times before, and he reiterates his determination to follow the imperative—execute the masterpiece, kill the fish—until death. His *affirmation* is stronger after he has glimpsed the awesome shape of the masterwork.

Nor does his fidelity ebb after he has executed the great work—tied the fish alongside; it is simply directed against new challenges. He must try to protect the work against those forces that would destroy it, and possibly all art, and he reiterates that hopeless determination as he battles the sharks. These represent not only reviewers and critics here but imperception, exploitation, that whole part of the apparatus of cynicism that attaches itself to each of the arts and will destroy it if unchecked.

And the artist strong enough to obey the imperative will be strong enough to perceive an alleviation of the aloneness, though it will not be provided by other men until the task is over. It appears, rather, in an awareness of the unity

of the cosmos and all living things in it, which comes gradually to the striver in the depths of his self-imposed exile for his art. Santiago acknowledges as he sees a flight of ducks against the sky that he knows “no man . . . [is] ever alone on the sea” (32); later, the physical part of his masterpiece destroyed in total catastrophe, he can embrace the very element which, in the largest sense, destroyed it: the sea itself. He affirms himself at one with the sea, the wind, the town where he lives, the destroyed masterpiece itself. And though he grieves for this ruined master work, he appears to have attained the deep, ultimate happiness of the noblest tragic hero, in his role as artist as well as in his other identities. He knows both that the great creation will always be his, and that he himself is as ultimately responsible for its destruction as he was for its execution.

*Craft, method, and luck.* The first two are constantly in view in Santiago’s careful preparation before he goes out—his systematic check of his gear and provisions, the care he gives to the smallest tasks, from stowing his gear to baiting the hooks—and is crystallized by his careful maintenance of his lines at exact depths and positions. He keeps them more precisely than anyone else, he reflects—not impossibly the author’s tribute to the author as craftsman. He has not had luck, but he prefers skill to luck.

Yet from the first Santiago acknowledges the supreme importance of that other element, luck. He is “unlucky,” the boy is on a “lucky” boat, eighty-five may be a “lucky” number. Is luck the same as that psychic indefinable, inspiration? It would seem not. Santiago speaks later of having violated his luck when he went “outside too far.” Yet the shark is carefully presented as an inevitability, not an accident, and the catastrophe as a pure cause-and-effect event. Perhaps he means his *hubris* destroyed the luck that would have protected him from the harshnesses of order. For luck seems to lie outside the orderly world, to be almost a caprice of the cosmos in action, as Tyche, the goddess of luck, was considered to be essentially unrelated to any other force, even the Fates, a force apart from everything, by those Greeks of the first century B.C.

Yet luck has some kind of relationship with inspiration, the text suggests. It is luck that may reward skill, in the example of the carefully maintained lines, and luck may manifest itself in inspiration, or idea, *donnée*, subject.

It may manifest itself there, or anywhere, but it is not the same thing. Inspiration, imagination, creativity—whatever it is named—is one of the two prime and almost equal partners in the hard labor of art. Imagination and discipline-craft are fixed as such partners in the image of the two hands and the fish they work together to bring in (Baker’s Trinity image). Santiago proclaims all three brothers: masterpiece, craft, and imagination. But which hand is which? That ancient maxim, “the left hand is the dreamer,” suggests the left as the delicate and unpredictable, even uncontrollable component

of imagination, with the stronger and ever faithful right as discipline and skill. Santiago's denunciation of the left as "traitor" reinforces that view, and it is the right hand with which he wins the hand wrestling championship. The left might even be characterized as the unconscious and the right as the conscious.

The powerful black man Santiago beats in the "championship" wrestling contest with his right hand seems pretty obviously the devil in the Christian tragedy, but what is he here? Less clear: perhaps the despair and doubt of both self and the validity of art that assails every artist from time to time, perhaps autobiographically one writer whom Hemingway felt he had to beat and did beat to become "champion." Who? The guess here is Faulkner, but it may be a bad guess; the whole concept has to be avowed as tenuous, and all nominations consequently speculative.

*The mysterious and the miraculous.* There is something in the making of the superwork that lies beyond that partnership of craft and inspiration, however, and even beyond the capricious and not at all holy element of luck. This is the awesome benediction of mystery and miracle; the artist's own exertions, however wise and strenuous, can only take him so far. Then the great work is *bestowed* or it is not.

The first intimation of mystery impending appears, dim and precise yet with unmistakable connotation, as Santiago starts out in his skiff. The silence of the sea, broken only by the sound of unseen oars stroking, is an evocative context for Santiago's reflection that he is going "far out"; in addition to its hubristic declaration, it suggests the start of a voyage into the unknown, into mystery. These notes intensify, first subtly, and then directly and powerfully when the fish takes the bait. Santiago's prayer-like invocations more directly belong to the Christian story but also strongly point to the emerging aspect of the miraculous in art. The fish is "unbelievably heavy" (21), "of great weight" (22), and Santiago marvels at his size as he envisions him "moving away in the darkness" (22). The mystery of the bestowed masterpiece is constantly deepened. When Santiago is actually taken in tow by the fish, the work assumes control of its creator; for four hours he does not see it, and he thinks of the fish as "wonderful and strange" (25), of a great and mysterious age. He reflects that the fish chose to stay in "deep dark water" and that he found him "beyond all men" (26); their joining is thus hinted as a kind of miracle as well as mystery, in the art parable as in the others. These aspects are constantly strengthened by his reflections on the size and nobility of the marlin and flower in the great death leap, the Ascension image in the Christian mode. The "great strangeness" (55) he feels in remembering it and the dimmed eyesight that accompanied it, make that sight a different kind of holy vision for the artist: this is the grail of the achieved masterpiece he has always sought. It may be glimpsed and briefly possessed if it has been truly earned, but it is not

permanent and it cannot be shared—not even by fellow artists who can at least understand its magnitude and the agony it represents.

*The emerging oneness of artist and masterpiece.* Even greater than the agony of execution is the agony of the destruction of the achieved masterpiece, for by this time, creator and work have become one. They have been “brothers” during their battle; when the fish is tied to the boat, they almost immediately become a single entity. Which is bringing the other in, he wonders; when the sharks mutilate the fish, he feels as though their teeth are ripping him. Later he tells his sorrow to the fish; by going too far out—creating too big a work—he has destroyed them both. This may be the climax of the development of their ever-tightening oneness. The thematic implication is instantly perceived: in the execution of the masterpiece, the masterpiece ultimately becomes part of the artist. What is inflicted upon it is inflicted upon him. Here, Backman says, Hemingway’s fusion of active and passive, slayer and slain, finds its strongest expression.<sup>13</sup>

*Fate of the masterpiece.* The masterpiece is always maimed by the events that are subsequent to its creation: that is, it can never be completely and truly perceived by any but the artist. It never survives intact in the dignity and honor it deserves. Developed directly by the battle and its outcome, this theme is culminated by the last image of the fish: a skeleton with a tail and fin that is now floating garbage, awaiting total oblivion by the tide.

But though the masterpiece itself may be destroyed (by hostility, misunderstanding, and misrepresentation, maiming critical attacks), the achieving of it cannot be. The execution of the work of art is not only a performance but a fact: though it may not survive in space, it will survive in time and in the greatest dimension, memory. This is one of the implications of the awe of the other fishermen at the size of the fish’s skeleton and their understanding of Santiago’s ordeal which attended its taking.

Another is that the achievement of the work of art is understood by the elect, the brothers in the art, and it exists as example and inspiration to them. Concomitantly, the nonelect, those who do not know, in their obtuseness confuse the achievement of the work with the destruction of it: the destroyers are honored, the creator shunned. This last, bitter irony is rendered in the comment of the tourist gazing at the ruined fish: “I didn’t know sharks had such handsome beautifully formed tails” (72).

But for the true artist, for him who has reached awareness in his suffering and achieving, all of this recedes into unimportance. For him, only one thing endures and is of final significance. This is his vision, from which this work and all the artist’s work comes, and it is projected in the last line, “The old man was dreaming about the lions” (72).

The fate of the work, as caught in the destruction of the fish by the sharks, is one of those phases of action that inevitably seems to belong in

the autobiographical parable, too. An early view had it that the fish was this very book and the sharks were the critics, an inaccurate precognition since they had not had a chance at it during its composition and liked it when they did. The better surmise probably is that they suggest the undervaluation that Hemingway felt reviewers had accorded him since *In Our Time*, as his 1927 poem "Valentine" demonstrates. The only real single possibility is *Across the River*, as Young suggested in 1966.<sup>14</sup> Hemingway prized it and was dismayed at what he felt was a critical failure of perception toward it. A reasonable hypothesis is that Hemingway fused the fate of *Across the River* with that of the book-in-being.

*The artistic vision.* The lions that are decisive symbols in the other modes of the story are equally strong as a synthesizing and culminating image in the tragedy of art. The dream of lions is a great sustaining force for the old man as he lives in failure and charitable scorn; he summons them in his most agonized hours during his ordeal of execution, and at the end they supply the final definition to this layer of tragedy as to the others. His great work as a physical entity has been destroyed. His achievement has not only been ignored and unperceived by those who do not know, but these give credit for achievement to the very ones who have destroyed it: the tourists think the remains of the fish are those of a shark, and comment on the shark's beauty. But Santiago does not care: he has achieved the sublime indifference of the artist to everything but his deepest vision of beauty and life and of his work in relation to them. It is unshakable and enduring and will always renew him. He is dreaming about the lions: he is warming himself with the artistic vision. One would judge that this is Hemingway's idealized self-portrait in the crucial dimension—not himself as he knew he was, but himself as he knew he ought to be, the artist as he ought to be.

*Critics, criticism, and the artist.* The sharks are forces of destruction in every fable of the book but they are splendidly unlimited in each. Yet, as with the lions and the other images in the complex symbology, their unclosed, larger identities also enclose quite exact lesser identities. Thus at the first level they are all the unnameable elements of a hostile universe that crush man, but they are more narrowly nemesis; in the Christian tragedy, they are all the forces against Christ, but touches link them uniquely with the Pharisees; here, they are the huge conglomerate of the forces that assault all art: exploitation, neglect, public indifference and ignorance, self-doubt, despair—and of course the reviewers and critics. That much advertised last identity is not "wrong," but it is only one part. Still, it is the most interesting part, apparently to the author and literate public as well. And certain aspects of the author's attitude toward the sharks as reviewers-critics have not been so widely observed as his hostility.

The hostility, in fact, is directed, and carefully directed, toward only the "scavenger" sharks—the reviewers who are frantic to play follow the leader.



The first shark, the Mako, is accorded a scrupulous if unloving accolade: he is as beautiful as the marlin except for his jaws, he fears nothing, he is built “to feed on all the fish in the sea” (45). This authentic, super critic is the equal of the artist but is different in function, a differentiation that is underscored by the resemblance of his teeth to “cramped” human fingers (the cramping suggesting a freezing of the creative function). Exercising his admittedly “noble” purpose, he attacks bravely. But Santiago has only contempt for those scavengers who can only follow their better and bite the fish “where he had already been bitten” (61). Thus, the great critic is as great as the great artist—but those who can only follow him and each other are cowards and unworthy.

Sharks more diffusely suggest the entire critical activity: when they are dismembered, stripped, and processed, as critics break down a creative work, at the “shark factory” (3), they make a stink that permeates the bay. Yet Santiago makes a bow to the critical activity when he acknowledges taking shark liver oil regularly; it helps the eyes, as a little pure criticism helps the artist’s vision.

*The economic, physical sustenance of the artist.* This is the most quotidian of all the considerations developed here and it becomes most interesting when the author uses it in a candid autobiographical representation of the relationship between journalism and literature. Yet careful justice is done to the more general parallel: the old man is artist, as he was Christ at the Last Supper, when the boy brings him the gift of food to strengthen him for the next day’s fishing. For after his long bad luck Santiago cannot buy for himself, and without physical nourishment, the spiritual labor of art cannot be performed. The repeated rituals of eating smaller fish in the boat, more important as communion ceremonies in the Christian fable, here stress the need of continuing physical and economic sustenance for the artist in his most elevated creative endeavor. They may be more interesting, however, as a suggestion that the artist proceeds from his own lesser work to the greater, gaining strength through the smaller for the creation of the larger. And among Santiago’s reflections on the fish are many with a definite economic facing. He wonders if taking the fish were a sin, though it will keep him alive and “feed many people” (59). He thinks of the money the fish will bring in the market, enough to feed him through the winter. And he declares that he did not kill the fish just to stay alive himself—his imperative to create and pride in work were infinitely stronger than economic necessity.

Yet the biggest image of the economic activity—as the sharks were of the reviewers and critics—is the turtles, and within this generic representation there is a more piquant one of Hemingway himself. More generally, turtles and anything pertaining to them are objectifications of the economic process—the turtles themselves, their eggs, “turtling,” and turtle boats. Broadly speaking,

the artist must resort to some activity or practice to support himself—hiring out on turtle boats that catch them or eating their eggs. Sometimes this lower activity not only keeps the artist alive but instructs and tempers him for his real work: the practice of art—catching big fish. But the turtles are both larger and infinitely more provocative when seen as objectifications of journalism and even of journalists in Hemingway's own career. When the boy tells Santiago that Santiago's years on the turtle boats did not hurt his eyes, Hemingway is declaring that his stretches of journalism did not hurt his own artistic vision. When Santiago speaks of eating turtle eggs to keep himself strong in the winter, the author is not only speaking of the physical nourishment but of the experience that can be fashioned into art which journalism has given him; the figure recalls certain lines from the introduction to his collected short stories, "In going where you have to go, and doing what you have to do, and seeing what you have to see, you . . . blunt the instrument you write with." But the instrument can always be rewhetted, he contends. When Santiago says he feels no mysticism about turtles, Hemingway is saying he feels none about the newspaper or magazine business, as many former newsmen profess to do. He expresses friendly contempt for the ordinary journalists, the "stupid loggerheads" (18), but admiration for the excellent journalists—i.e., his good friends in the ranks—by praising green turtles and hawksbills for their "elegance and speed and great value" (18).

So the book demonstrates overwhelmingly the author's turn toward fable that became markedly evident in *Across the River and Into the Trees*. And these layers of the story are constructed to the measure of many kinds of tragedy, that fuse as the levels of the work fuse. Whether one considers this novel to be Hemingway's best or not depends on what he expects from a novel. But none is more powerful as an expression of the tragic, and none should define him so finally as one of fiction's most powerful, and subtle, prophets of the tragic vision.

Certain dim resemblances between *The Old Man and the Sea* and *Oedipus at Colonus* have been noted: they are purely emotional, tonal, and—it seems safe to say—totally accidental. Like Oedipus, Santiago begins in a cast-down, even an accursed state, but he has achieved humility and serenity. The ordeal he experiences only confirms him in that humility and serenity, which carry him to an ultimate and transcendental triumph—again like Oedipus. That is all there is between the two, and there is nothing in the record to suggest nor it is suggested here that the earlier work had any influence whatever on the later. Yet, paradoxically, "A Man of the World," a short story published five years after the novel, seems to have been modeled directly if in a sardonic fashion on the play: situation matches situation, incident pairs with incident.

And the biggest part of the paradox lies in the difference in tone. Instead of the note of loftiness, the story strikes one of black comedy, even of coarseness and brutality, through most of its duration. One work is larger than life, the other perhaps smaller. Still in the end it sounds something of the same theme as *The Old Man and the Sea*, though admittedly a little more that of *The Sun Also Rises*: that we define ourselves by our confrontation of catastrophe—or, better here, the existential void.

The likenesses and the polarities are sufficient, perhaps, to justify an indulgence and look at the story as a kind of satyr play to the larger tragic work—so long as one knows perfectly well he is justifying an indulgence. It seems likely that Hemingway never thought of them that way.

The strategic foundation of the story is the way its tone plays against the *Colonus* structure that is its narrative foundation. The protagonist Blindy is foul-smelling, a slot-machine cadger and drink-moocher, repulsive to all perceptions. People in the bar avoid him. The appearance of his pus-packed eyesocket, and the details of the fight in which he lost it are almost subhuman in their coarseness, a coarseness that has turned many of the author's most sympathetic critics away from the story. Yet at the end there is, simply in retrospective, the absolutely classic Aristotelian reversal: the retelling of the maiming fight with Joe Sawyer suddenly invests Blindy with dignity; he is called Blacky again; he is invited to sleep in the backroom of the bar. His crude declaration—that he has made and is making the most of his condition and his acceptance of responsibility for it—heightens the affirmation. He has won what might be seen in a suitable context as tragic triumph—but it has taken place here in a deceptively surreal world of dark comedy. The victory thus is Sartrean; here, it is not tragic but a warped, crazy-mirror reduction of the tragic idea.

The linkings to Oedipus begin early. As blind as the one time king of Thebes, Blindy declares, "I been on lots of roads. . . . And any time I may have to take off and go on some more";<sup>15</sup> he is obviously providing the clue link between Oedipus' unending journey, led by his daughter-sister, on the roads of the world. When he says to the man at the slot machine, "Your night is my night" (65), he is handing us the parallel to the Delphic prophecy that Oedipus would bring luck to those who helped him. The sacred wood, a forest of sorts, at *Colonus* is the place of final confrontation in the play; with tongue deep, deep in cheek, surely, the author has Blindy drink the whiskey, Old Forester. As Theseus offers sanctuary to Oedipus, so Frank the bartender tells Blindy he can sleep in the back of the bar.

The decisive, thematic pairing occurs in statements made by principals near the end of each work. Oedipus proclaims that his great suffering and noble nature make him know that all is well. In the lower-than-life matching

utterance, Blindy declares that he has earned his life, sorry as it may be, and he is happy with it.

This comes after the recounting of the fight with Sawyer the years before. Each has maimed the other hopelessly, and it may be one of Hemingway's more notable feats that for the moment it counts, he can make us accept the brutality as a self-defining action. In fact, Blindy asserts his *right* to his responsibility and self-definition: "Only just don't call me Blacky any more. Blindy's my name. . . I earned it. You seen me earn it" (66). Finally, in what is almost a grotesque played by gargoyles, we see a strange version of the human triumph enacted. Blindy has met catastrophe and the existential void, and they are both his.

One of the real significances of the repelling, morbidly intriguing little story is its clear illumination of one of the really new developments in Hemingway's work after 1950: his use of literary source. It showed in *Across the River and Into the Trees*, could be perceived in the New Testament base and Dantean references to the stars in *The Old Man and the Sea*, and was to flower in *Islands in the Stream*—which was written before the story.

Apparently for the first time here, he uses the narrative structure of a literary masterwork as his own base, as other writers used pure myth. Yet the chronology of the actual writing of his last work makes plain that he was essentially picking up where he left off in what was to be published later as *Islands in the Stream*—that he was, in this respect, simply going a bit further.

#### NOTES

1. Carlos Baker, *Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story* (New York: Scribner's, 1969), 488–90.
2. Ernest Hemingway, "On the Blue Water," *Esquire*, V (April, 1936), 184–85.
3. Carlos Baker, "The Marvel Who Must Die" and "The Ancient Mariner," in Carlos Baker, *Ernest Hemingway: The Writer as Artist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 288–328; Harvey Breit, review of *The Old Man and the Sea*, in *Nation*, CLXXV (September 6, 1952), 194; Mark Schorer, "With Grace Under Pressure," *New Republic*, October 26, 1952, p. 20; Philip Young, *Ernest Hemingway: A Reconsideration* (State College: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1966), 121–33.
4. "The Old Man and the Sea," in *Three Works of Ernest Hemingway* (New York: Scribner's, 1962), 1.
5. Baker, in *Hemingway: The Writer as Artist*, 308–309, sees the lion as memories of Santiago's youth, functioning in a "brace-relax . . . systolic-diastolic movement" with his exertions. Young, in *Hemingway: A Reconsideration*, 127–218, says that on the "public" (presumably naturalistic) level of the story the lions are imprecise evocations of the "poetry" in Santiago and his nostalgia for his youth.
6. Lawrence Michel, "The Possibility of a Christian Tragedy," reprinted in Lawrence Michel and Richard B. Sewall (eds.), *Tragedy: Modern Essays in Criticism* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963), 210–33.
7. Baker, *Hemingway: The Writer as Artist*, 299–304; Clinton S. Burhans, Jr., "The Old Man and the Sea: Hemingway's Tragic Vision of Man," reprinted in Carlos Baker (ed.),

*Hemingway and His Critics* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1961), 259–68; Joseph Waldmeir, “Confiteor Hominem: Hemingway’s Religion of Man,” reprinted in Carlos Baker (ed.), *Ernest Hemingway: Critiques of Four Major Novels* (New York: Scribner’s, 1962), 144–49.

8. Baker, *Hemingway: The Writer as Artist*, 299.

9. Waldmeir, “Confiteor Hominem,” 145.

10. Baker, in *Hemingway: The Writer as Artist*, suggests the cyclical conception.

11. Schorer, in “With Grace Under Pressure,” 20, suggests the novel as a parable of the universal artist as well as an autobiographical objectification.

12. Young, *Hemingway: A Reconsideration*, 126–27, 275. Young feels the central, perhaps the exclusive element in the art–artist dimension is Hemingway’s view of himself as artist.

13. Melvin Backman, “Hemingway: The Matador and the Crucified,” reprinted in Baker (ed.), *Hemingway and His Critics*, 245–58.

14. Young, *Hemingway: A Reconsideration*, 275.

15. Ernest Hemingway, “A Man of the World,” *Atlantic Monthly*, CC (November, 1957), 64–66.

JAMES H. JUSTUS

*The Later Fiction:  
Hemingway and the Aesthetics of Failure*

Man as victim in a world at war is, arguably, the fundamental twentieth-century vision, and its most compelling spokesman is Hemingway. If he was not the first American writer to appreciate this permanent condition—it is already a settled conviction in Dreiser, Crane, and London at the turn of the century—he was the first to articulate it without the pretension of intellectual theorizing, instinctively aware even in the early 1920s that to fit the disturbing truth into a framework of theoretical structures was itself a kind of softening of the truth. And despite the perceptible shift in emphasis from the buttoned-up stoicism of Jake Barnes and Frederic Henry to the acknowledged need for communal co-operation in Harry Morgan and Robert Jordan, the original insights and the usable metaphors remained the same in the work of the 1930s and after: in a life of warfare, man suffers.

Indeed, nothing in the later work can support the contention occasionally voiced that Hemingway's 'growth' can be traced in his sequence of protagonists, that there is a steady ennobling process, from the nihilistic entrapment of man to his victory through tragic transcendence. For all the bathos of one and the noble self-sacrifice of the other, Harry Morgan and Robert Jordan are linked with the earlier protagonists in trying to fight through delusion and personal inadequacies to some clear picture of the reality of inevitable loss. And lest we accept too readily the notion of a mellow

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Hemingway in *The Old Man and the Sea*, the rhythms of mythic parallels, the quasi-biblical diction, and the stark Homeric courage of its protagonist cannot disguise the central fact of the fable: the grand victory is brief. Santiago *loses* the great fish, and for all the skeletal proof of his catch, he is still an old man with only residual skills, a failure who must retreat to dreams of youth and vigour. What we learn from Hemingway in the 1920s is what we learn from Hemingway throughout his career: the fact of failure is the one clear-eyed and undeviating purchase on reality in the midst of falsifying stratagems, poses, masks, and those defensive bursts of justification that weave together author and authored, life and art. Man is doomed to failure; he must run a race whose outcome is already known; 'they' who finally 'get you' are often not indifferent but apparently malevolent; man must live with violence and pain in a sustained anguish that comes from a realization of his only temporary survival; fear is a constant, and while courage is possible, heroism is not. There is not a single Hemingway protagonist who is not wounded, sometimes physically so, always psychically. Because loss is their permanent condition, these protagonists are prey to nostalgia and fantasy and reconstituted versions of the self, dodges and substitutionary acts that somehow function as temporary comfort and assurance.

A catalogue of Hemingway's characters from Nick Adams to Thomas Hudson, as well as the narrative situations that document their difficult adjustment to lives that are only minimally self-directed, shows a remarkably consistent record of human failure. In addition to a physical disability that he knows is permanent, Jake Barnes betrays his own best instincts and violates his own carefully devised code of personal conduct. Nick Adams never quite recovers from the traumas of childhood violence, the suicide of his father, and his own wounding in Italy. The rain that symbolizes the death of his lover and child is also Frederic Henry's own symbolic future of unrecoverable loss. Harry Morgan is one of the spiritual and economic Have-Nots whose general failure is merely ratified by his formal death in a hail of bullets. And if Robert Jordan is, according to Philip Young,<sup>1</sup> the first of Hemingway's protagonists to conquer his 'incapacitating nightmares', we should not forget the end of his story; our final glimpse of him, a peripheral figure in the failed struggle for Spanish freedom, is of supine man whose final act is gestural rather than definitive. What he loses are his love, his cause, and his life. While much of Colonel Cantwell's last phase is marked by reevaluation, reminiscence, and rewriting of the record to strengthen his place in it, the picture is one of sad depletion and the often quirky energy of the dying. The heart of Santiago's spiritual victory would seem to be sheer endurance of the fact of failure. And the evidence of the short fiction is similar. The protagonists in the most memorable stories—'The Snows of Kilimanjaro', 'The Killers', 'The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber', 'The Undefeated', 'The Gambler, the Nun,

and the Radio'—are caught in a context in which they or a third party engage in a recital of their failures or where victory is brief.

Given such a grimly consistent vision, we may well ask what *are* the possible counters to it? The work of the late Hemingway, like the early, reveals *no* satisfactory alternatives to the vision of failure—indeed, now that we have available the biography of, letters from, and assorted memoirs about this intensely autobiographical writer, we might well suspect even darker hues in that vision in the later fiction. That this is not the case is the triumph of Hemingway the artist over Hemingway the man. In both *The Old Man and the Sea* and *A Moveable Feast*, the writer who always complained of the difficulty of writing invented and managed to maintain the pace of certain rhetorical rhythms which in the first instance dignify and elevate the fable of failure and in the second disarm the reader's instinctive distaste for what the author reveals of his own selfishness, competitiveness, and mean-spiritedness. Style, that is, becomes one strategy for countering content.

In a sense, *The Old Man and the Sea* is now a lesser achievement than it was once thought to be because of the transparency of the device. The choice of a simple old fisherman who is down on his luck but who still proudly exercises his long-used skills is an explicit dalliance with sentimentality, a situation containing a ready-made, built-in poignancy not unlike that found in the pages of *The Reader's Digest* or *Guideposts*: in short, the inspirational value—the human spirit triumphing over adversity—is inherent in the very subject itself. What remained for Hemingway was the manner of telling, a style simultaneously detailed and generalized, calling upon his own specific familiarity with Gulf Stream fishing and a heightened form of the kind of translated English he had brilliantly but sporadically used (mostly for comic effects) as early as *The Sun Also Rises*. It is no wonder that *The Old Man and the Sea* was praised extravagantly when it appeared in 1952, and that the best critics correctly perceived that the victory was one of style. That, of course, had been the single greatest achievement of the early Hemingway, too—the forging of an uncluttered style that became the most influential of the twentieth century. Now, in the Santiago story, the stripped-down diction, the simple syntax, the repetitions, and the use of the conjunctions for rhythmical purposes had been redirected away from the blunt, tough-guy mannerisms into something akin to the scriptural.

But anterior to a famous literary style that gives a patina of success to the sequential fables of failure is an equally famous personal style that provides the illusion of success within a vision in which failure is a given. The story of Hemingway's art is the spectacle of failure both personal and existential. The story of Hemingway's career as man and artist is the search for techniques to neutralize if not to overcome failure. No protagonist wins, since none can win, but the famous dichotomy between the Hemingway hero



and the Hemingway code hero, the imaginative splitting apart of *The Way It Is* and *The Way It Should Be*, is one obvious means for handling the fact of failure. Figures such as Manuel Garcia, Ole Andreson, Rinaldi, Santiago, Pedro Romero—and the Ernest Hemingway of the public press—are flesh-and-blood exempla who show how, in the face of certain defeat, man's only nobility consists in personal conduct, an integrity that allows him to face his defeat with dignity.

This personal style in its largest sense is anterior and analogous to the crafted precision of Hemingway's literary style. In this respect the competing values of style and vision become an important source of the undeniable vitality that even readers not notably sympathetic to Hemingway admit they find in the best of his work. What we often note in the Hemingway hero is a dramatized instance of that tension between style and vision, a structuring of human responses into aesthetic patterns that constitute creative counters to the gloomy fact of failure. His projected but never completed *Book of the Sea* is neither the best nor the worst of Hemingway's work, but even in its posthumous, edited state it reveals considerable interplay between vision and craft; and as 'late Hemingway' it may illustrate some final creative statement in that interplay which from the beginning characterizes its author's approach to his art—and to his life.

One measure of the decline in Hemingway's creative energy for the last fifteen years of his life is the gap between the works he ambitiously planned and worked on and those he actually completed. In Carlos Baker's description of the unfinished novel Hemingway called *The Garden of Eden* (some of it cannibalized for *Across the River and Into the Trees*) we find that to the usual difficulty of composition was added the apparent loss of authorial judgement generally.<sup>2</sup> Personal engagement with his subject in *The Dangerous Summer* was no guarantee against slack, self-indulgent writing, embarrassingly evident even in the heavily edited excerpts that *Life* (but not Charles Scribner) saw fit to publish.<sup>3</sup> Embedded in the 'Cuba' segment of *Islands in the Stream* is what may well be the author's own self-mocking gloss on his failure to make anything of another large project. In his preparations for his day off in Havana, after a lengthy time at sea, a fretful Thomas Hudson asks himself: 'What the hell is wrong with you? Plenty is wrong with me, he thought. Plenty. The land of plenty. The sea of plenty. The air of plenty.'<sup>4</sup> For several years Hemingway planned a grand trilogy of novels with the vague rubric of 'Land, Sea, and Air'. Within that plan, the *Book of the Sea* itself consisted of four independent novels, three of them devoted to Thomas Hudson and a briefer fourth to Santiago. From the testimony of friends and the evidence in the *Selected Letters*, the only piece of writing from the last period that came without agony was *The Old Man and the Sea*, for which Hemingway interrupted the writing of 'Bimini' and 'Cuba'; after completing the Santiago story, intended from the

start as a coda for Hudson, he returned to the final sea-chase segment, now titled 'At Sea', which he wrote in the spring of 1951. After editing and cutting by Mary Hemingway and Charles Scribner, Jr., the three Hudson parts of the Book of the Sea were published in 1970 as a single novel, *Islands in the Stream*.<sup>5</sup>

Although the narrative discontinuity between *The Old Man and the Sea* and *Islands in the Stream* is clear, more significant is their thematic and psychological continuity. If, following the author, we consider the two novels as a single work issuing from a common period of composition (irregularly from 1946 to May 1951), and if we remember that Hemingway interrupted his Book of the Sea to write *Across the River and Into the Trees* (1948), what we most dramatically see is the functional interrelation of the author's life and art. That intimate connection is of course the hallmark of Hemingway throughout his career, evident to everybody during his lifetime despite the author's own annoyed disclaimers. But this cluster of work is different. These titles are an old man's books. Though Hemingway was only 47 when he began this work, as the biography sadly documents, he was already a prematurely ageing man. One sign in the fiction is the prominence of nostalgia, the recurrence of dreams, the bouts of reassessments, and the impulse to reshape old mistakes into more acceptable forms. All three heroes are manifestations of a battered lifetime of constant threats, tests, and disappointments, and a few victories that are memorially rehearsed to help shore up defences against a larger defeat to come. Explicitly, Cantwell and Hudson have perceptibly moved beyond the expectations of youth and the accommodations of maturity, from the nagging moral question of how shall a man live? to the starker one of how shall a man die? If Santiago, a simpler man, is not given to such lofty meditations, it is only because his creator is still being faithful to a realist's creed of credible characterization; the fable itself and the modest self-assessments of the old man are implicit articulations of the same thing.

Given the circumstances of Hemingway's creative life during the composition of his Book of the Sea, the wonder is that it possesses what vitality and coherence it does. No other of his works is more consciously *composed* than *The Old Man and the Sea*, the coda segment. It is not merely that, to follow Gertrude Stein's famous observation on Hemingway's early writing, it smells of the museum. In this case, the classical and biblical analogues of epic endurance are retold with austerity and restraint. While its control, its willed perfection, its rigorous excision of anything left to chance are its obvious strengths, they also make *The Old Man and the Sea* finally less interesting than the other parts of the sea story that became *Islands in the Stream*. Unlike the taut structure and the calculations of style in the Santiago story, with its air of a rhetorical exercise, the Thomas Hudson story is *underwritten*: the shapely but flexible patterns of its structure can still

surprise, and the more varied, less processed style accommodates a wider range of human complexity.

Two similar episodes—Santiago’s successful struggle with the marlin and David Hudson’s unsuccessful struggle with a broadbill—suggest the general differences in the two works. Even though the David episode is the dramatic centre in ‘Bimini’, it is preceded and followed by other incidents, other characters, other anxieties. Its pacing and its placement meet our conventional expectations of the novel form; that is, it has context. In *The Old Man and the Sea* the landing of the marlin is also central, the first necessary stage in a continuous drama, but it is its own context. While the sense of place is firm, the action seems to occur in some realm of storybook time. Partly because of its rigorous adherence to the old unities, Santiago’s drama is fablistic, not novelistic. What passes for its narrative extension is really symbolic, mythic, even allegorical, a characteristic that explains why ordinary copy-editors at *Life*, where it was first published, were instantly able to see something more in this work than a simple, primitive story exquisitely told.<sup>6</sup> Its ‘upper’ level of meaning is as insistent as its ‘lower’ level of story. Unlike *The Old Man and the Sea*, *Islands in the Stream* is complex in its narrative situations, its characterizations, and its sense of a society in a specific moment in time as well as a sense of place. As many readers have shown, *Islands in the Stream* is also shot through with hints of a larger symbolic significance, but they are merely intimations and they remain firmly subordinated to narrative.

Despite its considerable editing—the first by Hemingway himself<sup>7</sup>—*Islands in the Stream* retains enough narrative patterning to make it structurally and thematically coherent. Each of the three-part narrative has its own architecture, and each is designed to display different facets in the drama of human decline. Each book is dominated by the fact of death as Thomas Hudson, without fully understanding his sons, wives, and lovers, undergoes the searing experience of deprivation of those he loves, until, at the end, he himself lies dying. One critic has perceptively commented on Hemingway’s technique of representing literally Hudson’s progressive narrowing of his life in ‘At Sea’, in which ‘at last in a channel along the Cuban coast, where the mangrove presses close on either hand, he finds his death’.<sup>8</sup> ‘Bimini’ economically supplies all that we need to know—and the most we will ever know—of the circumstances behind this twentieth-century ‘grief-hoarder’. Its narrative rhythm is established by alternating segments of repose and action. The obscure tensions, both cultural and personal, that culminate in the ugly fight on the Queen’s Birthday; David’s narrow escape from a shark; and David’s heroic bout with his fish: these three dramatized episodes reveal the protagonist as spectator. With a stability all too precarious, Hudson is unable to affect events; his is a recuperative sensibility whose major threat is the eruption of the very emotions that make men human: rage, love, remorse.

In between these scenes of action are moments of repose, carried mostly by beautifully rendered conversations in which Hudson meditates on his vulnerability and stands exposed to a fate he cannot change.

'Cuba' is an extended segment of repose whose only action—patrol duty—is background. It consists of talk—conversation, story-telling, reminiscence—and functions as the first available, and finally inadequate, counter to suffering. The other available counter is the commitment to duty, the action of 'At Sea', although Hemingway implies that in the overall scheme there is finally little relationship between the purgative and what is being purged. Indeed, the swiftly paced action of the sea-chase in part three, like the sustained talk in the repose of part two, is merely substitutionary. While both telling and acting have their own integrity, they are modes that ultimately make no difference. Grief, loss, suffering are existential, and they are paramount in the emotional structure of the novel. When Hudson and his first wife are reunited in 'Cuba', the happiness is momentary, doomed already by their individual personalities and by the fact of their son's death; being suddenly summoned for sea duty is almost irrelevant in an uneasy relationship that is already spoiled. 'Get it straight', Hudson tells himself. 'Your boy you lose. Love you lose. Honor has been gone for a long time. Duty you do' (326). Patrolling the Gulf Stream looking for Nazis is, potentially at least, an action in the service of a higher cause, the stuff of conventional World War II films, but duty here is grimly personal. He does not have to like chasing Nazis, Hudson reminds himself; he merely has to do it well. The emotional state of the protagonist is the consistent focus throughout the novel, and depletion is its most telling note. Texturally, the novel is studded with the diction of defeat: *unhappiness, suffering, loss, sorrows and cries, grief, hopelessness, blankness, wickedness*.

This study of failure is pervaded by a mood of imminent social and cultural collapse, an aura of dread that provides a context for, even as it condenses into, the personal collapse of Thomas Hudson. 'Bimini' opens on the Queen's Birthday, an anachronistic event whose honouring by irrelevant celebrants is noisy, vulgar, and violent; with a sick gusto Mr. Bobby collaborates with Hudson in projecting the painter's masterpiece, 'The End of the World', a Caribbean version of Hieronymus Bosch that will of course never be painted; the wealthy tourists from the yachts are 'trash', but even Hudson's friends are 'a pretty seedy lot', not bad but 'worthless'. Roger Davis, the closest of these friends, is another of Hemingway's walking wounded, a burnt-out case when we last see him looking, with neither enthusiasm nor hope, for a new start in the west. The atmosphere of dread takes on a metaphysical cast whenever Davis and Hudson, brothers in pain, are by themselves. Davis suffers from guilt arising from the failure of responsibility (in the death of his younger brother and with a succession

of women) and the prostituting of his talents, but he tends to transfer such personal problems into the public realm. After his fight with an obnoxious tourist, Davis admits his regret in succumbing to violence:

‘There’s a lot of wickeds at large. Really bads. And hitting them is no solution. I think that’s one reason why they provoke you. . . . You know evil is a hell of a thing, Tommy. And it’s smart as a pig. You know they had something in the old days about good and evil.’

‘Plenty of people wouldn’t classify you as a straight good’, Thomas Hudson told him.

‘No. Nor do I claim to be. Nor even good nor anywhere near good. I wish I were though. Being against evil doesn’t make you good’. (47)

They both agree that the wealthy tourist was an ‘awful type’, and as a final comment, Davis observes:

He couldn’t have been any worse than the last one on the coast. The trouble is, Tommy, there are so many of them. They have them in all countries and they are getting bigger all the time. Times aren’t good, Tommy. (48)

The evils are real, of course. They include natural disasters, such as waterspouts and hurricanes, sharks, and Nazis as well as spoiled vacationers and corrupt Hollywood tycoons; but, more importantly, they include personal demons, the dark nightmares of nearly all the adult characters in *Islands in the Stream*. Davis recognizes the principle: ‘I was against it and then I was evil myself. I could feel it coming in just like a tide’ (47). Hudson is not only not exempt; he is Hemingway’s prime example of the fragile remnant, a human being victimized as much by his own inner deficiencies as by any of those assorted external evils. Roger Davis is a reminder of his own darker self, a figure sapped of self-confidence and self-control and occasional hostage to self-pity.<sup>9</sup> But there is another side to this relationship. Davis has squandered his talent and has made himself vulnerable by loving others. The poignancy here is that even in his ruin he may be superior to Hudson. It is not surprising that a tactful Hudson hesitates to preach too readily or too directly to his friend; Davis’s squandered talent may be greater than Hudson’s husbanded one.

Throughout ‘Bimini’, the only section in which Hudson’s profession is treated, Hemingway establishes the grounds by which we can be assured that Hudson is trying to be a good artist in a bad time. The assurances are not convincing. Despite his protagonist’s early friendship with fellow artists

in Paris—Picasso, Braque, Miro, Pascin—the author gives no real evidence that Hudson is anything better than a passably decent artist, commercially successful enough to maintain an agent but imaginatively deficient. His most admired painting, hanging behind the local bar, is of three waterspouts and three men in a dinghy; his most heartfelt painting, generated by his son's struggle with a broadbill, tries to capture transient reality in a moment of actual loss; and Mr. Bobby, though his aesthetic judgement may be suspect, gives what is clearly intended to be an unsentimental summary of Hudson's *oeuvre*:

People paying money for pictures of Uncle Edward. Pictures of Negroes in the water. Negroes on land. Negroes in boats. Turtle boats. Sponge boats. Squalls making up. Waterspouts. Schooners that got wrecked. Schooners building. Everything they could see free. They really buy them? (17)

The professional perfunctoriness of island genre painting is only a part of Hudson's general personal failure. The summary is additionally resonant, coming as it does after Mr. Bobby's exasperated wondering aloud why Hudson and his friends 'stay around this island'. The painter's precise calibration of his island life can also be seen as a tucked-tail retreat, rehabilitation, or escape.

If Roger Davis's other problem is loving too freely, Hudson's is his emotional penuriousness. To love is to make the self vulnerable. That sad truth of human relationships explains both Davis and Hudson: if the first is ravaged by too much giving of the self, the second is desiccated from giving too little. Like the 'carapace of work' he has devised to protect himself, Hudson's stoic imperturbability protects him against further emotional lacerations. While Roger displays all the scars of psychic hurt, Hudson carefully, formally, maintains the disjunction between his equally serious psychic hurts and the external self he shows to the world. We never see or hear him without the full 'Thomas Hudson', an attribution that formalizes the emotional distance between reader and protagonist. He once observes an officer from the Headquarters code room in Havana: 'He looked healthy and his unhappiness did not show' (255). This is the same sort of desperate adjustment that Hudson himself makes, and one that dates not from the time he is massively visited by the disasters of fate—the loss of his two younger sons at the end of 'Bimini' and that of his oldest son in 'Cuba'—but from our initial glimpse of him.

Like many other Hemingway protagonists, Hudson lives a life of psychic recuperation, remembering fitfully his past disappointments and failures in the midst of the necessary compromises of the present. 'You have to make it inside of yourself wherever you are', he reminds himself, and to Davis, who expresses a need to get away, he says: "Geography isn't any cure for what's

the matter with you” (16, 102). But making it inside, laudably realistic as it is, requires even for Thomas Hudson an almost systematic manipulation of the outside. His chief failure is his first marriage, the breakup of which he mentally returns to again and again. Although we are told that he ‘had long ago ceased to worry’ about it, having ‘exorcised guilt with work insofar as he could’ (7), his ‘work’, though he takes it seriously, is always regarded as an activity just slightly better than therapy:

He had been able to *replace* almost everything except the children with *work* and the *steady normal working* life he had built on the island. He *believed* he had made something there that would last and that would *hold* him. Now when he was lonesome for Paris he would *remember* Paris *instead of* going there. He did the same thing with all of Europe and much of Asia and of Africa. (7, italics mine)

What is striking about both syntax and diction in this passage, a piece of authorial exposition internalized by the protagonist himself, is its provisional character, Hudson’s own awareness that he must rely on surrogates, not to regain anything but simply to keep from losing everything. The make-do stability only barely disguises desperation, and the desperation is disguised not at all by the explicit patterns, order, and rhythm that Hudson arbitrarily imposes on himself. From larger concerns—such as alternating segments of work and reward in a discernible predictability—to smaller ones—such as the little ritual he makes of burning driftwood in his fireplace—Hudson devises and cherishes willed activities ‘that would hold him’.

For many of the residents Bimini is a boring stasis; for Hudson the island, a refraction rather than a true reflection of the actual world, is simultaneously an eden, a purgatory, and a refuge. “It’s a good place for a guy like you that’s got some sort of inner resources” (25), says an admiring friend, but Hudson’s cool surface is hardly an accurate indicator of either the depth or variety of those inner resources. His characteristic position at the Floridita is itself the language of wary defensiveness: ‘He took his seat on a tall bar stool at the extreme left of the bar. His back was against the wall toward the street and his left was covered by the wall behind the bar’ (258). His heavy dependence upon alcohol and seconal and his insomnia suggest a fragile psychological balance that is threatened as much as it is strengthened by the emotional adjustments he must make for his sons’ visit. Although his proprietary airs and patrician condescension instantly establish Hudson as a valued Bimini resident, not a transient, his own internal musings reveal a more ambiguous status. He is still a foreigner living alone, a spiritual alien adjusting as well as he can to the condition of human separation. Every

detail of his biography is a reinforcement of his spiritual rootlessness: he is thrice divorced, the father of three sons by two wives, the owner of three houses but no home—the solid, prominent Bimini house that has withstood three hurricanes, a Finca in Cuba, a ranch in Idaho—and a boat with a flying bridge that ranges all over the Gulf Stream, first for fish, finally for German submariners.

Hemingway's extraordinary attention to sensuous details in *Islands in the Stream* functionally underscores his protagonist's need, since they are often his points of stability in a wavering world. The preparation, colour, taste, feel, and smell of his drinks—the Tom Collinses, the frozen daiquiris, the Gordon's gin with lime juice, coconut water, and bitters—are precisely, lingeringly itemized. The description of Honest Lil's complexion—'She had a skin that was as smooth as olive-coloured ivory . . . with a slightly smoky roselike cast . . . [like] well-seasoned *mahagua* lumber when it is freshly cut, then simply sanded smooth and waxed lightly' (273)—comes naturally from a consciousness that has long contemplated the object. The discipline of description, always a hallmark virtue in Hemingway, here is exquisitely fitted to the protagonist, who not only has, literally, a painter's eye but who must also cultivate it compulsively for his own emotional good, for by this practice an indifferent and disparate nature can be spatially disposed, a lot of the wickeds at large can be blocked out or compositionally transformed, and his own griefs and guilts can be exorcised.

"I've learned how to live by myself pretty well and I work hard" (25), Hudson tells a friend, and his hard work is not limited to his painting; he works hard to keep a general routine; to drink, fish, and party in planned segments, and to disallow, if he can, any untoward occasions which would drain his emotional resources. Even little pleasures are planned: Hudson puts away the Mainland newspaper 'to save it for breakfast'. The high point of his summer at Bimini is his sons' visit, but it is potentially the most draining. Knowing the customary disorderliness of youth allows him to prepare for a house disrupted by scattered clothing and fishing gear:

When a man lives in a house by himself he gets very precise habits and they get to be a pleasure. But it felt good to have some of them broken up. He knew he would have his habits again long after he would no longer have the boys. (52)

But the inevitable results of his sons' high energy and spontaneity and their relational chemistry among themselves and others cannot of course be fully planned. Before the boys leave David narrowly escapes an attack by a hammerhead shark and undergoes a gruelling day trying to land a swordfish; and the emotional toll is greater for the damaged father than for



the resilient son. By himself Hudson is unable to fill the customary parental role, which functionally is shared by not only Roger Davis, a kind of shadow version of Hudson and David's tutor in the fighting chair, but also Eddy, the alcoholic cook who kills the attacking shark when Hudson's aim proves faulty. What Hudson *can* do is to paint two pictures of David's fish that got away. This after-the-event tribute is anticipated during the action, when Hudson maintains his distance on the bridge, seeing David's ordeal from a 'foreshortened' perspective, and when, finally, after he descends to the 'same level as the action', his observation of his son's 'bloody hands and lacquered-looking oozing feet' (136) is more painterly than fatherly. Hemingway clearly intends the lack of discipline in Davis and Eddy to be more blatant versions of the disabling flaws that the protagonist only by great dint of effort has managed to control.

The cost is high. A life of enforced habits, of measured pleasures, is also a life of emotional barrenness, as we see in Hudson's adjustment to the loss of his sons. No amount of self-discipline can fully prepare him for being hostage to fate, but it is the only kind of behaviour he knows. Despite having little 'interest in the game', he tells Eddy: "We'll play it out the way we can" (196). Aboard the *Ile de France* the grief is blunted by drinking, reading, and exercising until he is tired enough to sleep. He also learns that *The New Yorker* is a magazine 'you can read on the fourth day after something happens' (200).

In both 'Cuba' and 'At Sea' the self-discipline is that of a zombie. Whatever bouts of pleasure were possible in 'Bimini' are nowhere in evidence in the second and third segments, but what is even more pronounced is the grim game itself. And although Hudson and his crew play the game reasonably well in their search for the Nazis, they make tactical mistakes that put the chasers at the mercy of the chased, and they impulsively kill rather than take prisoner a German sailor, an act that in Hudson's mind renders all their efforts useless.<sup>10</sup> From small details to the larger structure, most of what Hudson undertakes as action is substitutionary. He carries his .357 Magnum between his legs: "How long have you been my girl?" he said to his pistol'. And he uses it to blast a land crab on the beach who, like him, was doing nothing more than 'practicing . . . his trade' (316-17). 'There is no way for you to get what you need and you will never have what you want again', Hudson tells himself. 'But there are various palliative measures you should take' (282). These measures are talking to and sleeping with his favourite cat; long, ritualized drinking sessions at the Floridita; curiously detached sexual acts; and doing his 'duty'—service for the Navy. With his sons he can play the game of rummy for the shocked delectation of the tourists at Mr. Bobby's; without them at the Floridita he plays a cheerless game of the dignified rummy telling 'happy' stories

to Honest Lil. To Hudson's credit nowhere does he engage in that most stereotyped palliative—talking out his grief. He tells Honest Lil: “Telling never did me any good. Telling is worse for me than not telling” (274). Rather his stories—fanciful concoctions—are aesthetic displacements; when he is forced into conversation about direct matters that hurt, the information is as sparse, oblique, and clipped as the speech rhythms. One of Hemingway's devices for showing the desperate nature of these palliatives is the frequency of flashbacks. In ‘Bimini’, when he has the quiet joy of his sons' companionship, the memories of Paris are collaborative—young Tom remembers, too—but after their deaths Hudson's memories return more compulsively to the past—to happier days at the Finca and the exploits of his cats, to other love affairs, to earlier days in North Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. Despite the ‘carapace of work’ and doing his duty ‘well’, Hudson's is characteristically memorial living.

The Book of the Sea is of course about the author just as the most generative energy in all the previous books, fiction and non-fiction alike, had been autobiographical. Hemingway's dismay in 1952 that his simple story of Santiago was immediately read as parable and allegory of the author grown old, harassed by enemies but still equipped with the finest skills of his contemporaries, was understandably half-hearted and ambiguous. *The Old Man and the Sea* accurately, sensitively, depicts the psychological status of its author, whose view of human possibilities and whose devices for countering that gloomy assessment had not been changed by Depression America, Fascist Spain, or an entire World War. The logic behind the aesthetic of contest (big-game hunting, deep-sea fishing, bull-fighting) is precisely the fact that the chaos of living—with violence at its centre—can be mitigated only through human efforts to give it shape and purpose, that is, arbitrarily, by the imposition and acceptance of rules, procedures, and conventions in which the playing of the game itself is its own significance. If there is any ‘victory’ in Santiago's story, it comes because the old fisherman plays out his given game with whatever determination and energy are left. The ‘victory’ in the Thomas Hudson story is even grimmer, and its poignancy lies in the very closeness of protagonist and author.

Gregory Hemingway and James McLendon have shown the extent to which the novelist made use of his Caribbean experiences in the 1930s. Following his usual penchant for the techniques of the *roman à clef*, the method in *Islands in the Stream* is even more transparently autobiographical than it is in earlier work, most notably in his frank use of his wives and their sons, but also including the friends, bores, and islanders, even Honest Lil, the long-suffering whore who likes to hear happy stories, and the author's favourite cat that gets the honour of keeping his original name, Boise. Even the episode of the pig that commits suicide by swimming out to sea is based on an incident

during 1943 when Gregory and Patrick stayed on Cayo Confites while their father took the armed *Pilar* on sub-scouting expeditions.<sup>11</sup> Commenting on the fact that the episode of David and the shark attack in *Islands in the Stream* stemmed from an incident involving himself, the younger son (rather than Patrick, the middle), Gregory Hemingway adds: 'Papa almost always changed the situation a little and usually improved on it slightly but mainly he used material that had actually happened.'<sup>12</sup>

We are now able to see the autobiographical basis of Hemingway's art with greater clarity than we were thirty years ago, but, more importantly, we are also able to see the logic behind that fact. With more intensity than most writers Hemingway wanted no biography written, no letters collected. He wanted only his published works to be read and admired. In retrospect this may have been an aesthetic instinct as well as personal choice. A biography must have struck him as redundant: he was all there, in better versions usually, in the works themselves. What is bothersome in the later fiction is the apparent loss of authorial judgement generally, such as the garrulous posturing of Hudson in 'Cuba'. But it is a weakness that appears as early as *Green Hills of Africa*, in which dramatic thrust is calculatedly cast aside in favour of an artificial 'interview' situation featuring a straight man and a Papa who knowingly pronounces his judgements on literature, sports, nature, and the meaning of life. It is a posture that recurs in *Across the River and Into the Trees* and, with minor adjustments, in *A Moveable Feast*; and the pattern establishes the basic autobiographical basis of Hemingway's art, so much so that Papa the Hunter, Colonel Cantwell, and Thomas Hudson are merely variations of a single identity; further, the Hemingway of Paris in the early 1920s is a variation, too. All these characters are projections, idealized figures put to the service of a writer whose primary creative energy was necessarily his own life.

The emotional honesty especially evident in Thomas Hudson as self-portrait may not say as much for Hemingway's conscious judgement as for his psychological agony. But even here, at his most transparent, the matter of real life is usually adjusted into more shapely patterns than real life supplied, and the impulse behind the reshaping was aesthetic more than biographical: the need to show, not the need to conceal. Again, we have Gregory's testimony: 'My father had a tendency to improve on even the best of real stories.'<sup>13</sup> Hemingway's early traumatic experiences, his loves and hates, his wars, his sporting exploits, his sensitivity to place are recounted from *In Our Time* to *Islands in the Stream* in ways that are both autobiographical and aesthetically artifactual. Finally he projected his best version of his own death in *Across the River and Into the Trees*, an event quintessentially Hemingway, since it dramatizes the extent to which man can control, shape, arrange that major moment that, except for suicides, lies beyond human agency.

## NOTES

1. Philip Young, *Ernest Hemingway: A Reconsideration* (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1966), p. 114.
2. Carlos Baker, *Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story* (New York: Scribner's, 1969), pp. 454–55, 460, 540.
3. 'The Dangerous Summer' appeared in *Life* in three successive numbers: 5, 12, 19 September 1960.
4. *Islands in the Stream* (New York: Scribner's, 1970), p. 237. Page references to subsequent quotations are included in the text.
5. For a full chronology of the composition, see Carlos Baker, *Hemingway: The Writer as Artist*, 4th edn. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. 299–400; Baker, *Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story*, pp. 488–94; and Baker (ed.), *Ernest Hemingway: Selected Letters, 1917–61* (New York: Scribner's, 1981), pp. 574, 616, 719, 730–39.
6. Jackson J. Benson calls attention to the 'lacquered design' of the novel and the 'stylized role' of the old fisherman who too perfectly exemplifies the 'game code in action'. See *Hemingway: The Writer's Art of Self-Defense* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1969), pp. 172, 177. For a reading of *The Old Man and the Sea* as successful Christian tragedy, see Chapter 9 of Wirt Williams, *The Tragic Art of Ernest Hemingway* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1981).
7. See, for example, Baker, *Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story*, p. 497.
8. Francis E. Skipp, 'Metempsychosis in the Stream, or What Happens in "Bimini"?' *Fitzgerald/Hemingway Annual*: 1974, 137.
9. The physical resemblance between Hudson and Davis is noted by Mr. Bobby. Hudson says they are no kin: 'We just used to live in the same town and make some of the same mistakes' (155).
10. In a letter of 13 June 1951, Hemingway refers to the fact that in the sea-chase the Nazi crew members 'out-class those who pursue them', who are 'sucked into one perfect, but unarmed, ambush'. See Baker (ed.), *Selected Letters*, p. 730.
11. Gregory H. Hemingway, *Papa: A Personal Memoir* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976), and James McLendon, *Papa: Hemingway in Key West* (Miami: E. A. Seemann, 1972), *passim*.
12. *Papa: A Personal Memoir*, p. 67.
13. *Papa: A Personal Memoir*, p. 29.



GREGORY S. SOJKA

*The Angler*

I

“I tried to make a real old man, a real boy, a real sea and a real fish and real sharks. But if I made them good and true enough they would mean many things.”<sup>1</sup> Ernest Hemingway’s statement concerning *The Old Man and the Sea* is consistent with the goals of accuracy and truth that consistently define his artistic aesthetic. A skeleton of the novel, containing the narrative essentials of the eventual Nobel Prize, appeared in a 1936 *Esquire* essay, “On the Blue Water.” Hemingway describes an old man who, when fishing in a skiff out of Cabanas, hooked a great marlin that towed him out to sea. After two days, the man was picked up by fishermen sixty miles away with only the front half of the marlin lashed to the skiff. The fish had pulled the boat for two days. When sharks attacked the marlin the old man fought them “clubbing them, stabbing at them, lunging at them with an oar until he was exhausted,” and “crazy” from his loss.<sup>2</sup> *The Old Man and the Sea*, says Robert Stephens, is the best example of the iceberg relationship between Hemingway’s fiction and non-fiction.<sup>3</sup> The art and craft of fishing compose the body of the narrative as it does in “Big Two-Hearted River.” But, as Harvey Breit observes, in the best of Hemingway’s work, “these special areas, these particular professions and occupations, are transposed inexorably into universal meanings. In *The Old Man* the mystique of fishing, with its limited triumphs and tragedies, is

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From *Ernest Hemingway: The Angler as Artist*, pp. 121–139. © 1985 by Peter Lang Publishing.

transposed into a universal condition of life, with its success and shame, its morality and pride, and potential loss of pride.”<sup>4</sup>

## II

From the very first pages of the story Santiago is a humble man with little worldly success to show for his many years. “Everything about him was old except his eyes,” says the narrator. As blue as the sea, they were “cheerful and undefeated.”<sup>5</sup> His humility is not a sign of resignation; not “disgraceful,” it carried “no loss of true pride” (p. 14). What does distinguish this old man from the other old anglers is confidence in his craft. Though he has gone eighty-four days without a fish, Santiago is as unwilling to give up his boat as Manuel Garcia of “The Undefeated” is unwilling to surrender his *coleta*, the matador’s badge of service. Santiago may lack strength, but he says he knows “many tricks” and has “resolution” (p. 23). These “tricks” are not means of deception or ways of cheating but techniques and strategies that are intricate aspects of the fishing craft accumulated over the years and perfected into personal art. Just as Hemingway’s aesthetic theory of writing stresses truth and facts, Santiago’s profession follows similarly rigid principles of sportsmanship and integrity. Since style for Hemingway was a “moral act, a desperate struggle for moral probity amid the confusions of the world and the slippery complexities of one’s own nature,” Santiago’s discipline establishes a “standard of rightness against a deceiving world.”<sup>6</sup>

He holds tightly to his professional principles and keeps a tight rein on his emotions when competing with a formidable foe. Despite his fears, Santiago’s heroic behavior serves as a spiritual and physical reaffirmation of his value as a worthy fisherman and, most of all, as a worthy man. Young Nick Adams learns “you got to be tough” to survive in the world, and Thomas Hudson can only tentatively state “I think I understand” life’s complexities, but Santiago realizes that “a man can be destroyed” in body, but not defeated “in spirit.” Unlike Nick, who seeks mental rehabilitation in the narrow, orderly confines of a quiet trout stream, and Thomas Hudson, who constructs a “carapace” of artistic self-discipline on an insulated island, Santiago moves out of the Gulf Stream past other boats in order to put his “tricks” and “resolution” to the ultimate physical and emotional test of endurance on neutral waters. Although his marlin is destroyed, the brave old man’s pride and confidence remain intact, and he prevails as *El Campeon* in the eyes of young Manolin and his fellow fishermen. Like many of Hemingway’s elderly characters, including Anselmo of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and Colonel Cantwell of *Across the River and Into the Trees*, Santiago takes great pride in the physical strength and courage of his youth. But unlike these other older men Santiago earns the privilege of a triumphant return to the glory of his youth.

The introspective journey, used in “Big Two-Hearted River” and *Islands in the Stream*, again provides the central thematic unity in this novel. Earl Rovit notes that in Jungian terms, “every quest and confrontation is a discovery of self.”<sup>7</sup> Faith in angling skill provides Santiago with the confidence to proceed into the far reaches of the ocean, a *nada* comparable to Nick’s murky swamp and Hudson’s narrow inland channel. The “ritual of orderliness and cleanliness” and “meticulousness in practical details” that we first observe in Nick Adams and later perceive in Thomas Hudson’s artistic carapace, are never more apparent than in Santiago’s fishing.<sup>8</sup> The only sense of faith, surety, and confidence comes from practical tasks efficiently undertaken and rigorously completed. Pragmatic actions with perceivable achievements gain precedence over philosophical speculations, which in the Hemingway universe are often accompanied by paralyzing confusion and meaningless chaos. Thus Santiago must decide how to perform best in the given conditions of his predicament and must not lament his fated confrontation.

### III

Santiago’s preparations for his journey all have a practical purpose; even his breakfast reflects his experienced foresight. The old man drinks his coffee, his only sustenance, very slowly. A bottle of water in the bow of the skiff will provide later refreshment. This meticulous attention to detail is also evident in bait preparation, a procedure which Hemingway stresses at length in his fishing articles and which Nick Adams scrupulously enacts in the short stories. Each of the four baits utilizes sardines so precisely that “there was no part of the hook that a great fish could feel which was not sweet smelling and good tasting” (p. 31). The depth of the bait and the positioning of the sardines on the hook allow the true piscatorial craftsman no margin for error. Likewise, Santiago arranges his tackle in a manner that reduces chances for failure. “Green-sapped sticks” serve as bobbers and inter-connected lines would allow a fish to take out over three hundred fathoms of line (p. 34).

Santiago’s ordering intelligence is marked by meticulous preparations and minimal guesswork. Hemingway’s methodical, rhythmic description also reflects the ordered concrete detail that is so important to a man who is trying to re-establish his place in the village fishing fraternity. In fact Santiago positions his fishing lines “straighter than anyone did.” At each level in the stream a bait is positioned “exactly where he wished it to be” for any fish that swam there, unlike other fishermen who allow them to drift at some unknown depth (p. 32). Santiago practices his craft with the same artistic precision of the bullfighter; slight miscalculations by the matador could be fatal, and the wrong depth of bait or improper position of lines could spell failure for the angler. Santiago arranges his lines “with precision,” because “when luck comes



you are ready" (p. 32). Santiago is like Manuel Garcia of "The Undefeated," whose instincts and knowledge "worked automatically." Manuel "knew all about bulls," and "did not have to think about them": he "just did the right thing."<sup>9</sup> Santiago's actions, the instinctive product of a pragmatic intelligence developed during years of practice, distinguish him as a "strange old man" who succeeds where many others have failed.

The old man's attitudes mirror his practical nature. Unlike most of the other fishermen, Santiago believes "no mysticism" about turtles, but eats their eggs to give himself strength for the "truly big fish" (p. 37). Although most fishermen hated the taste, Santiago drinks a cup of shark liver oil each day for protection against "all colds and gripes" and for its beneficial quality on his vision (p. 37). Even his meager meals are a means of building fortitude and endurance rather than a mere indulgence of appetite: the sagacious angler prepares himself with a ritual intensity for his contest.

Tony Tanner wisely suggests the critical distinction between the "ordinary intelligence which interprets difficulties, formulates intentions, modifies actions, etc.; and the sort of vague speculation, metaphysical or theological, etc." which Santiago avoids.<sup>10</sup> Manolin's parents call the old man *salao*, "which is the worst form of lucky," since he hadn't taken a fish in eighty-four days (p. 9). In view of this man's preparation and diligence we naturally wonder, how can this be possible? As in the case of many Hemingway heroes, however, there is no logical cause for such injustice. All of Santiago's energies are aimed toward achieving "something that was going on with a definite end."<sup>11</sup> The most important thing for Santiago, therefore, is a "functional grip on the concrete world," staying on certain secure "bases," to borrow Frederic Henry's metaphor, and not to get "caught" in those emotional areas between the bases of reality. Santiago relies on his own actions and abilities, for other means of salvation do not exist.

That is why this man, like Nick Adams and Thomas Hudson, fights against the onset of thoughts that confuse and distract him from immediate tasks and responsibilities. Thus, the first time Santiago wonders about the day's baseball results, he quickly dismisses the occasion as "no time to think of baseball," but only "that which I was born for" (p. 40). Later baseball allusions (particularly to Joe DiMaggio) serve as fortifying examples of courage, but, the *mejor ligas* are here only distractions to his present tasks and therefore superfluous. On this eighty-fifth day of drought, Santiago is resolved to "fish the day well." He dismisses wishful thoughts of drifting and sleeping with "a bight of line around my toe" to wake him, and replaces them with a practical plan of action (p. 41).

The unique mechanics of fishing allow Santiago to experience the certainties of his senses with the fishing line in his hands. Initially he was happy feeling the "gentle pulling" but then he felt "something hard and unbelievably

heavy" (p. 43). His task of holding the line firmly without breaking it becomes an actual index of his patient character. After four strenuous hours Santiago "rested sitting on the un-stepped mast and sail and tried not to think" about the agony ahead of him, but "only endure" (p. 46). With an old sack tied around his shoulders to cushion the friction of the taut line, Santiago leans forward against the bow in a position "only somewhat less intolerable;" but he thought of it as "almost comfortable" (p. 47). Santiago actually receives a boost to his confidence by the physical reassurance of his suffering. Because it is an intricate part of life, pain must be tolerated.

The fisherman's thoughts reflect the same discipline that he expects of his body. When the notion of a radio as a fishing companion momentarily strikes his fancy, he says "think of what you are doing," jerking himself back to the task at hand and away from anything "stupid" (p. 48). Self-pity for this "unavoidable" situation is temporary, as the old man constantly reminds himself of such necessities as eating the tuna before it spoils "in order to keep strong." "Remember," he reminds himself, "no matter how little you want to, that you must eat him in the morning" (p. 48). Physical necessities retain priority over emotional indulgences, and Santiago toughens his resolution by keeping occupied with practical tasks in the same manner Nick Adams meticulously makes camp and fishes for trout. Weighing and balancing the various possibilities despite the pressure, Santiago shows a clear-head, and, despite a cramped hand, he never panics. His is a discriminating intelligence not seen in Nick's bouts with delirium or Thomas Hudson's alcoholic indulgences.

During his struggle, the old man does his best to confront the "what is" of reality and abandon the "what could be" and "why" of possibility. "There is no sense in being anything but practical," he thinks when eating the raw tuna. When the big *dentuso* strikes his marlin, Santiago momentarily laments his lack of sufficient weapons. "Don't think, old man," he tells himself loudly. "Sail on this course and take it [suffering] when it comes" (p. 103). Although killing this truly phenomenal marlin may be a sin, he quickly dismisses this theological possibility with a reaffirmation of his own inherited professional beliefs: "you were born to be a fisherman as the fish was born to be a fish" (p. 105). Santiago confronts destiny and does not try to change reality: charged with irreligion, Santiago should be praised for following a strict code of morality intrinsic to his own livelihood. Unlike the young soldier of Chapter VII in *In Our Time* who pitifully begs Christ to get him out of a bombarded trench in Fossalta and later goes upstairs with a whore in the Villa Rossa, Santiago zealously upholds a single set of values that are as rigid and demanding as any rules of orthodox religion.

He succeeds because his pragmatic sense demands direct confrontation with the reality of his situation. When attacking sharks destroy his knife lashings, he wishes that he had remembered to bring a stone reinforcement

as well as “many [other] things.” No time to think of his shortcomings, he admonishes himself to “think of what you can do with what there is” (p. 110). This final key sentence summarizes all of Santiago’s actions during his voyage. Constantly reminding himself not to think “nonsense” about his amazingly bad luck and the tragic loss of his fish, the old man gives priority to his itemizing senses and classifying mind. When Santiago momentarily contemplates the possibility of purchasing luck with his fishless “eighty-four days at sea,” he characteristically dismisses the foolish thought as “nonsense,” and gets back to plotting his course home (p. 117).

Norman Mailer’s description of a heavyweight boxing match as a “rapid debate between two sets of intelligences” might apply with equal appropriateness to the battle between Santiago and the marlin.<sup>12</sup> At no other time in Hemingway’s fiction is the aesthetic of contest so clearly rendered as in the contest between these two worthy opponents—a judgment which the author himself suggests in a letter: “It’s as though I had gotten finally what I had been working for all my life.”<sup>13</sup> This novel captures the essence of the man–animal conflict that is consummated in love and respect. The struggle is the most valuable aspect of the fight: the outcome secondary. The superior contestants in this contest raise their conflict to an aesthetic dimension, a dual art that Mark Schorer perceives in Hemingway’s parable:

It is an old man catching a fish, yes; but it is also a great artist in the act of mastering his subject, and more than that, of actual writing about the struggle. Nothing is more important than his craft, and it is beloved; but because it must be struggled with and mastered, it is also a foe, enemy to all self-indulgence, to all looseness of feeling, all laxness of style, all soft pomposities.<sup>14</sup>

Hemingway’s narrative technique allows Santiago’s thoughts and statements to be interspersed with those of an omniscient narrator to highlight this dialogue of action and reaction.

As Hemingway states in his angling reports, the true sporting contest should involve the angler’s persuading and convincing, not the merely overpowering or butchering his foe. Not only does this persuasion make for better competition, it also enhances pleasure for the angler, who benefits from the fish’s talent, strength, and endurance. By allowing the fish to jump, swim, and dive to the best of his ability, the fisherman can test his own ability under optimal competitive conditions. On either side of the same line, the man and fish achieve physical equanimity and, in a transcendental leap of suffering, reach spiritual unity.

From the beginning of his association with the great marlin, Santiago addresses the fish as an intelligent being. His initial remarks to persuade the

fish to consume his sardine bait are coaxing appeals that resemble an adult's attempts to make a child sample a new food. "Come on," he says aloud. "Just smell them. Aren't they lovely? Don't be shy, fish. Eat them" (p. 42). Santiago, "the towing bitt," is pulled for four hours by his unseen opponent, and the mystery of this invisible source of strength adds to his excitement (p. 45). During the process the man develops a spiritual affinity with his invisible captive. He begins to pity the great fish and thinks: "He is wonderful and strange and who knows how old he is?" The strong fish fights without panic and Santiago wonders "if he has any plans or if he is just as desperate as I am?" (p. 49). The sagacious veteran can appreciate the calm, intelligent behavior of his hooked foe, and the old man's calculating mind is continually at work trying to infer the marlin's strategies from his observable actions. Mutual admiration joins both desperate parties in a parity of bondage with no outside assistance.

When Santiago finally secures his fishing tackle, he swears "I'll stay with you until I am dead," the ultimate oath of fidelity (p. 52). With this declaration Santiago removes his final protection—the line will not be cut—the source of his suffering will remain. Although loving and respecting the marlin, he tells the marlin, "I will kill you dead before this day ends" (p. 54). The Hemingway hunting morality stresses vocational obligations, not personal hatred. Santiago readily accepts his portion of pain in this mutual test of fortitude and character. "You're feeling it now, fish," he says. "And so, God knows, am I" (p. 56). Man and fish test each other's endurance by extending pressure to the breaking point: holding tight with resolution, they never yield to panic or pain.

Up to this point in the contest, Santiago only reacts to the impersonal pressure of his invisible opponent. When the fish finally breaks to the surface and Santiago discovers its immense size his will is strengthened as well as the necessity to persuade and not overpower his quarry. "I must convince him," he thought. But Santiago "must never let him learn his strength nor what he could do if he made his run" (p. 63). Santiago uses his intelligence to compensate for his lack of physical strength without belittling the marlin's nobility. Viewing himself as the underdog in his battle, the humble old man wishes to change places with the fish "with everything he has against only my will and my intelligence" (p. 64). Nobly accepting physical suffering and pain becomes an index to his determination. The marlin's physical advantage increases Santiago's desire to show "what a man can do and what a man endures" (p. 66).

Although most of Santiago's memories of glory are waverings of faith, two function to build his confidence. The first is Joe DiMaggio, the great "Yankee Clipper," who comes to mind frequently during the old man's quest. Even this ballplayer's career is a model of the Hemingway code: despite a team of great talent, DiMaggio "makes a difference" to New York's success.

He played out the final years of his career with a painful bone spur on his heel. Yet, "Joltin' Joe" continued to excel and lead his team to repeated victories in the World Series.<sup>15</sup> Santiago, who believes that "pain does not matter to a man," derives inspiration from the ballplayer who never complains. DiMaggio, who "does all things perfectly even with the pain of the bone spur in his heel," is a paragon of stoicism. Santiago can not comprehend *un espuelo de hueso* but understands courage: "I think the great DiMaggio would be proud of me today" (p. 97). For his sore hand and back approximate the ballplayer's bone spur.

Santiago also gains confidence from his own past heroism. Once he arm-wrestled a large negro from Cienfuegos in a Casablanca tavern. For twenty-four hours they remained deadlocked. The spectators placed bets and the referees were changed regularly. Face to face, the two men "looked each other in the eye" and blood oozed from under their fingernails. The negro's attendants fed him rum and lit cigarettes in hopes of a great burst of energy, but Santiago, *El Campeon*, prevailed with a mighty effort just when a draw seemed imminent. At a return match Santiago easily defeated the negro ("a fine man and great athlete") because the initial victory weakened his confidence and broke his spirit (p. 70). Santiago, who "could beat anyone," retires undefeated (p. 70). In this time of possible doubt the former champion draws upon his past victories to gain sustenance in present adversities. Because he has experienced worse pain arm-wrestling, the old man redoubles his efforts to succeed when his pain went "into dullness that he mistrusted" (p. 74).

During their mutual captivity, Santiago's admiration for the marlin grows: "The fish is my friend, too," he said aloud. "I have never seen or heard of such a fish. But I must kill him" (p. 75). The marlin's fighting spirit and great dignity elevates him beyond the level of a "game" or "food" fish. Although dutifully steadfast, Santiago is confused by the injustices of a universal order where such a noble animal can be food for undistinguished men. Because he does not "understand these things," and is happy that we do not have to try "to kill the sun or the moon or the stars," Santiago feels "it is enough to live on the sea and kill our true brothers" (p. 75). With these simple philosophical musings, Santiago contently returns to his marlin, a "true brother" in a fraternity of life that demands peak performances and offers few distinctions.

Santiago's identification with the marlin as an equal in sagacity becomes clear when he attributes the marlin's actions to human motivations: "Maybe he suddenly felt fear," he wonders. The man's conception of the marlin as an intelligent, thinking personality, not an instinctual animal, reminds him of his obligations to be "fearless and confident" (p. 84). He tightens his grasp to "convince" his foe as the marlin circles for the climactic fight. For Santiago to fail in his obligations would be a disservice to his opponent. "I could not fail myself and die on a fish like this," he says. The man's pain "does not matter,"

while the marlin's pain "could drive him mad" and into a fatal panic of defeat (p. 87). Santiago willingly accepts pain and possible loss to gain a greater victory. Although tempted to rest in the bow and let the fish circle by himself without recovering any line, the old man pivoted and pulled in "the line he gained" (p. 89). The Job-like fortitude which enables Santiago to succeed in his appointed task is a reflection of Hemingway himself—the proponent of persistence angling. "You give them holy bloody hell from the start," and "go for a knockout" he told Henry Strater. The most important lesson is "no laying back or letting the fish rest while you rest."<sup>16</sup>

In *Death in the Afternoon* Hemingway argues that "killing cleanly and in a way which gives you aesthetic pleasure and pride has always been one of the greatest enjoyments of a part of the human race."<sup>17</sup> Hemingway's dissertation on bullfighting demands that a skillful matador like Gitanillo de Triana must kill with "a purity of line through maximum exposure." During this moment of truth, if executed correctly, the sword unifies man and bull in a balanced pose of grace and beauty. In chapter XII of *In Our Time* Hemingway describes the matador Villalta executing the perfect kill: "All in the same rush. . . the bull charged and Villalta became one with the bull and then it was over. Villalta standing straight and the red hilt of his sword sticking out dully between the bull's shoulders."<sup>18</sup> The parallel act—gaffing a fish—must also be performed as correctly as the *descabellar* to insure the fish a quick, merciful death and to enhance the angler's integrity with this *coup de grace*. Santiago values the correct kill, in the heart not the head. To insure the proper gaff Santiago must bring the marlin into the correct position next to the skiff. With both competitors near collapse, their mutual suffering is never clearer. Because of the marlin's beauty, calm, and nobility, Santiago invites his "brother" to "come on and kill me." Man and fish reach a complete parity of honor through their valiant fight. Temporarily blurred by the marlin's valiant resistance, even the old man's pragmatic mind becomes emotionally confused. Suffering "like a man," however, sobers him quickly back to the reality of the situation.

The description of Santiago's good kill combines the technical expertise and emotional intensity of Hemingway's most effective writing, in which the aesthetic of contest and ritualistic beauty of death are somehow invoked simultaneously. He "took all his pain and what was left of his strength and his long gone pride and put it against the fish's agony and the fish came over on to his side." When Santiago drives the gaff home, "the fish came alive, with his death in him, and rose high out of the water showing all his great length and width and all his power and his beauty" (p. 99). Only Santiago's superlative effort brings the mighty marlin alongside the skiff, as the fish extends himself above the old man with one last leap of freedom in a final show of beauty and strength. Santiago's heroic effort succeeds but provides no immediate relaxation. Because he has killed the fish who

he calls “my brother,” now he “must perform the slave work” and secure his catch (p. 95). Feeling subservient now to his dead soulmate, the old man does not assume egocentric mastery over the marlin; he would rather sail in physical equanimity as “brothers.” As they sail “together locked side by side” the ever-gracious Santiago realizes the necessity for a dignified return with both competitors in their native elements.

Santiago’s ordeal is far from finished; an initial attack by a Mako shark will be followed by others. With “little hope” but “full of resolution” he attacks the sharks in defense of his helpless marlin and with little concern for his own safety (p. 101). Even when assaulting the malevolent *galanos*, Santiago, as usual, kills well and only in self-defense. Following Hemingway’s journalistic advice, Santiago rams the harpoon down into the shark’s head at a spot where “the line between the eyes intersected with the line that ran straight back from his nose” (p. 102). For when the shark strikes the marlin, “it was as though he himself were hit” (p. 103). “Man is not made for defeat,” he says. “A man can be destroyed but not defeated” (p. 103). Thus, the spirit and honor of the marlin must be kept alive by its conqueror whose love and respect vindicates his actions. “You loved him when he was alive and you loved him after,” says the man to himself. If you love your foe, it is not “a sin” to kill him (p. 105). Past memories are more glorious than the present difficulties for both man and fish. The man enjoyed thinking of the fish and “what he could do to a shark if he were swimming free,” and enjoys the camaraderie that exists between the two old shark-killing veterans. Like a soldier who uses a fallen comrade’s weapon to avenge his death, the old man would enjoy using the marlin’s bill as a weapon on the sharks. His final oath—to “fight them until I die”—is a fitting memorial to the marlin that fought so admirably to his own death (p. 115).

Badly beaten but not defeated, Santiago keeps alert by opening and closing the wounded palms of his hands to “bring the pain of life” back into his mind. His journey is not completed, however, until he shoulders the mast of his boat up the hill to his humble home.

Although the old man bears this burden of suffering alone as usual, his example is a graphic lesson to his young protégé. The tyro Manolin realizes that “there is much I can learn” from Santiago, who “can teach me everything” (p. 126). As Carlos Baker observes, the boy learns the challenge and “intrepidity to reach beyond the known,” the safe inshore regions within sight of land, and out towards the unlimited possibility of the Pacific.

Urged on by pride, by the love of his trade, by his refusal to take continuing bad luck as his portion, and by a resurgent belief that he might win, Santiago made the trial of the impossible. In the tragic process he achieved the moral triumph.<sup>19</sup>

Santiago's triumph is indeed moral: he loses the marlin but not his belief in the worth of his task. The lesson is clear; if Manolin inherits his master's pride and tenacity, he will also become a well-armed warrior in the struggle that is life.

## NOTES

1. Ernest Hemingway, "An American Storyteller," *Time* 64 (December 13, 1954), pp. 70–77.
2. Ernest Hemingway, "On the Blue River," *Esquire* 5 (April, 1936), p. 184.
3. Robert O. Stephens, *Hemingway's Nonfiction: The Public Voice* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), p. 312.
4. Harvey Breit, "Review of *The Old Man and the Sea*," *Nation* 175 (September 6, 1952), p. 194.
5. Ernest Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea* (New York: Scribner's, 1952), p. 10. All subsequent references to this novel are from this edition with page numbers in parentheses in the text.
6. William Barrett, *Time of Need* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 65.
7. Earl Rovit, *Ernest Hemingway*, p. 91.
8. Tony Tanner, *The Reign of Wonder* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1965), p. 239.
9. Ernest Hemingway, "The Undefeated," from *Men Without Women* (New York: Scribner's, 1927), p. 47.
10. Tony Tanner, *The Reign of Wonder*, p. 239.
11. Jake Barnes uses this phrase while explaining the technicalities of bull fighting to Lady Brett in *The Sun Also Rises*, p. 173.
12. Norman Mailer, *Existential Errands* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1963), p. xi.
13. Letter from Ernest Hemingway to General Charles "Buck" Lanham, 12 June 1952.
14. Mark Schorer, "With Grace Under Pressure," *New Republic* 127 (6 October, 1952) p. 30.
15. During his thirteen-year career, DiMaggio led the Yankees into ten World Series with nine world championships, five by 4–0 margins. Only in his last season did DiMaggio's batting average drop below .300. See *The Baseball Encyclopedia* (New York: Macmillan, 1969), p. 769.
16. Letter from Ernest Hemingway to Mike Strater, ? May 1928.
17. Ernest Hemingway, *Death in the Afternoon* (New York: Scribner's, 1932), p. 220.
18. Ernest Hemingway, *In Our Time* (New York: Scribner's, 1925), p. 137.
19. Carlos Baker, *Hemingway: The Writer as Artist*, 4th ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 319.





DAVID TIMMS

*Contrasts in Form:  
Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea  
and Faulkner's 'The Bear'*<sup>1</sup>

1

It is paradoxical that while most of us feel diffident about formulating definitions of the novel, we are confident about which texts we wish to call 'novels'. No wonder we are reluctant to offer definitions. The novel's bastard nature was acknowledged early: *Joseph Andrews* is famously a 'comic epic poem in prose'. That the novel is 'mimetic' or tends towards the 'referential' would be an area of agreement even for critics of widely divergent aesthetics: Erich Auerbach and Roman Jakobson perhaps.<sup>2</sup> But the very fact that the world comes so insistently into the form makes it more obviously the ground for contesting ideologies. This suggests that it is impossible to make a list of necessary qualities we would all agree on. Even Forster's unfashionably unambitious definition, that the novel is 'any fictitious prose work over 50,000 words',<sup>3</sup> has been contradicted by Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, which opens with a substantial verse section. But it seems that as readers we find it easy to recognize 'family resemblances' between novels. Texts as different as *Tristram Shandy* and *Middlemarch* are clearly siblings, but *Gulliver's Travels* is equally clearly only a cousin.

But oddly, the opposite seems to apply with regard to the novella. Here, we can find defining characteristics. Length is the most obvious. Mary Doyle Springer in *Forms of the Modern Novella* (1975) refines Forster when she says

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From *The Modern American Novella*, edited by A. Robert Lee, pp. 97–112. © 1989 by Vision Press.

that the novella is ‘a prose fiction of a certain length (usually 15,000 to 50,000 words)’.<sup>4</sup> That is fair enough: novellas are that length, otherwise they are short stories or novels. But what about ascribing particular works to the class of novellas? James’s ‘The Death of the Lion’ seems unproblematically a novella, especially since he gives his own *imprimatur* to the description.<sup>5</sup> But ‘The Aspern Papers’ or ‘The Turn of the Screw’? They are both within the word-limit. Conrad provides a more striking instance. I would call *The Nigger of the Narcissus* a novella, but not *Heart of Darkness*.

These examples hint that the difference may be one of value, and indeed that distinction has been offered by plausible voices. F. R. Leavis, for instance, jibbed at the word ‘*nouvelle*’ for Lawrence’s *St. Mawr*: ‘that description, with its limiting effect, has a marked infelicity. It certainly doesn’t suggest the nature or weight of the astonishing work of genius that Lawrence’s “dramatic poem” is.’<sup>6</sup> Nabokov is thinking in similar categories when he suggests dismissively that the writer of novellas operates by ‘diminishing large things and enlarging small ones’.<sup>7</sup> James on the other hand would not have accepted this conflation of ‘novella’ and ‘novelette’; he referred to the *nouvelle* as a ‘blest’ form.<sup>8</sup>

Certainly a qualitative distinction will not do to separate *The Old Man and the Sea* and ‘The Bear’ either from other prose fictions or from each other. In a most useful examination of the history of the term ‘novella’ Gerald Gillespie includes both works as distinguished modern examples of the form:

William Faulkner’s ‘The Bear’ is still very close to the ‘simple’ *novella*, to Hemingway’s ‘Old Man and The Sea’, because it demonstrates through the creature hunted and the participants of the hunt a natural order that becomes visible precisely in the confrontation with the particular symbol.<sup>9</sup>

This seems to me to raise exactly the kind of problem I refer to above. While Gillespie’s general comments on the nature of the novella are unobjectionable, this particular ascription of texts seems to me unsatisfactory. I hope an explanation of that unsatisfactoriness might be suggestive not only about the texts themselves, but also about the nature of the novella.

## 2

It is evident at the outset that *The Old Man and the Sea* and ‘The Bear’ have similarities beyond their roughly equal length. Gillespie’s brief description of the thematic content of the two texts places them both in a tradition of American fictions that begins as early as Cooper’s *The Pioneers* (1823) and has been expressed in both ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture ever since. Michael Cimino’s *The Deer Hunter* (1978) is a recent example. The tradition tells the story of a

man's confronting nature and expressing in the confrontation elements of nobility that match what he confronts, and contrast with the society that surrounds him outside the forest or on shore. It is a theme characteristically American, in more than one sense, as 'The Bear' makes clear:

There was always a bottle present, so that it would seem to him that those fierce fine instants of heart and brain and courage and wiliness and speed were concentrated and distilled into that brown liquor which not women, not boys and children, but only hunters drank, drinking not of the blood they spilled but some condensation of the wild immortal spirit, drinking it moderately, humbly even, not with the pagan's base and baseless hope of acquiring thereby the virtues of cunning and strength and speed but in salute to them. Thus it seemed to him on this December morning not only natural but actually fitting that this should have begun with whisky.<sup>10</sup>

This view of the hunter is very specific. As the text points out, it is not at all 'pagan', and that is confirmed in anthropological works. According to James W. Fernandez, the 'Fang', a people of western equatorial Africa, use metaphors that make an analogy between men good at hunting and men who are good judges generally. He suggests that this is straightforward common sense and economic hard-headedness: 'Everyone knows the difference between a good and a bad hunter. The evidence comes home in his bag.'<sup>11</sup> But in 'The Bear', though it is a measure of Boon Hogganbeck's inferiority that he is in a position to shoot the bear and misses, it is a measure of Ike McCaslin's superiority and worthiness that he is in a position to shoot the bear and won't. While Santiago in Hemingway's story does kill the fish, he is like McCaslin above the concerns of cash. He does not get it home, and even though the meat would have brought him a great deal of money, his concern that the sharks have 'ruined' the marlin has nothing to do with economics. It is not even that being a 'hunter' carries a mark of social distinction, as it does in Britain. In both texts being a hunter is like being a priest.

If this is a characteristically American view it is also characteristically male. Richard Poirier commends Faulkner's careful balance of negatives in this very passage from 'The Bear' and tries to tell us that 'the description of things being dismissed by the negatives is never foreshortened or contemptuous.'<sup>12</sup> Could he really make that assertion if he read 'as a woman' the bracketing of their sex with boys and children? Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (1949) suggests that in a patriarchal culture hunting is the initial source of male status: superiority 'has been accorded in humanity not to the sex that brings forth but to that which kills'.<sup>13</sup> Faulkner is not even that positive here: the real force

of the negatives is that ‘hunter’ equals ‘minus female’. His drink is defined as that which women do *not* drink. The hunters do not use sheets but sleep under blankets, whose ‘rough male kiss’ Rupert Brooke noticed in another context. They have no interest in the virtues of good cooking, traditionally defined (at least in its domestic context) with women. Bizarrely, given his appearance, the figure of Boon Hogganbeck underlines this devaluation: within the symbolism of the text, he is female. The dog Lion ‘don’t care about nothing or nobody’, but Boon ‘knelt beside him, feeling the bones and muscles, the power. It was as if Lion were a woman—or perhaps Boon was the woman. That was more like it . . .’ (167). We should not be surprised then to find he does not drink reverentially but immoderately, and cannot shoot straight. He stresses his alliance with the non-hunters in the final words of the book: he lays claim to the squirrels (‘They’re mine’) when ‘proven hunters . . . scorned such’ (155).

Though women appear only as concepts in the central experiences of ‘The Bear’ and *The Old Man and the Sea*, what might be called ‘the Female’ is everywhere. Nina Baym identifies a recurrent pattern in ‘the’ American tradition:

. . . the role of the beckoning wilderness, the attractive landscape, is given a deeply feminine quality. Landscape is deeply imbued with female qualities, as society is: but where society is menacing and destructive, landscape is compliant and supportive. It has the attributes simultaneously of a virginal bride and a non-threatening mother; its female qualities are articulated with respect to a male angle of vision: what can nature do for me, asks the hero, what can it give me?<sup>14</sup>

These precise female identifications are not entirely accurate for ‘The Bear’ or *The Old Man and the Sea*, but in both cases, landscape is seen as female, inviting and sexually compliant:

[Santiago] always thought of the sea as *la mar* which is what people call her in Spanish when they love her . . . the old man always thought of her as feminine and as something that gave or withheld great favours, and if she did wild or wicked things it was because she could not help them. The moon affects her as it does a woman, he thought.<sup>15</sup>

For Ike McCaslin, what he experiences in the woods is ‘the existence of love and passion and experience which is his heritage and not yet his patrimony’, and the taste of it is the same as when ‘entering by chance the presence or

perhaps even merely the bedroom of a woman who has loved and been loved by many men' (155). This world is properly at the disposition of the genuine male principle. Old Ben is called colloquially 'the head bear . . . the man' (150) by Sam, his votary, and the maleness of the great swordfish is grossly Freudian. In this world the 'natural' order of male over female is rigidly maintained: Ben rakes the shoulder of the bitch who dares to look at him; only a male dog is able to hold him. The lords of the landscape are distinguished by a superior indifference to the female of their own species: both Ben and the great marlin are solitary, and their single state is imitated by their acolytes.

Not so in the social world ever closing in on Santiago and McCaslin. It is the world of commerce and industry, lumber factories, locomotives and fish-canneries, and its voice is feminine. From his relationship with the bear and Sam Fathers, Ike learns that he must 'repudiate' the legacy of 'his' land, because the whole notion of 'ownership' of the land is tainted. But his wife tempts him with sexual favours to repossess it, and withdraws them when he refuses. In *The Old Man and the Sea*, too, a woman speaks for society when she sees the skeleton of the marlin on the beach among the 'empty beer cans and dead barracudas'. She asks a waiter what it is and the waiter offers 'Tiburón . . . Eshark' in explanation of what happened to the great fish. She misunderstands, and thinks that she is looking at the skeleton of what the book has taught us to associate with what is sneaking and evil:

'I didn't know sharks had such handsome, beautifully formed tails.'

'I didn't either,' her male companion said. (109)

For a double reason women cannot be *aficionados*, and besides getting the facts wrong, the woman here diminishes what the reader is supposed to have experienced as a struggle of tragic proportions to a question of aesthetics. She reduces the 'value' of the fish as surely as the sharks did. Both texts conform to a definition offered by Judith Fetterley: 'To be American is male; and the quintessential American experience is betrayal by a woman.'<sup>16</sup>

Annette Kolodny has reminded us that a view of the landscape as female and compliant is anything but 'natural' if you are yourself a woman, and she has also stressed that the verbal appropriation of the landscape by men was matched by its physical appropriation, from which women were largely excluded.<sup>17</sup> Given this exclusion, if 'The Bear' yet again excuses Adam and blames 'the woman' for the fall from grace, it must be hypocritical . . . but does it, at least in simple terms?

In *History, Ideology and Myth in American Fiction, 1823–1852* (1984) Richard Clark has suggested that 'the' American tradition shown to be a construct by recent feminist critics might be seen to have a more particular

ideological function than simply to affirm patriarchy. He schematizes the form of the characteristic myth retold by texts in this tradition as 'Civilisation threatens Adamic Innocent living in harmony with Edenic Nature.'<sup>18</sup> It cloaks the actuality, which was an attempt to make 'Eden' economically profitable. The myth has a relationship with history rather like the relationship of dream and reality in Freudian theory: it can represent actual situations 'the other way round', with the purpose of providing 'a wish-fulfilling image of man's relationship with nature'.

Where in historical reality we know that blacks and Indians were exploited and expropriated by the whites, in the mythic representation we are offered the famous couples—Natty and Chingachgook, Ishmael and Queequeg, Huck and Nigger Jim—in which the innocent white man is symbolically allied with his victim in opposition to the advance of white civilisation. Evidently the figure of the white innocent has been produced by condensation and displacement of both material and ideological elements and can be interpreted as acting either as a denial of real conditions . . . or as a recuperation of them.<sup>19</sup>

If this operates for blacks and Indians, it also operates for women in both *The Old Man and the Sea* and 'The Bear', at least in my representation of it so far. But that representation is limited, and this simplified statement of myth does not hold good for Faulkner's story as a whole. 'Civilisation' in the shape of old Carothers McCaslin predates the Adamic Innocent. Ike McCaslin overtly confronts precisely those historical facts Clark identifies, but while Ike has moral stature at some points of the story, at others he seems ludicrous and his ideals naïf. The woods do indeed have their noble prelapsarian aspect, and Old Ben is an expression of it; but the Garden also already contains the serpent whom Ike calls 'Grandfather' near the end of the work (251). The complex represented by 'The Bear' will not conform with Clark's scheme, except in a way that is so partial as to raise more questions than it answers. On the other hand, there are no such complications in *The Old Man and the Sea*. It has one digression, in the shape of the episode of Santiago's arm-wrestling with the huge black. This digression however does not obscure the issue but clarifies it, since it functions in a straightforwardly allegorical way to the main story.

I suggest that it is on the complications of 'The Bear' and in the antithetical singleness and clarity of *The Old Man and the Sea* that the satisfactoriness or otherwise of the description 'novella' depends. Todorov suggests that 'there is no time, in reading a short work, to forget it is only "literature" and not "life"<sup>20</sup>; but the novel classically encourages us 'to find Swann's / Way better

than our own', as Randall Jarrell put it.<sup>21</sup> Though the two texts are alike as to length, *The Old Man and the Sea* follows the aesthetic principle the novella's brevity hints at, while 'The Bear' does not.

## 3

Definitions of the novella must take into account its most eloquent modern apologist, Henry James, and the suggestions about the form in his prefaces offer what he himself would probably have called a *point d'appui*. In connection with 'The Death of the Lion' he recalls the relief with which he greeted his editor's advice that he need not confine himself to the 'six to eight thousand words' usual in periodical publication:

Among forms, moreover, we had had, on the dimensional ground—for length and breadth—our ideal, the beautiful and blest *nouvelle*; the generous, the enlightened hour for which appeared thus at last to shine. . . . For myself I delighted in the shapely *nouvelle*—as, for that matter, I had from time to time here and there been almost encouraged to show.<sup>22</sup>

I should like to concentrate on the two features James picks out: length and shapeliness.

Many critics, following Lukács, have suggested that the novel uniquely gives the sense of lives shaped not simply by events but by the passage of time itself. This is not to say that all novels do, of course, but those which do not seem conspicuous in not doing so. In an essay on this topic Eleanor Hutchens notes that such novels 'make up the body of the anti-novelistic novel.'<sup>23</sup> That is not to say that the events in novellas do not sometimes take place over long periods of time: 'The Beast in the Jungle' is a case in point. But novellas differ from novels in that they do not give a sense of the experience of the passing of time. They will pick out only significant moments. In the novel, it is the very inclusion of events of lesser significance, of periods of time with no highlights, that gives the sense of time passing. The line of least resistance for the novella is to do as Hemingway's does, and confine action to a short period, in the case of *The Old Man and the Sea* some three days and nights. 'The Bear' is quite different in this respect. At different points of the narrative Ike appears as a small boy and as an old man, 'uncle to half a country and father to none' (228). Look for instance at this comment on his gun:

He had his own gun now, a new breech-loader, a Christmas gift; he would own and shoot it through two new pairs of barrels and one new stock, until all that remained of the original gun was



the silver-inlaid trigger-guard with his and McCaslin's engraved names and the date in 1878. (156)

The focus is on Ike's central experience with the bear, but passages like this encourage us to do what Eleanor Hutchens notes of reading novels, even those with central figures like Clarissa Dalloway or Leopold Bloom: we put one event always in the context of another, reconstruct a whole life in the experience of reading.

Analogous to the inclusion of 'inessential' events in plots of novels is the inclusion of 'superfluous' detail in describing settings. Such details function by virtue of their very irrelevance; as Barthes notes, it reminds us of the contingency of life and therefore testifies to the 'reality' of the world the novel represents.<sup>24</sup> On this point 'The Bear' and *The Old Man and the Sea* diverge once more. Events in 'The Bear' take place in many locations besides the woods, and of all of them we are given some physical sense. Of course the whole situation of Santiago—he is far out at sea and is materially impoverished anyway—is one that admits of little in the way of physical description, but then that is my point: the novella is well-adapted to such narrow settings.

The same is true of character, partly in simple quantitative terms: the novella finds it hard to accommodate a large cast. *The Old Man and the Sea* abides by the suggestions of the form in having only two major parts (the fish and the man), one supporting actor (Manolin), and a few bit-parts. 'The Bear' on the other hand has not only two star roles (Ike and McCaslin) but two large animal parts as well, and one for a good supporting small dog. There are a number of important 'character' parts (Boon, Sam Fathers, Major de Spain, Ash, the educated black), an opportunity to introduce a starlet, and a large cast of extras. There is a difference qualitatively, too, for the form surely does not encourage psychological complexity. Where an individual's psychology is the subject (as in 'The Beast in the Jungle' once more) the tendency is to treat a single issue. *The Old Man and the Sea* obeys this principle and is not 'psychological', the emphasis being on what the old man does, rather than on what he thinks: on the moral status rather than the springs of his actions. A great deal of 'The Bear' is given over to Ike's motives, and attention is paid to the way in which a whole range of events shape his psyche. Perhaps I should say 'happenings', for Ike is a very passive hero, especially in contrast with Santiago. 'The Beast in the Jungle' comes once more to mind; Ike is more like one of James's heroes than one of Hemingway's.

*The Old Man and the Sea* deals with a single theme: the possibility of creating significance through dignity and courage in a natural and social world devoid of inherent meanings. The marlin's world is full of sharks; the old man's world is full of people like Manolin's parents who put cash reward above loyalty, or the woman tourist who cannot tell an ignoble fish from a noble one.

Gerald Gillespie traces the lineage of the novella from the Latin *exemplum*, and notes the contribution of the Italian *novellino*, the little anecdote that has a moral.<sup>25</sup> Erich Auerbach, too, notes that the *novellino* has the form of an *exemplum*, and comments that the style is 'flatly paratactic . . . with the events strung together as though on a thread, without palpable breadth and without an atmosphere for the characters to breathe in'.<sup>26</sup> The dismissive tone apart, this seems to me an adequate description of *The Old Man and the Sea* in terms of style, plot and setting. But it is surely appropriate to present such a theme in paratactic language and by means of a paratactic plot: this is a world without a teleology or even an eschatology, where the only inherent organizing principle or end product is blank sequence. The only way to make such a world meaningful is to force life and death into a context of your own manufacture where they are not arbitrary; for Santiago the assumed moral imperatives of a ritual contest between his own cunning and experience and the fish's strength. In a well-known letter to H. G. Wells, James expressed something similar: 'it is art that *makes* life . . . makes importance.'<sup>27</sup> But as Walter Benjamin stresses, in the 'story' (and he explicitly includes the novella in this category), '*one* hero, *one* odyssey, *one* battle',<sup>28</sup> and in *The Old Man and the Sea* this singleness is evident in language and narrative style.

Once more 'The Bear' is quite different. It includes a variation on Hemingway's single theme, but Faulkner has ancillary themes that have a more or less independent existence. The race issue, for instance, branches in several different directions. It is not simply another instance of the damage wreaked by the original sin of presuming to own land and buy and sell it. 'The Bear' deals with the issue of the exploitation of female slaves, and the right to inheritance of the black descendants of slave-owners. It deals with the usefulness or otherwise of 'educating' blacks without giving them proper means of subsistence. It deals with the distinctive qualities of blacks as a racial group, and refers to the different stresses of having black and Indian, or white and Indian ancestry.

If the style of *The Old Man and the Sea* is consonant with its single theme, that of 'The Bear' is appropriate for its complex and multiple ones:

And He probably knew it was vain but He had created them, and knew them capable of all things because He had shaped them out of the primal Absolute which contained all and had watched them since in their individual exaltation and baseness, and they themselves not knowing why nor how nor even when: until at last He saw that they were all Grandfather all of them and that even from them the elected and chosen the best the very best He could expect (not hope mind: not hope) would be Bucks and Buddies and not even enough of them. (215-16)

The language here is hypotactic and grammatically embedded. Ike's wish to find exactly the right word, which goes to the extent of referring to the near relatives that will not do ('not hope mind: not hope'), paradoxically makes the semantics more obscure. The whole, content and style, encourages the reader to see Ike McCaslin's life and problems as complex and confusing—and indeed it is one of Ike's failings that he does not recognize this himself, believing that the simple act of renouncing his land will restore the Garden to order.

This complexity is enormously increased by the fact that 'The Bear' does not maintain a single angle of vision or attitude towards its themes and characters, as *The Old Man and the Sea* does. The attitude the latter wishes to encourage in its reader is like Manolin's at the end: a sort of sad, admiring resignation. It is made bitter-sweet by the introduction of the woman tourist, a member of a crass out-group that serves to define the membership of the sensitive in-group: Santiago, Manolin, narrator and reader. Once more 'The Bear' is very different. While Santiago is not a conventional hero he is consistently heroic and is never presented in a light that will show him as either mean or laughable. He belongs in a tradition of 'naturally noble' American fictional heroes that goes back at least to Natty Bumppo. But Ike McCaslin's naivety is often laughable, and he does not even have the dignified simplicity of a Huck Finn, say. This is clear from his cousin's antiphonal responses when Ike catalogues black virtues:

'They are better than we are, stronger than we are. . . . Their vices are aped from white men. . . .'

'All right. Go on: promiscuity. Violence. Instability and lack of control. Inability to distinguish between mine and thine—' and he

'How distinguish, when for two hundred years mine did not even exist for them?' and McCaslin

'All right. Go on. And their virtues—' and he

'Yes. Their own. Endurance—' and McCaslin

'So have mules:' and he

'—and pity and tolerance and forbearance and fidelity and love of children—' and McCaslin

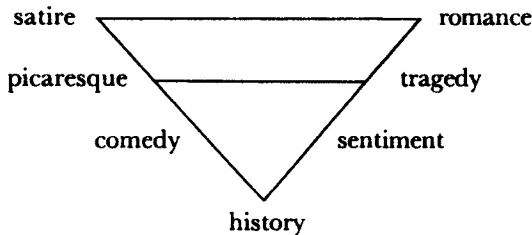
'So have dogs.' (225)

Ike's tone here is too righteous and too humble for us to be convinced that the text is wholly behind him; McCaslin as the voice of the common man is too tart and too humorous for the reader simply to dismiss him as a self-interested cynic.

The grandness of Ike's renunciation has a comic and even farcical corrective in the story of Uncle Hubert's bequest. Ike's indigent uncle had

nobly promised to leave his nephew a silver cup full of gold coins, which he ceremoniously sealed in a burlap package before the whole family. Over the years, Ike had noticed unaccounted-for changes in the shape of the package, and in its sound when rattled. He discovers the reason for the alterations only when the burlap is unsealed on his twenty-first birthday. Uncle Hubert had 'borrowed' the gold coins one by one, and replaced them with I.O.U.s. Finally he had exchanged the precious cup for a tin coffee-pot. Romance has turned to broad humour, but humour itself turns to irony when Ike pragmatically finds the coffee-pot useful: the silver cup would have been merely ornamental. Something similar happens on a more local level when McCaslin asks Ike why he did not shoot the bear when he had the chance. It is a serious topic, and Ike replies seriously by quoting Keats's 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', implying something like 'Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard / Are sweeter.' But can this reference remain serious in the context of Uncle Hubert's silver cup, or when we remember that Keats's poem is partly about a man not catching a young woman, when Ike is obsessed with his Grandfather's catching them too often?

Robert Scholes's contribution to a most useful collection of essays, *Towards a Poetics of Fiction* (1977), proposes a diagram that classifies fictions by genre.<sup>29</sup> He gives us a diagram based on an inverted triangle:



Any fiction can be placed relative to others somewhere in the triangle. Fictions that represent life as it actually is are 'histories', and others vary according to whether they tend to represent life as being better than it is (romance) or worse than it is (satire). Traditional 'novels' are all placed within the bottom two-thirds of the diagram, below a line drawn between picaresque and tragedy. They are mixtures: indeed the fact that they are mixtures is constitutive of their being novels. Where would *The Old Man and the Sea* and 'The Bear' fit? In different places, I suggest. I would place *The Old Man and the Sea* above the picaresque-tragedy line, near tragedy rather than romance. The position of 'The Bear' is more problematic, but certainly it would be below the line, not above. It is drawn down towards 'history' by its complex plot and characterization and its multiple themes, and by its seeing them in both comic and tragic lights: by its seeing life mimetically, 'as it is', in fact.

Novellas as a class would not simply occupy a zone within the area taken up by novels as a whole in Scholes's triangle. Many of the most characteristic would fall outside that area, whether they tend towards satire on the one hand, or towards romance on the other. Another and more famous geometric metaphor for fiction is the circle from James's preface to *Roderick Hudson*:

Really, universally, relations stop nowhere, and the exquisite problem of the artist is eternally but to draw, by a geometry of his own, the circle within which they shall happily *appear* to do so.<sup>30</sup>

While James's formulation is a just one, it must also be said that the firmer the circle is drawn, the less will be the sense of the multifariousness of life; the more heterogeneous the world included, the less clear will the outline of the circle be, if the shape is maintained at all. The novella is surely a form that stresses the circle, both by the obvious measure of length, and by the less obvious measure of 'shapeliness'. To that extent it gives less of the sense of heterogeneity that is characteristic of the novel form. I hesitate to offer a reductive definition, but what seems to be the case is that the novella is a form that operates within a narrower technical and thematic range, and that this influences its generic possibilities. Brevity encourages this limitation of techniques, themes and generic possibilities rather than enforces it; but it is precisely when a fiction of novella length adopts heterogeneous technical, thematic and genre features that we become unhappy with the description 'novella'. By this measure, *The Old Man and the Sea* is a model novella, and while I have had no intention of trusting the teller rather than the tale, I am glad not to have to go against Faulkner himself, who had the sub-title of *Go Down, Moses and Other Stories* removed from its second printing.<sup>31</sup>

#### NOTES

1. *The Old Man and the Sea* was first printed as a separate volume (1952), but 'The Bear' first appeared as the longest of a group of interconnected stories in *Go Down, Moses* (1942). While both texts have appeared in a variety of contexts since first publication, I have adhered to the convention suggested by the original appearance in italicizing the title of Hemingway's narrative, and putting Faulkner's in inverted commas.

2. Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (1946), trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963); Roman Jakobson, 'Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics', in T. Sebeok (ed.), *Style in Language* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1960), pp. 350–70.

3. E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (1927; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1962), pp. 13–14.

4. Mary Doyle Springer, *Forms of the Modern Novella* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 93.

5. *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces by Henry James*, ed. R. P. Blackmur (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), p. 220.
6. F. R. Leavis, 'The Novel as Dramatic Poem: *St. Maŕw*', (1950) rpt. in Stephen Hazell (ed.), *The English Novel: Developments in Criticism since Henry James* (London: Macmillan, 1978), p. 85.
7. Quoted in Springer, p. 5.
8. *The Art of the Novel*, p. 220.
9. Gerald Gillespie, 'Novella, Nouvelle, Novelle, Short Novel? A Review of Terms', *Neophilologus*, 51 (1967), 227.
10. William Faulkner, 'The Bear', in *Go Down, Moses and Other Stories* (1942; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970), p. 146. Future references will appear in brackets in the text.
11. James W. Fernandez, 'Persuasions and Performances: Of the Beast in Everybody . . . And the Metaphors of Everyman', in Clifford Geertz (ed.), *Myth, Symbol and Culture* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1971), p. 51.
12. Richard Poirier, *A World Elsewhere: The Place of Style in American Literature* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1967), p. 79.
13. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, (1949) trans. H. M. Parshley (New York: Bantam Books, 1961), p. 58.
14. Nina Baym, 'Melodramas of Beset Manhood: How Theories of American Literature Exclude Women Authors', in Elaine Showalter (ed.), *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature and Theory* (London: Virago Press, 1986), pp. 63–80.
15. Ernest Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952; London, Triad Grafton Press, 1976), p. 23. Future references will appear in brackets in the text.
16. Judith Fetterley, *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), p. xiii.
17. Annette Kolodny, "'To Render Home a Paradise": Women on the New World Landscapes', in *Women's Language and Style*, ed. Douglas Butturff and Edmund L. Epstein (Akron, Ohio: L & S Books, 1978), p. 43.
18. Richard Clark, *History, Ideology and Myth in American Fiction, 1823–1852* (London: Macmillan, 1984), p. 10.
19. Clark, p. 12.
20. Tzvetan Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose*, (1971) trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 143.
21. Randall Jarrell, 'Children Selecting Books in a Library', *The Complete Poems* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1969), p. 107.
22. *The Art of the Novel*, p. 220.
23. Eleanor Hutchens, 'An Approach Through Time', in Mark Spilka (ed.) *Towards a Poetics of Fiction* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1977), p. 61.
24. Quoted in Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978), p. 53.
25. Gillespie, p. 120.
26. Auerbach, p. 214.
27. *Henry James: Letters*, IV, ed. Leon Edel (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1984), 770.
28. Walter Benjamin, 'The Storyteller', *Illuminations*, (1955) trans. Henry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (London: Fontana, 1973), p. 98.
29. Robert Scholes, 'An Approach Through Genre', in *Towards a Poetics of Fiction*, p. 48.
30. *The Art of the Novel*, p. 5.

31. James Early, *The Making of 'Go Down, Moses'* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1972), p. 114, says that after the first printing of the book, 'And Other Stories' was dropped from the title, 'at Faulkner's request'. Early also says that 'Michael Millgate believes that the original title may have been an editor's rather than Faulkner's.'

PETER L. HAYS

*Up to the End*

**D**uring the war years Hemingway did little publishing: in 1942 he selected stories for soldiers in a thousand-page book called *Men at War*, and he wrote war correspondence for *Collier's* magazine in the latter half of 1944. In his rambling introduction to *Men at War*, Hemingway stated bluntly his antipathy for war:

The editor of this anthology . . . hates war and hates all the politicians whose mismanagement, gullibility, cupidity, selfishness, and ambition brought on this present war and made it inevitable. But once we have a war there is only one thing to do. It must be won. For defeat brings worse things than any that can ever happen in a war.<sup>1</sup>

His purpose in compiling the volume, Hemingway stated, was to show to those who have to endure a war that others have done so before them, faced what they must, and acquitted themselves with courage. He wanted to give combatants accounts of others like themselves, for when he had been a naive youth in World War I, he “would have given anything for a book . . . which showed what all the other men we are a part of had gone through and how it had been with them” (pp. xii–xiii). “Whatever I had to do [in combat] men

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From *Ernest Hemingway*, pp. 96–111. © 1990 by Peter L. Hays.



had always done. If they had done it then I could do it too and the best thing was not to worry about it” (p. xii).

In selecting stories for the *Men at War* anthology, Hemingway was guided by the principal of truth, the truth of war as he knew it, obviously, rather than literary merit alone, fine writing on the subject of war. He rejected several suggestions of the publisher as exaggerated and fanciful, clinging to the eyewitness observer or the account, though fictional, that smacked of truth.

A writer’s job is to tell the truth. His standard of fidelity to the truth should be so high that his invention, out of his experience, should produce a truer account than anything factual can be. For facts can be observed badly; but when a good writer is creating something, he has time and scope to make it of an absolute truth.

Screaming, necessary though it may be to attract attention at the time, reads badly in later years. (pp. xiv, xv)

(The reader sees again the importance of craft for him, whether the skill and courage of the writer or the skill and courage of a soldier under fire.) By his definition of what constituted true writing, he includes accounts from the Bible of David’s battle with Goliath and Joshua’s conquest of Jericho, Virgil’s account of the Trojan Horse from the *Aeneid*, along with historical accounts of the Crusades. Eyewitness accounts, such as Stendhal’s of Waterloo, are represented, as are fictional ones, Stephen Crane’s account of the Civil War in *The Red Badge of Courage*. Hemingway includes three of his own works: the retreat from Caporetto from *Farewell to Arms*, Sordo’s last stand from *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and a slight short story (mostly journalism) from the Spanish Civil War called “The Chauffeurs of Madrid” (which was not kept in the paperback reprint and has never been reprinted since). He mixed authors noted for their literary style—Victor Hugo, Tolstoy, Winston Churchill, Ambrose Bierce, and Faulkner—with such individuals, now unknown to us, as Mary Johnson, Private 19022, and Blake Clark. Although World War II was at its fury when the book was first published, and it concludes with accounts of Pearl Harbor and the Battle of Midway, Hemingway prefaces sections with quotations from the German military strategist General Karl von Clausewitz, and he also includes, as testimony to their courage, an account of the Japanese naval victory during the Russo-Japanese War. War he hated, but the accounts of brave men, regardless of their nation, he admired.

After the war, he did two brief introductions, for John Groth’s *Studio: Europe* and for another anthology *A Treasury of the Free World*. In 1946, he began writing *The Garden of Eden*, which was not published until 1986. Although he returned to the manuscript several times over the years, he never

finished it. In 1948, in Italy, he met eighteen-year-old Adriana Ivancich while shooting birds on a private estate and promptly became infatuated. Soon he put aside his lengthy novel of the land, sea, and air to write a novel inspired by Adriana and Venice. (Adriana was always well chaperoned, usually by her mother, when she and Hemingway were together in Italy or in visits to him in Cuba; Mary Hemingway was also present, controlling her jealousy. Hemingway loved the girl as a symbol of his youth, as the daughter he had long wished for and never had, and as the attractive woman that she was. She was flattered by the attention of an older man, one who was world-famous, but she did not reciprocate his passion and there seems never to have been an affair.) The resulting novel, *Across the River and into the Trees* (1950), is probably Hemingway's worst. Critics have tried to redeem it from its own failings, praising the denseness of allusion to such writers as Dante, Thomas Mann (*Death in Venice*), and Gabriele D'Annunzio, the symbolic resonance of nearly every scene, every word, but none of these make the novel work.

The book recounts the last days of a Colonel, formerly General, Richard Cantwell, who is stationed in Trieste after World War II and returns to Venice to spend a last weekend before his imminent death, a Venice he fought for and protected in World War I. The title of the novel comes from the dying words of Confederate General Stonewall Jackson, and as critic Philip Young points out, they constitute a metaphor for the land of death.<sup>2</sup> The colonel has suffered three heart attacks and knows that death is near and tries to prepare for it, while enjoying life to the fullest: seeing his mistress; enjoying food, wine, and companionship; and duck shooting. Like Hemingway, Cantwell is fifty-one, was wounded in Italy in World War I, was an observer in the Spanish Civil War, and was in the Huertgen Campaign of World War II. Like Hemingway, Cantwell was married and divorced and now has a nearly nineteen-year-old girlfriend of Italian nobility; unlike Hemingway's situation, the colonel's girlfriend returns his passion. The colonel is taking nitroglycerin for his angina, and like Stonewall Jackson, Cantwell also was shot through the hand (Cantwell, twice), as well as having been wounded in the head, chest, and leg. With his wound in his hand and pain in his side, the colonel is a Christ figure; he is also Richard the Lion-Hearted and "Mister Dante" (pp. 229, 246). The girlfriend, Renata, is Cantwell's Beatrice (Dante's heroine and inspiration); Renata means rebirth. She gives the colonel a gift of sea green emeralds, as the Doge of Venice gives a ring to the sea, marrying Venice to the water; so the opposites in the book are married: age and youth, experience and innocence, male and female, land and water, love and war, etc. Renata is Catholic and will not marry the colonel because he has been married before. She seeks to purge the colonel of his bitterness (as in purgatory), to allow him a good death, shriven and forgiven: "I want you to die with the grace of a happy death" (p. 240). The intentions of the novel may be admirable; the effect is not.

The colonel's name: Cant-well. Does it apply to his heart condition, the fact that he can no longer exert himself well? Yet the colonel, in his reminiscences, says that he was an exceptional soldier, fighting bravely, only losing men by following the orders of unknowing desk jockeys. He shoots well at duck hunting, and—in spite of the heart condition that pains him after walking over a Venetian bridge and that kills him—he knocks out two sailors in a street brawl because they have whistled at Renata and show no respect to him or his rank, and he makes love to her three times in a gondola (no lack of ability there). Moreover, he knows literature (alluding to Dante, Shakespeare, Blake, Whitman, Rimbaud, Verlaine, and Eliot), art, history, and gourmet foods and wines; his joy of life is such that “he had never been sad one waking morning of his life” (p. 289). What then is it that he can't well? Why is his comic-book-reading driver named Jackson, the same as General Stonewall Jackson? Obviously there is a contrast between those who do their jobs well, thoroughly, artistically, and with dignity, whether soldier, waiter, or gondolier; but that contrast between the colonel and his driver is apparent without the name Jackson.

Hemingway has the colonel drop names: George Patton, Erwin Rommel (with whom the Colonel skied after they had fought on opposite sides in World War I), Bernard Montgomery, Charles Leclerc, Dwight Eisenhower (a “Politician General,” not yet elected president when the novel was published) and, by allusion, Harry S. Truman. He makes Cantwell a latter-day Wild Bill Hickok, counting those he has killed (difficult in these days of mechanized warfare), always concerned that he sit with his back covered and careful to notice each person entering a room, lest someone slip up on him unawares to kill him. Cantwell's desire to be observant is laudable, as is his waking each morning to greet the day, but to be observant only to be aware of potential assassins when one is dying of heart disease seems anachronistic and ludicrous.

The novel is full of talk, rather than action; some duck shooting, a one-page street brawl, and some rather vague lovemaking are the only activities in a 308-page book—the rest is conversation (some of it to Renata's portrait), description, or reminiscence. Much of the colonel's and Renata's conversations have to do with his explaining American slang to her, slang now badly dated. (Perhaps it is this cant that the colonel knows well.) The distance between author and character is not well established. Cantwell seems very close to Hemingway, in age, history, friendships, and dislikes. Cantwell's service in World War II, at least all that he recalls, seems limited to the period from the invasion of Normandy to the Huertgen Campaign, from June 1944 to January 1945, seven months, exactly Hemingway's time covering the front, but certainly not all the service of a field-grade American officer during the entirety of the war. Cantwell calls Renata “daughter,” as

Hemingway was then addressing women, notably in Lillian Ross's profile of him for the *New Yorker* (May 13, 1950). The colonel and Renata mock Sinclair Lewis unmercifully (by description, not by name); Lewis, who had praised Hemingway when accepting the Nobel Prize twenty years before in 1930, was in Venice when Hemingway was. Perhaps saddest is the self-parody of what had once been Hemingway's tight, barebones prose, with only the telling detail. Instead this novel gives us inflated, meaningless rhetoric: "Please put your arms around me. Gently and well" (p. 114); gently, yes, but what does "well" mean in that context? On the same page, the colonel's "heart [is] broken, honestly and fairly." Renata "chewed well and solidly on her steak" (p. 127). After making love to Renata, the colonel reached "accurately and well for the champagne bucket" (p. 154), and while dying he still manages to close the car door, "carefully and well" (p. 307). For an author once extremely chary of adjectives and adverbs, Hemingway's use of them in *Across the River* seems careless and slapdash. Hemingway tells the reader when the characters are speaking Spanish or Italian, unlike the lilting suggestions of it in *The Sun Also Rises* or *For Whom the Bell Tolls* with their stilted constructions suggesting literal translation of a foreign tongue or the presence of non-English words. Instead, in this novel, the reader gets, "It was easy,' the Colonel told her in Italian."

If we are to lament the Colonel's death, Hemingway does not give us enough of his life to care. If one is to admire Renata's gentling of his "wild boar blood" again, one is not given enough of an interest in the colonel to care. He seems, in fact, rather fortunate, living in one of Venice's most expensive hotels, dining off lobster and champagne, with a young girlfriend giving him emeralds, his death no tragedy. Limiting the novel to a long weekend does not achieve the compression of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, nor does the relationship of the lovers achieve the intensity of Robert and Maria's, so the separation is not as painful; in fact, the age and life-style difference, the chattiness of the novel, and the flaccidity of the prose undermine it further. It is not a good novel, and the critics tore it and its author apart.

Adriana Ivancich (and her mother) visited Hemingway (and Mary) in Cuba in late October 1950, taking some of the sting out of the reviews. Inspired, Hemingway returned to his large sea novel, the adventures of Thomas Hudson, what was later published as *Islands in the Stream*. In the new year, he turned his attention to the story he had told briefly in *Esquire* in April 1936 of a Cuban fisherman towed to sea by a giant marlin, and finished the first draft of *The Old Man and the Sea* by mid-February. He also wrote two fables for *Holiday*, "The Good Lion" and "The Faithful Bull," an introduction to a bibliography of his works, and a preface to *Pourquoi Ces Bêtes Sont-elles Sauvages?*, a picture book of African wildlife, and returned to Thomas Hudson's story.

*The Old Man and the Sea* was published September 1, 1952, in a single issue of *Life* magazine (the first time that *Life* had ever published a whole novella) and as a Book-of-the-Month-Club selection a week later; the magazine version sold five million copies in two days, and still the book sales went well. Hemingway's reputation was definitely restored. *The Old Man and the Sea* is a parable about human existence, and as a parable, moving though it is, it lacks human depth and complexity. Hemingway had considered "The Dignity of Man" as a title, but thought it, while accurate, too pompous.<sup>3</sup> The story tells of an old Cuban fisherman who has gone eighty-four days without catching a major fish. On noon of the eighty-fifth day he catches a giant, eighteen-foot-long, 1,500 pound marlin, which tows him farther out to sea for two more days, only coming close enough to be killed on the third day. The old man, Santiago, lashes the fish to his skiff—it is too big to fit into the boat—and sails back to the fishing port of Cojimar, near Havana; along the way, sharks attack the bleeding marlin and strip all the meat from it, despite the efforts of the old man to prevent them. It is a simple story, told in a style close to original Hemingway prose, replete with meanings. And though Hemingway was at pains to deny any overt symbolism, it is obviously present and at one time, at least, too painfully obvious.

To begin with, there are Biblical and specifically Christian images. Santiago is more than twice the Biblical "forty days" without a fish (p. 9). Santiago is the Spanish form of St. James, the Galilean fisherman apostle of Jesus, and martyr. At the end of the novella, having been scourged by the rope across his back, having been cut around the eye, having his hand stigmatized by line cuts, Santiago shoulders his mast, as Christ did His Cross, stumbles under its weight as he carries it, and falls asleep on his bed in the cruciform position. For those for whom these are not obvious enough to show how Santiago is Christ-like in his endurance of the pain of life, Hemingway, when Santiago sees the second sharks, adds, "Ay," he said aloud. There is no translation for this word and perhaps it is just a noise such as a man might make, involuntarily, feeling the nail go through his hands and into the wood" (p. 107).

Within such a specifically Christian context, it is appropriate to see the fish as *ichthys*, the symbol of the early Christians, based on the Greek words "Jesus Christ, Son of God, the Savior," whose initials form as an acrostic the word *ichthys*, or fish. And as Hemingway has done with Santiago, the fish is also identified with Christ and His Passion. The fish goes down to the depths for three days and ascends on the third. Santiago spears the fish in its side, "just behind the great chest fin that rose high in the air to the altitude of a man's chest" (p. 94). The subsequent paragraph—"Then the fish came alive, with his death in him, and rose high out of the water showing all his great length and width and all his power and beauty. He seemed to hang in the air

above the old man”—echoes the earlier “all his greatness and glory” (p. 66), and both echo the Lord’s Prayer: “For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory.”

Hemingway identifies hunter and hunted, killer and prey. Throughout the novella, Santiago calls the fish his brother, so the fact that both are identified with Christ should not be confusing: both suffer, both endure, both act nobly. Both show how one should act under duress. “You are killing me, fish, the old man thought. But you have a right to. Never have I seen a greater, or more beautiful, or a calmer or more noble thing than you, brother” (p. 92).

Although Santiago is alone for most of the novel, Hemingway is at pains to make him the center of several concentric circles of connectedness to others. First, there is the boy, Manolin, the old man’s surrogate son and disciple, whom he has initiated into the craft of fishing. Then there is the community of fishermen and friends who support him, giving him food, bait, and credit. Beyond that, there is the human community, which searches for the old man when he is missing, “‘with coast guard and with planes. . . . The ocean is very big and a skiff is small and hard to see,’ the old man said. He noticed how pleasant it was to have someone to talk to instead of speaking only to himself and to the sea” (p. 124). In fact, throughout his ordeal, Santiago has prayed for Manolin’s presence—his help, his youth, as if Santiago could share it, and his company. But the fisherman is a member of communities more than human; Hemingway makes Santiago at one with all of nature, and not just his prey:

He knew no man was ever alone on the sea. (p. 61)

He was very fond of flying fish as they were his principal friends on the ocean. He was sorry for the birds, especially the small delicate dark terns . . . (p. 29)

He loved green turtles and hawk-bills. . . . Most people are heartless about turtles because a turtle’s heart will beat for hours after he has been cut up and butchered. But the old man thought, I have such a heart too and my feet and hands are like theirs. (p. 37)

He eats turtle eggs, though, and drinks shark liver oil, not only for the nourishment provided, but also—as he will later do to the flesh of the marlin—as an act of ritual “at-onement,” of ingesting the qualities of another, of communion.

What all these creatures share is an indifferent universe. A migrating warbler perches on the line between Santiago and the marlin. “‘Take a good rest, small bird,’ he said. ‘Then go in and take your chance like any man or bird or fish’” (p. 55). The message here is one the reader has encountered before: a

cruel, indifferent world, where an individual creates his own code of conduct and is measured against it. Santiago is a fisherman and prides himself on the skill, the craft, with which he conducts his profession:

Each bait hung head down with the shank of the hook inside the bait fish, tied and sewed solid and all the projecting part of the hook . . . was covered with fresh sardines. . . . (p. 31)

He kept [his lines] straighter than anyone did, so that at each level in the darkness of the stream there would be a bait waiting exactly where he wished it to be for any fish that swam there. Others let them drift with the current and sometimes they were at sixty fathoms when the fishermen thought they were at a hundred.

But, he thought, I keep them with precision. Only I have no luck any more. . . . It is better to be lucky. But I would rather be exact. (p.32)

Man cannot control fate, what destiny gives to him; we are back with *The Sun Also Rises* and the saying from Ecclesiastes that the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, but that time and chance happen to all men (Ecc. 9:11). What man can do, must do, in the face of adversity is maintain his own standards of conduct and endure. "Although it is unjust, he thought. But I will show [the fish] what a man can do and what a man endures. . . . The thousand times he had proved it meant nothing. Now he was proving it again" (p. 66). After three days at sea, his hands badly cut, Santiago works to bring the marlin in close enough to harpoon him: "He took all his pain and what was left of his strength and his long gone pride and he put it against the fish's agony" (p. 93).

There is a certain reflexiveness in Hemingway's description of Santiago, his care with his craft, and his efforts. Just as Romero's "straight and pure and natural in line" in *The Sun Also Rises* could apply equally well to Hemingway's prose, so too Santiago's lines, "as thick around as a big pencil" (p. 31), which he kept "straighter than any one" (p. 32). And with each new book, Hemingway, and the critics, felt that he had to prove himself again.

Santiago fights the sharks as long as he is able, protecting his catch:

He hit [the shark] with his blood mused hands driving a good harpoon with all his strength. He hit it without hope but with resolution and complete malignancy. (p. 102)

That shark takes Santiago's harpoon with him. The old man kills two more sharks with his knife lashed to an oar, but the knife blade breaks on the second

shark. "Now they have beaten me, he thought. I am too old to club sharks to death. But I will try as long as I have oars and the short club and the tiller" (p. 112). "I'll fight them until I die" (p. 115). And fight them he does, until weapons and marlin are gone. In this book, Hemingway does not leave the message to be deduced. He states it explicitly: "A man can be destroyed but not defeated" (p. 103). Bad luck, fate, may destroy a man, but if he maintains his own standards, he will maintain his dignity and not be defeated—a romantic notion for someone considered, as Hemingway has been, a nihilist.

Aristotle insists that Greek tragic heroes contribute to their misfortunes, and Santiago does so in losing the marlin to the sharks, and does so in ways suggestive of Greek tragedy. When Manolin asks him where he intends to fish, Santiago answers, "Far out." Having caught the marlin, he reflects, "His choice had been to stay in deep water far out beyond all snares and traps and treacheries. My choice was to go there to find him beyond all people. Beyond all the people in the world." And at novel's end, he thinks: "And what beat you. . . . 'Nothing,' he said aloud. 'I went out too far.'"

Santiago commits hubris, an act of presumption or arrogance—to go beyond others, to achieve more, and thereby establish oneself as better, and thus links himself with such Greek heroes as Achilles and Oedipus. Hemingway repeats a paradox here, one discussed by philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*: without exceeding the common norm, nothing exceptional is accomplished, but by going beyond others one invites criticism and punishment. Santiago goes out far, catches his fish, and then is punished for his hubris by having the flesh stripped off his prize. He returns only with the skeleton. But his fellow fishermen know from its length that Santiago is still *El Campeon*, still able, still capable, still a master fisherman. That they alone know explains the misunderstanding between tourist and waiter at the novella's end: the tourists, the uninitiated, are uncomprehending (echoing Mark 4:12).

Just as Jake emulates the sports hero Romero, so too does Santiago have a hero he measures himself against, also from sports, but with a difference. Santiago's hero is Joe DiMaggio, who played baseball for the New York Yankees when the novella was written but who had retired by the time of publication because of his advanced age: thirty-seven years. DiMaggio, like the fictional Romero, was a skilled craftsman who made his art look easy. He was troubled with growths on his heel, bone spurs, which required surgery, and Santiago, struggling to bring in his fish with cuts on his hands, compares himself and his pain to that of DiMaggio, old for his occupation and also physically hampered. There is one significant difference between Romero and DiMaggio, though. A bullfighter faces the bull essentially alone. Boxers like Ole Anderson and Jack Brennan also face their opponents alone. The shift toward greater social concern and awareness that Hemingway had begun in



the thirties with *To Have and Have Not* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is continued here with the concentric circling of societies and even in the choice of a hero to emulate. Baseball is a team sport, and DiMaggio was the quintessential team player, sparking the team and encouraging their efforts. So Santiago thinks of Joe DiMaggio, whose father was a fisherman, wondering if he measures up to his hero, and he dreams of lions, the only cats who are social, grouping in packs, and he wishes that Manolin were with him. At the end, Manolin nurses him and waits for Santiago to heal so that he may accompany his hero and continue learning from him.

The novella is, as I said, essentially a parable of the need for human connection and for a self-defined code of conduct that measures the individual, fate notwithstanding; and as such, it does not deal with psychology or human complexity. Santiago does speculate, but his philosophizing is neither deep nor convincing:

Imagine if each day a man must try to kill the moon, he thought. The moon runs away. But imagine if a man each day should have to try to kill the sun? We were born lucky, he thought. (p.75)

Such ramblings are, however, minimal, even less than in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. And the prose, while it no longer struck the audience of literary critics with the force Hemingway's prose had in the twenties—and some critics accused him of imitating himself—was sparser and cleaner, with fewer ill-placed adverbs than that of *Across the River and into the Trees*. However thin and obvious it might have been, *The Old Man and the Sea* was good reading, showed that Hemingway could still tell a story and control his prose, and had not lost his talent. In fact, he won the Pulitzer Prize for literature the following year, 1953, and the Nobel Prize the year after. He would have won in 1953 for his complete works, especially *The Old Man and the Sea*, but the prize was supposed to go to works of moral uplift, idealistic works, and the Prize Committee was disturbed, as the award announcement said when it did come, by Hemingway's "brutal, cynical, and callous" early prose; the 1953 award for literature went to Winston Churchill. Nevertheless, fearing to have lost Hemingway after his 1954 plane crashes, the committee acknowledged his oeuvre, his "heroic pathos" and his "powerful style-making mastery of the art of modern narration, most recently displayed in *The Old Man and the Sea*, and for his influence on contemporary style," awarding him the 1954 Nobel Prize.

Hemingway's only writing in the mid-fifties was a two-part article for *Look* magazine of his safari and plane crashes.<sup>4</sup> The first part is factual and mildly amusing; the second is garrulous. He and Mary visited Europe in 1956, and

while in Paris, the management of the Ritz Hotel informed Hemingway that there were trunks of his in the basement, stored since 1928. Browsing through the trunks revealed notebooks from the early days in Paris and reminded Hemingway of the beginnings of his career, or so, at least, Hemingway claimed. A request by the *Atlantic* for a memoir of Scott Fitzgerald further stimulated him to write about his own early days in Paris. During this same period Hemingway wrote a series of short stories, including some about World War II experiences (now in the Finca Vigía edition of *The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*), and gave two bad stories to the *Atlantic*—"A Man of the World" and "Get Yourself a Seeing-Eyed Dog"<sup>5</sup>—in place of the Fitzgerald memoir, which he kept for *A Moveable Feast*. He finished that body of recollections and delivered a draft of the manuscript to Scribner's in March 1959.

That same year, *Life* Magazine commissioned him to do a ten-thousand-word story to accompany photos taken by a *Life* photographer of a contest between Spain's two best bullfighters: Louis Miguel Dominguín, who had retired from bullfighting in 1953, and Antonio Ordóñez, son of Cayetano Ordóñez, Hemingway's model for Pedro Romero in *The Sun Also Rises*. To complicate the rivalry, Ordóñez was married to Dominguín's sister and managed by Dominguín's brothers. Hemingway went to Spain for the summer fights, adopted Ordóñez as his protégé, and adopted a biased view of the fighters as a result. Hemingway acknowledged that Dominguín was technically knowledgeable and proficient, and perhaps the best banderillero in Spain—Ordóñez did not place his own banderillas—but complained that Dominguín's capework did not excite him or move him. Moreover, he criticized, as he had in *Death in the Afternoon*, the decadence of bullfighting, the tricks that had entered for the amusement and entertainment of the audience, at the expense of the art of bullfighting—tricks such as leaning against the bull's head, pretending to be receiving a telephone call—and he accused both Dominguín and Spain's national hero, the bullfighter Manolete, of such tricks, earning the intense enmity of Spanish readers.

Hemingway took notes during the summer and wrote them up afterward, beginning in October. He could not now control his garrulousness. What was supposed to have been a ten-thousand-word journalistic account, accompanied by photographs, constituting an appendix and updating of *Death in the Afternoon*, grew into a book of over one-hundred-thousand words by May 1960, much of it slack and tedious. Hemingway himself was unable to cut his own manuscript. He asked Aaron Hotchner to do the editing, and together they cut the text in late June and early July to sixty-thousand words.<sup>6</sup> The *Life* editors cut it still more, sometimes with clumsy transitions, and published it in three installments, September 5, September 12, and September 19, 1960. At its few moments of intensity, describing the matadors in action,

it rivals *Death in the Afternoon*, but it adds no new information about the art of bullfighting nor its symbolic significance for the author; and its moments of intensity are few.

Part 1 is largely nostalgia, reminiscences of Spain, together with appreciation of the landscape, food, and wine. As a result, together with the editing of the longer narrative, part 1 is choppy and episodic. There is no uniting narrative until the rivalry, the *mano a mano* (hand-to-hand) contest between the bullfighters begins. In part 2, Hemingway throughout arrogates to himself not only knowledge of bullfighting that it seems only an active participant, not just an observer, would have, but knowledge also of the bull's condition and feelings. Part 3 continues the rivalry, both matadors being gored, ending the contest. Throughout, but particularly in part 2, there is also more on the courage, craft, and self-control of the bullfighter, a paradigm of all artists and all individuals who seek aesthetic control in their lives:

Any man could face death but to be committed to bring it as close as possible while performing certain classic movements and do this again and again and again and then deal it out yourself with a sword to an animal weighing half a ton, which you love, is more complicated than just facing death. It is facing your performance as a creative artist every day and your necessity to function as a skillful killer. (*Life*, September 12, 1960, p. 76)

Hemingway's own lack of control is obvious here. The first sentence is long and confusing. The modification is misplaced: the bullfighter loves the fighting bull, not his half ton of weight. Finally, the rhythm of the prose, which Hemingway had been such a master of, uniting it to the action he is describing, here, does nothing. These three pieces were the last that would be published in Hemingway's lifetime. (*Moveable Feast*, although delivered to Scribner's in 1959 and worried over by Hemingway in the two remaining years of his life, was only published afterward.) They are not, as published, bad writing, but to quote Ezra Pound, they "present no [significant] adjunct to the Muses' diadem."

## NOTES

1. Ernest Hemingway, *Men at War* (New York: Bramhall House, 1955), p. xi. Subsequent quotations will be paginated in the text and will refer to this edition.
2. Young, *Hemingway: A Reconsideration*, p. 114.
3. Baker, *Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story*, p. 500.
4. "The Christmas Gift," *Look* (18:8) April 20, 1954: pp. 29–37; (18:9) May 4, 1954: pp. 79–89.
5. *Atlantic*, vol. 200, November 1957.

6. The word counts vary from source to source. Carlos Baker in *Life Story* says the original manuscript was 120,000 words, the edited one 70,000 (pp. 552–53). Michener, in his introduction to the 1985 *The Dangerous Summer* has 120,000 and 70,000 (p. 13). Hotchner, who did the editing, says the manuscript was 108,746 words, 688 typed pages, which was cut to 53,830 words for the editors of *Life* to make their final excisions (Hotchner, *Papa Hemingway* [New York: Random House, 1966], pp. 239–42).



GERRY BRENNER

*Psychology*

In his chapter “Nathaniel Hawthorne and ‘The Scarlet Letter’” from *Studies in Classic American Literature*, D. H. Lawrence writes,

All the time there is this split in the American art and art-consciousness. On the top it is as nice as pie, goody-goody and lovey-dovey. Like Hawthorne being such a blue-eyed darling, in life, and Longfellow and the rest such sucking-doves. . . .

Serpents they were. Look at the inner meaning of their art and see what demons they were.

You *must* look through the surface of American art, and see the inner diabolism of the symbolic meaning. Otherwise it is all mere childishness.

That blue-eyed darling Nathaniel knew disagreeable things in his inner soul. He was careful to send them out in disguise. Always the same. The deliberate consciousness of Americans so fair and smooth-spoken, and the under-consciousness so devilish. *Destroy! destroy! destroy!* hums the under-consciousness. *Love and produce! Love and produce!* cackles the upper-consciousness. And the world hears only the Love-and-produce cackle. Refuses to hear the hum of destruction underneath. Until such time as it will *have* to hear.

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From *The Old Man and the Sea: Story of a Common Man*, pp. 79–96. © 1991 by Twayne Publishers.

The American has got to destroy. It is his destiny. It is his destiny to destroy the whole corpus of the white psyche, the white consciousness. And he's got to do it secretly.<sup>23</sup>

Although Lawrence directs his observations at nineteenth-century American romantic writers, the destructive underconsciousness that lurks in their work permeates *The Old Man and the Sea* too. Santiago's aggressions—suppress and conceal them though he vainly tries throughout the novella—add the final dimension to his character, for they unlock the psychological enigma and uncanny appeal of his simple-seeming character. The richly ambivalent response of simultaneously attracting and repelling readers is triggered by his overt aggression, his sexism, his passive aggression, his feminization, the harm he inflicts on Manolin, and the pity he deserves from discerning readers. Like all of Hemingway's engaging and problematic heroes, Santiago, too, is a psychological cripple.

#### SANTIAGO'S OVERT AGGRESSION

Although the novella portrays Santiago as an almost otherworldly figure—a saintly, benevolent, and gentle man—it simultaneously portrays him as very much of this world. One of us, his aggression, fused to his erotic drive, proves his membership in the human race. A number of his aggressions cause little concern. Santiago's acts of aggression against the sharks are of course defensible, because these appetite-driven antagonists instinctually seek to violate his prize. Given his conviction that, as a born fisherman, he must kill the marlin, that act of aggression is occupationally defensible, as is the arm wrestling with the black from Cienfuegos, sublimated as it is in a competitive physical contest. Other aggressive actions, however, reveal a cauldron of hostility.

The most flagrant of Santiago's aggressions is the episode that Manolin recalls during the opening conversation of the novella. Santiago asks whether Manolin can remember when, as a five-year-old new to the boat, he was almost killed when Santiago brought in a green fish—one not sufficiently exhausted while being reeled to the boat. The fish came close to tearing the boat to pieces, Manolin recalls, before Santiago could subdue it: "I can remember the tail slapping and banging and the thwart breaking and the noise of the clubbing. I can remember you throwing me into the bow where the wet coiled lines were and feeling the whole boat shiver and the noise of you clubbing him like chopping a tree down and the sweet blood smell all over me" (12). When Santiago asks if Manolin truly remembers the event or just knows it from Santiago's having told it to him, Manolin assures him that he remembers it, for he claims to "remember everything" since they first began fishing together.

This event occurred no more than 10 years earlier, and it seems odd that a skilled fisherman would boat a green fish. His years of experience would have taught him that the fish would battle—vigorously struggle to writhe or flop itself free from the hook and gaff and dodge the lethal clubbing of the fisherman. Perhaps Santiago wanted to display to his new apprentice his strength and skill in boating a big fish quickly. Perhaps Santiago knew there were sharks in the water who would feed off the fish unless he boated it quickly. Perhaps he thought the fish was not hooked firmly and would shake free of the hook if it had enough time. Regardless of his motive, the results of his prompt catch reveal its importance: it allows him to throw Manolin into the bow and to club to death the thwart-breaking, boat-banging, blood-spurting fish.

Manolin's recall of the details of this event testifies to a good memory but better testifies that the event traumatized him. To an impressionable five-year-old child the violence of the episode—the clubbing of the fish, the shivering of the boat, the cracking of the thwart, and the blood-spattering of the activity—would be terrifying. It takes little imagination to visualize Manolin cowering in abject fear in the boat's bow, terror stricken at the sudden emergence of Santiago as a man of murderous potential, a man whose violent behavior could someday, if provoked, turn on him.

Manolin mentions no apology from Santiago for this untoward episode when it occurred, and during the opening conversation Santiago neither explains why he boated the fish green nor expresses regret at the terrorizing event that occurred. He may have felt no embarrassment over the event and that he had done nothing to apologize for. He may have felt it would not have been manly to apologize for his violent display or his imprudence in having boated the green fish. His failure to express thoughts about his action conflicts with the thoughtfulness and considerateness he shows elsewhere in the novella, however, and also signals to Manolin, perhaps unconsciously, that the old man is capable of committing violence on refractory creatures—including Manolin, should the boy ever choose to struggle against Santiago's domination. Having once witnessed Santiago's capacity for violence, a traumatized or alarmed Manolin would certainly dread a recurrence of such violence and fear that he might be its next victim. That dread contributes to—if not explains—Manolin's submissiveness and deference to Santiago and the absence of self-assertion in him in the novella's opening frame. That absence may be partly due to Manolin's parents' childrearing practices, but it is an absence that Santiago's aggressive action encouraged the boy to adopt.

#### SANTIAGO'S SEXISM

Except for the killing of the marlin and sharks, the boated green-fish episode is the primary instance of Santiago's overt aggression. This seemingly gratuitous



episode occurs in the absence of other thoughts or displays of overt hostility in Santiago, which should lead readers to regard this minimal aggression with suspicion. The absence of overt hostility in Santiago suggests a repressed individual whose fears of overt aggression cause him to find oblique or indirect ways to express it.

One form of such oblique aggression is Santiago's sexism, which expresses hostility or contempt toward things female.<sup>24</sup> The blatant case of Santiago's sexist aggression is his vilification of a jellyfish, the Portuguese man-of-war. As a man-of-war bird circles above dolphins and flying fish, ineffectually trying to spear one of the latter, Santiago commends "his" efforts and regards "him" "a great help," for "he" leads him to the marlin (33–34), but the old man feels contempt toward the man-of-war jellyfish, which Santiago sees and comments on concurrent with the bird's circlings. He calls it "You whore" (35). To denounce the jellyfish with such a label is inconsistent with Santiago's love-and-fraternity ethic toward creatures animate and objects inanimate. It also is illogical to feminize a creature whose very name—*man-of-war*—assigns it to the opposite gender. Santiago's automatic hatred of the jellyfish, without knowing its actual gender, shows an attitude prejudiced by connections he makes between it and women: when he looks into the water to observe the jellyfish's iridescent bubble, he thinks of it as not only "the falsest thing in the sea" but as a creature whose poisonings "struck like a whiplash" (36). In other words, jellyfish resemble women, both being duplicitous and punitive creatures. Santiago acknowledges his hostility toward this "whore" jellyfish by admitting that he "loved" to see big sea turtles eating them and "loved" to hear jellyfish pop when, after a storm washed them ashore, he could walk the beach and step on them (36). Since the Portuguese man-of-war's gender is never objectively identified, Santiago's gratuitous name calling suggests that jellyfish are scapegoats onto whom he vents misogynistic attitudes that reflect his sexist stereotyping and aggressions.

Santiago's sexism recurs when, during the first night after hooking the marlin, he remarks that the fish "took the bait like a male and he pulls like a male and his fight has no panic in it" (49). Here Santiago discloses his sexist belief that a hooked female marlin always shows "panic." The term, of course, is not descriptive but judgmental. Instead of saying that female marlin fight erratically or feverishly, his term impugns their fight and reveals his belief that under stress they behave in the same way that, he insinuates, women do—with predictable and stereotypical hysteria. The aggression in this putdown, of course, rests in the scorn of "panic"—undesirable behavior, whether of males or females.

Santiago displays no overt aggression toward his wife, whose memory he seems to respect: he has taken down from a wall the tinted photograph of her "because it made him too lonely to see it and it was on the shelf in the

corner under his clean shirt" (16). Yet Santiago's failure to think once of his wife during his three-day ordeal suggests repression—some psychic need to erase her from his memory—and that repression suggests that he associates her with unpleasant experiences, either wrongs she committed or guilt for his own actions that he does not want to acknowledge. Either way, his relegation of her photo to a corner shelf beneath a shirt refuses to memorialize her and is tantamount, as all rejections are, to aggressive repudiation of the gender whom she represents in his mind.

These sexist aggressions would appear to be offset by Santiago's love of the sea. As has been discussed earlier the narrator tells that Santiago "always thought of the sea as *la mar* which is what people call her in Spanish when they love her. Sometimes those who love her say bad things of her but they are always said as though she were a woman" (29). Unlike some fishermen who speak of the sea "as *el mar* which is masculine," Santiago "always thought of her as feminine and as something that gave or withheld great favors, and if she did wild or wicked things it was because she could not help them. The moon affects her as it does a woman, he thought" (30).

This litany of sexist aggressions all nests within the metaphoric equation that women and the sea share identical traits. I address his observations in reverse order. First, Santiago denigrates woman—the sea as dependent on the moon or some power over which she has no control. Admittedly the sea is nonvolitional, and its tides and currents are determined by physical laws, but to claim that the same is true of women stereotypes them as dependent and not responsible for their actions, reveals Santiago's stereotyping of woman as puppet. Second, when Santiago thinks of woman—the sea as a creature capable of "wild and wicked things," he further reveals sexist aggression by selecting adjectives of moral disapproval that judge rather than describe behavior. Using nonsexist phrasing, for instance, that passage might have been written, "if she became stormy and gave in to sudden squalls that pounded small vessels." Here, then, Santiago offers another stereotype of woman as evil or treacherous. Third, Santiago cuddles his longstanding notion of woman—the sea "as something that gave or withheld great favors." To be sure, this acknowledges female power, contradicting his earlier characterization of woman—the sea as dependent, but it also insinuates that such power is exercised capriciously or arbitrarily or unpredictably. This is the stereotype of woman as Pandora—an irrational and fickle gift giver.

The fourth and most damning of Santiago's sexist aggressions occurs in the statement that those who love the sea "say bad things of her" but say them "as though she were a woman." With this equation, Santiago indicates that the bad things that people say about the sea are not personal but are only categorical. In this way, the sea becomes a scapegoat for all bad things that men want to say about women. Santiago's unthinking acceptance of unexamined,

commonplace attitudes finds nothing wrong in this facile substitution that tolerates any expression of negative feelings or thoughts against women.

Santiago certainly is entitled to his own views on these matters, but he weaves sexist aggressions into the instruction he gives Manolin, thereby perpetuating in another generation his unexamined and slanderous aggressions that demean women. If Santiago is a role model, then these harmful attitudes will surely—and regrettably—be transmitted to his youthful admirers.

#### SANTIAGO'S PASSIVE AGGRESSION

Despite Santiago's sexist aggressions, many readers find them forgivable when balanced against the love he expresses toward his world. Indeed, his sexist aggressions toward the sea as woman appear negligible when weighed against the love he declares for *la mar* and seem more than offset by the fraternal bond between Manolin and Santiago. Manolin proves that love by patiently waiting at the shore to assist Santiago on his return from each day's fishing. He helps the old fisherman carry the wooden box with its fishing lines, gaff, and shafted harpoon. He buys Santiago a beer at the Terrace, offers to get sardines and baits for the next day's fishing, and brings him dinner and beer, knowing that Santiago will go hungry before he will beg for a meal or credit from the owner of the Terrace. When Manolin "gently" urges Santiago to eat the dinner the boy has brought to him, Santiago explains his hesitation, saying "I only needed time to wash" (21).

When Santiago mentions that he needed time to wash before he dined, his love for Manolin suddenly is revealed as being tinged with passive aggression. Santiago's comment is expressed nonassertively and without overt reproach but nevertheless is an aggressive barb that triggers guilt and self-accusation in Manolin. The boy scolds himself for not having brought water, soap, and a towel to the hut for Santiago to wash with, which prompts further self-reproach: cold nights and winter are coming, and Manolin has not yet gotten Santiago the shirt, jacket, shoes, and blanket that his old friend will surely need.

Manolin's considerate thoughts and acts are consistent with the text's fraternal theme, but love for Santiago and desire to be his brother's keeper are superficial motives here: Manolin's deeply disturbing motive—guilt—is a result of Santiago's passive aggression. Clearly Manolin has accepted the notion that gratitude is a primary virtue in a young boy. His benevolence toward Santiago, then, partly reflects his attempt to repay Santiago for the instruction and friendship Santiago has shown him. This burden of indebtedness, however, indicates that Manolin knows or senses Santiago's hostility toward him. If Santiago's love was unconflicted Manolin would feel pride in his relationship with Santiago and show signs of pleasure and happiness in his acts of

friendship. Instead he feels guilt and shame, ostensibly because his obedience to his father after Santiago's 40 fishless days feels like a betrayal of Santiago, an abandonment of his mentor, an act of filial ingratitude. But Manolin's guilt at having neglected the materials necessary for Santiago's washing before dinner is also symptomatic of the potent insidiousness of Santiago's passive aggression. As a target of Santiago's indirect and unassertive hostility, Manolin inflicts on himself the punishment he feels that Santiago wishes to administer to him. Manolin's tortured and torturing conscience has been implanted in him by the repressed but nevertheless communicated hostility of Santiago.<sup>25</sup>

At first glance the charge of Santiago's hostility against Manolin may seem irresponsible. Examples of his benevolence, considerateness, and fraternal gentleness toward Manolin occur throughout the novella. Although Santiago has long given Manolin the benefit of his instruction, he will not let him buy him more than two baits or more than one beer at the Terrace. He treats Manolin as an equal. Indeed, he refuses to scold Manolin for neglecting to bring water, soap, and towel to wash up before dinner or, at the end of the novel, to reproach Manolin for failing to declare his discipleship three days earlier. He even gives Manolin the marlin's sword as a trophy and memento of the camaraderie the boy shared with Santiago.

Nevertheless, Santiago's benevolence, considerateness, and fraternal gentleness are excessive and compulsive. Their constant presence, and the marked absence of routine forms of hostility (as when the marlin's lurches injure him), reveal—as do all excessive behaviors—that Santiago successfully arrests the strong temptation and desire to commit aggressive acts and unconsciously fears dread consequences if he releases his aggressive impulses. This behavior seems to constitute what psychologists call *reaction formation*—a defense mechanism of the ego in which individuals actively display excessive and obsessive love or hate toward some activity, object, idea, person or persons, primarily to keep hidden the existence of strong contrary feelings. For instance, an unrelenting and militant antipornography zealot or antiabortion foe might be hiding, in the first case, strong erotic desires to view pornographic scenes or, in the second case, strong aggressive desires to unleash infanticidal longings. Likewise, behind a pornography addict's erotic fixation and active seeking out of pornography may lie strong aggressive attitudes against the subject he or she seems to find only erotic gratification in, and behind militant pro-choice advocates' defense of the rights of women often lies deeper hostility against males whose laws have denied those rights. In any event, individuals whose behavior shows symptoms of passive aggression differ from these examples of people who display reaction formation: the former's excessive and obsessive or compulsive behavior lacks the marked activity of the latter's. Passive aggression, in other words, is a different defense mechanism of the ego, for it shows minimal assertiveness

and seeks primarily to deny the existence of aggression. Hiding and vigilantly restraining his aggressive feelings of hostility and malice toward Manolin, Santiago makes them resemble benevolent, altruistic acts whose passivity seems to argue the absence of aggression.

As often occurs in cases of passive aggression, Santiago's passivity triggers aggression in his targets—as it did in Manolin's frenzy over his neglect. Consider Santiago's ordeal with the giant marlin. Santiago is not an aggressor because he only drops his baits into the water and sits in his skiff as the tide, currents, breeze, and oars take him into good water. The marlin, a predator, aggressively eats the bait; Santiago merely sets the hook that the fish bites and swallows. Moreover, the marlin, a powerful fish, tows Santiago to sea; Santiago merely holds the line—the recipient, as it were, of the marlin's aggression. Santiago harpoons the fish only after it is played out, a benevolent coup de grace that puts the fish out of its misery with a quick and merciful death. Throughout the ordeal the fish's aggressions punish Santiago—its lurches injuring his hands and back, cutting his eye, smashing his face into the bow, exhausting the patient fisherman. Santiago seems the victim of the marlin, and his passivity during the ordeal routinely leads readers to esteem his noble behavior and to sympathize with his perseverance.

Readers should note that passive though Santiago's aggression toward the marlin is, it is lethal. It is harmful to Manolin, too, and Santiago's conquest of the fish has its analogue in his conquest of the boy. He desperately desires both conquests, but he conceals one behind his passive aggression by deflecting suspicion as either manipulative or exploitative and by buttressing his altruistic image.

Santiago's passive aggression generates overt aggression in the marlin and similar behavior in Manolin, as the novella's brief scene before Manolin and Santiago's final conversation makes clear. Before Santiago awakens on the last day of the novella, Manolin cries as fishermen gather around Santiago's skiff and fetches a cup of coffee against the time when Santiago will awaken. Manolin's tears register pity for the ordeal he imagines that his mentor has experienced, but they also reflect his own guilt and anger for having failed to pledge himself to Santiago three days earlier. Unlike his scenes in the novella's opening episodes, Manolin now becomes assertive. Expressing himself in imperatives, he orders the proprietor of the Terrace to fix a can of coffee, "Hot and with plenty of milk and sugar in it" (123). Protecting Santiago, first he commands fishermen, "Let no one disturb him" (122), then instructs the Terrace proprietor, "Tell them not to bother Santiago" (123). When the proprietor commends the pair of fine fish Manolin caught on the previous day, the boy retorts, "Damn my fish," dismissing facile condolence and compliment. Manolin's assertive behavior during this prelude to his conversation with Santiago acts out the old fisherman's repressed aggressions,

showing how one person's passive aggression stirs active aggression in the person on whom it has been targeted.

Readers often find the closing conversation between Manolin and Santiago a serene coda to a touching relationship between a young boy and an old man, but the conversation also shows the full reach of the duplicitous manipulations in Santiago's passive aggression and warrants detailed examination. When the boy demands that Santiago not sit up and that he drink the coffee Manolin has poured into a glass, Santiago declares, "They beat me, Manolin. . . . They truly beat me" (124). This seems a normal enough opening line for a man who has just survived an ordeal, but the ambiguity of "they" requires Manolin to identify the pronoun's referent, the sharks. Although the pronoun ambiguity can be attributed to the confusion of a just-awakened man, it also is a small act of aggression: its inconsiderateness demands mental labor from Manolin—as ambiguous pronoun referents routinely do (thereby earning retaliatory downgrading from teachers). By saying that the sharks "beat" him, Santiago claims a role as the sharks' victim, altogether minimizing his role as aggressive agent in the killing of the fish. By this inversion of who he is—victim instead of agent—Santiago deliberately downplays his aggression during the ordeal, but thereby reveals his efforts now to conceal the aggression he subtly displays against Manolin. Manolin does not ask him how the sharks beat him but instead vehemently asserts, as the text's italics indicate, that the marlin did not beat Santiago: "*He* didn't beat you. Not the fish" (124). Manolin again takes the aggressive role, for Santiago's incomplete information both compels him to assert what he believes is true and plays on Manolin's guilt at having been absent during the "beating" Santiago got.

More of Santiago's veiled aggression occurs when Manolin asks what Santiago wants done with the marlin's head. He answers, "Let Pedrico chop it up to use in fish traps" (124), permitting another act of aggression—chopping up the fishhead—to be done but not by himself. When Manolin asks what is to be done with the fish's spear, Santiago says, "You keep it if you want it" (124). Because of the size of the fish, Santiago knows that the spear is a valuable trophy. Indeed, the possessor of the marlin's spear will be envied as the inheritor of a prize and esteemed as the beneficiary of everything the spear symbolizes—primarily the legendary status that will be accorded to Santiago as the man who caught the gigantic fish with his bare hands. So the nonchalance in Santiago's conditional answer to Manolin's question—"You keep it *if you want*" (124; italics mine)—is disingenuous. He knows for a certainty that Manolin wants the spear and to pretend otherwise tacitly accuses Manolin of being as indifferent to possessing the spear as he was indifferent to accompanying Santiago three days earlier. In short, Santiago manipulates Manolin by making him declare what Santiago already knows he will say and what would need no saying between strong friends, "I want it" (124).

To sense the full force in the artful aggression of Santiago's "if you want it," consider some lines he could have said without the malicious rebuke couched in that "if" clause: "I'd like you to have it," or "Please take it as a reminder of me," or "I hope you'll want it," or "I'd be honored if you'd keep it as a token of our friendship." Santiago has said and thought sentimental things throughout the text, and a declaration of genuine feeling here would not be inappropriate.

As the conversation proceeds, Santiago continues to rebuke Manolin. After declaring his desire to have the spear, Manolin makes the first of three pledges of discipleship to Santiago, the pledge that Santiago is fishing for with his aggressions: "Now we must make our plans about the other things" (124). If Santiago harbored no aggressive resentment about Manolin's failure to declare his commitment three days earlier, he would promptly acknowledge and appreciate the import of the first-person plural pronouns in Manolin's pledge that "we must make our plans," and he would approve the notion of collaborating on plans for their future. Santiago does no such thing. He brushes aside Manolin's pledge as if it deserved no response or meant little to him. Indeed, Santiago's response—"Did they search for me" (124), does not seem to follow from Manolin's pledge. This non sequitur seems to indicate that Santiago is interested only in what *others* did for him during his absence. It also sets others' actions on his behalf against Manolin's failure to take the necessary step of discipleship three days earlier. In addition, Santiago altogether ignores Manolin's offer to make amends for that failure by resolving to make plans with him for their future. In effect, Santiago insults his offer, as Manolin might conclude, were he later to think over the content of his conversation with Santiago.

Of Santiago's dialogue with Manolin no line contains more passive aggression than his simple declaration, "I missed you" (124). A factual statement, it plainly records the truth: Santiago did miss Manolin during his ordeal, and his several wishes that the boy were with him in the skiff vouch for that fact. But the statement is also an accusation: there would have been no need for Santiago to have missed him if he had decided, albeit against his father's orders, to affiliate himself with Santiago earlier. Nor would Santiago be in a state of physical exhaustion and injury, his statement implies, had he not missed Manolin, for together they might not have been beaten by the sharks and might have gotten home with more of the fish intact. The deep hostility in the simple statement will ring in Manolin's ears after Santiago dies. Given Manolin's devotion to Santiago, this simple statement probably will lead Manolin to accuse himself of bringing on Santiago's death and to remind himself that Santiago would not have been so battered and worn by his lonely ordeal had Manolin been with him. Santiago's simple statement, then, is a harpoon that makes certain that Manolin will feel the thrust of Santiago's charge for years to come. Santiago does nothing to soften the

statement—neither admits that it is a selfish idea nor tells Manolin he should not take it personally nor even asks if by chance Manolin missed him as much as he missed Manolin. Any number of qualifications or conditionals could have softened the subtextual severity of Santiago's three words.

Santiago might have allowed Manolin to express how much he too missed Santiago, but without a pause—which white space on the page or a newly indented paragraph could express—Santiago promptly asks Manolin what he caught during the three days. This might be another innocent question, were it not for the invidious comparison that Manolin's answer of "four fish" invites. No four fish could begin to rival Santiago's one giant, as he well knows, so his question, which seems asked in genuine interest, has a hostile edge that impugns any fish that Manolin and his fisherman could have caught. The brevity of Manolin's answer reacts to the aggressive barbs in Santiago's question, for he dispenses with it abruptly: "One the first day. One the second and two the third" (124). Manolin admits the insignificance of his fishing in comparison to the ordeal he knows Santiago has been through. So when Santiago commends his catch with "Very good" (125), Manolin's impolite response shows his irritation at Santiago's formal courtesy, blurting out, with manly resolve, "Now we will fish together" (125).

To both this virtual rebuke of Santiago's cold commendation and this second pledge of occupational partnership, Santiago says, with false modesty, "No. I am not lucky. I am not lucky any more" (125). The passive aggression in this presumably self-effacing statement partly resides in Santiago's self-characterization as one on whom the fates have chosen to turn their backs. This smells of self-pity and also betrays Santiago's resentment toward those forces and agents who have cast him this lot. Rather than overtly retaliate, his statement wheedles aggression from Manolin. The boy assertively declares, "The hell with luck," and boasts with manly swagger, "I'll bring the luck with me" (125). As in his relationship with the marlin, Santiago's passivity again forces the target of his aggressions to be the aggressor.

Having worked Manolin up to this fever pitch of assertive masculinity, Santiago deftly gaffs him with the question to which all of his conversation has led, "What will your family say" (125). As Santiago well knows, before pledging himself to Santiago, Manolin must hurdle the obstacle of disaffiliating himself from his family, a momentous act in the life of a young boy. That Santiago has played his hand well, has employed the talent he earlier boasted of—trickery—is clear with Manolin's retort, "I do not care. I caught two yesterday. But we will fish together now for I still have much to learn" (125). This third pledge from Manolin seems, finally, to satisfy Santiago, whose refusal to accept Manolin's two earlier pledges suggests vindictiveness—a wish to make Manolin pay a penance of one pledge for each day of the ordeal from which he was absent. The aggression that motivates Santiago is clearly



evident when he declares, without a moment's hesitation, that the two will need "a good killing lance" (125). It is fitting that Santiago should so readily mention this lethal object, since it is comparable to the verbal aggression he has used on Manolin to subtly coerce his pledge.

To uncover the hostility beneath Santiago's simple-seeming fraternal benevolence requires scrutiny, and to recognize passive aggression in Santiago should help readers be alert to its presence in other people, fictional and real. Victims of passive aggression are duped by its appearance of benevolence or, worse, seduced into imitating it. Consider Twain's Huckleberry Finn or Fitzgerald's Nick Carraway, narrator of *The Great Gatsby*, or Faulkner's Anse Bundren in *As I Lay Dying* or Steinbeck's George Milton in *Of Mice and Men* or Dickens's title character in *David Copperfield* or Hemingway's Jake Barnes, Thomas Hudson and David Bourne in, respectively, *The Sun Also Rises*, *Islands in the Stream*, or *Garden of Eden*—to cite just a few examples. These characters appear to be benevolent, passive men and gain reader approval because their lack of aggression makes them vulnerable to others' victimization or exploitation. Yet, to a man, they exploit others and more than a few readers.

Santiago's passive aggression is especially reprehensible because of his choice of victim—an unsuspecting, impressionable boy, easy prey for a man skilled in trickery, on which Santiago prides himself. Following the shrewdly disguised aggressions in the brief conversation between Santiago and Manolin helps expose Santiago's exploitation of a boy to whose naivete must be added the vulnerability of his grief, guilt, and pity for the aged fisherman.

Santiago is not a dyed-in-the-wool villain because he is not fully conscious of his exploitation of Manolin. Although Santiago consciously desires one devotee who will revere him and perpetuate the legend of his name, he does not view this as exploitative. This common confusion, over a parent's, guardian's, teacher's, coach's, guru's, or employer's obligations to the personal rights of subordinates shows that Santiago does not know himself and does not actively seek self-knowledge. He is caught up in the idea of creating someone in his own image, of replicating himself in the young pupil or apprentice. Because he values his own image, he finds no wrong in that replication and would dismiss the idea that it is exploitative. Yet wheedling pledges of discipleship can harm others and has the potential, as well, to precipitate strong guilt feelings and emotional distress in others; it is exploitative because the consent or commitment it coerces from an uninformed or unstable individual is self-serving.

#### SANTIAGO'S FEMINIZATION

Santiago has strongly ambivalent feelings toward Manolin: he values his friendship and regard but resents his tardiness in pledging discipleship. This

tardiness is the overt cause of Santiago's aggressions, but the covert cause is fueled by Santiago's hostility toward his own desire for Manolin. His aggressions reveal his strong disapproval of the latent, unconscious homosexual feelings toward Manolin that he cannot accept in himself. To accept them would require accepting his own lack of masculinity.

Santiago and Manolin's relationship superficially appears to be a heartwarming tale of a fond bonding between young boy and old man. Santiago displays no homosexual overtures or mannerisms. Respecting and respectful of each other, the two seem to share an idealized father-son friendship. Their camaraderie is tainted by the passivity and studied nonsexuality of Santiago's excessive attachment to Manolin, however, which finds him having regressed to an immature stage of development, incapable or undesirous of mature heterosexuality. He prefers the prepubertal sexuality of bonding with a male figure because he fears women as dangerous love objects.

Santiago's behavior replicates the "father fixation" of many young boys, the developmental stage of turning to the father as a way to deflect the anxieties that accompany their forbidden, incestuous, oedipal desire for their mother.<sup>26</sup> Most boys outgrow this stage during puberty and take an active interest in girls, and according to the novella, Santiago did marry a woman who apparently died. Santiago's failure to spend any time with her memory and his recurrent "wish for the boy" constitute a regression to a prepubertal sexual stage that shows his longstanding preference for the passive attachment he can develop toward another male. In this process Santiago, like many another boy, seeks to play what he assumes to be the female role in relation to his father, thereby valuing passivity, seeking approval, and repudiating masculine aims and characteristics. This results in the feminization that characterizes Santiago in the novel. It explains as well Santiago's sexist attitudes, for they reflect—in the indirect way that such unconscious behaviors routinely do—his hostility toward those retained feminine traits in himself that he will neither recognize nor relinquish but will hate. Indeed, his sexist attitudes indicate his resolution to be a "better woman" than most women are, to imitate women and thereby deny both his unconscious hatred of women and the presence of feminine traits in himself. As Karl Menninger writes, "Whenever the development of masculinity is inhibited with a consequent feminine identification, the inhibition is accompanied by a negative attitude toward that femininity within the man himself as well as toward femininity in others."<sup>27</sup> In effect, the battle with the marlin is psychologically vital to the feminized Santiago: it provides him with the ordeal he requires and punishes him for his latent homosexual desire for Manolin's companionship.

All of this feminization adds up to an unhealthy situation for Manolin. The strong bonding that Santiago demands of him is a form of psychological abuse, and Manolin's behavior repeatedly shows that his regard for Santiago rises

out of guilt rather than love. If it were love he would feel pride in his activities and take pleasure in the parental approval that Santiago should bestow on him. His guilt shows no pride, however; instead it shows fear of parental rejection, Santiago having infantilized him as an insecure, dependent child. Santiago's latent homosexuality also will lead Manolin away from normal heterosexual development and inculcate the same code of erotic self-denial that Santiago lives by. It will teach Manolin to prefer the intimacy of male over female relationships and to feel guilt should he vary from that model. Finally, Santiago's psychological abuse will foster in Manolin the isolationism that Santiago values and will inflict the conflict that routinely stymies passive aggressives—the conflict between “expressing resentments and wanting to be accepted and admired.”<sup>28</sup> In a word, if Santiago's pernicious influence does not make Manolin into a misfit, it will make him into a psychologically disturbed man.

A psychological analysis of Santiago leads me to see Santiago as no ideal figure for Manolin to continue his apprenticeship with. If Santiago's ordeal with the marlin proves to be fatal and he does not survive long then Manolin may have the chance to develop into a healthy young man. He needs to be free from the unhealthy influence of the passive-aggressive cripple with whom he has already fished for too many years.

## NOTES

23. D. H. Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1923; New York: Viking Press, 1964), 83–84.

24. For a different analysis of the novella's sexist attitudes, see Martin Swan, “*The Old Man and the Sea*: Women Taken for Granted,” 147–63.

25. A good deal of debate surrounds the label of passive aggression—whether it is a specific personality disorder, a defense mechanism, or a maladaptive personality trait. As will be clear from my discussion, I use it to mean a defense mechanism of the ego. For discussion of the term and its varied uses, see Joseph T. McCann, “Passive-Aggressive Personality Disorder: A Review,” *Journal of Personality Disorders* 2 (1988): 170–79.

26. My discussion here and in the following discussion is indebted to Karl Menninger's classic, *Love against Hate* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1942), especially the chapter “The Frustrations of Women,” 41–79.

27. Menninger, 58.

28. McCann, 172.

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ERIC WAGGONER

*Inside the Current:  
A Taoist Reading of  
The Old Man and the Sea*

If works like *Death in the Afternoon* and *Green Hills of Africa* detail Hemingway's respect for proper action and precision of thought and movement, then *The Old Man and the Sea* is an important key as to why that precision matters at all. Santiago's internal monologue affords us a unique running interpretation of each action, each natural occurrence, and each human response to them. A great deal of scholarship interprets Hemingway's 1952 novel in terms of Christian symbolism,<sup>1</sup> with Santiago representing at times a Christ-figure, a failed Christ-figure, or a simple apostle wrestling, like Thomas, with doubt and the "inseparability of suffering and Grace" (Hamilton 141). Such interpretations began when the book was published, and Carlos Baker informs us that for a brief but intense period clergymen modeled sermons around the story (505).

Such scholarship helps elucidate Hemingway's own troubling relationship with the Christian faith; surely many critics have agreed with Kathleen Verduin that *The Old Man and the Sea* is a "culmination of Hemingway's lifelong involvement with Christ," although it is "neither allegory nor complete confession of faith" (37). But as any invocation of a Christ-figure must include reference to martyrdom and a belief system which was, for Hemingway, problematic at best, this mode of thinking imposes a particular symbolism on a story which Hemingway repeatedly insisted was understandable and rich enough to be meaningful and complex on its own terms.

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Towards rethinking *The Old Man and the Sea* free from the binaries of God-and-Humanity, Nature-and-Humanity, or any system which sees the novel as primarily oppositional—primarily related to competition, defeat, and victory—I want to examine the relation of Hemingway’s short classic to Taoist thought and writing. My reading will rely heavily on Eastern philosophical traditions, specifically on the Taoism of Lao-Tzu and the *I Ching*. I am not suggesting that Hemingway consciously plotted his novel from an Eastern philosophical perspective. His religious terrain was convoluted but always solidly Western;<sup>2</sup> and his 1941 trip to China was to analyze the Sino-Japanese War (Baker 365).<sup>3</sup> It is impossible to know whether Hemingway was familiar with Taoist thought. Instead, I will argue that striking similarities occur between *The Old Man and the Sea* and several Taoist texts as regards interpretation of (and placement in) the natural world. Moreover, Hemingway depicts Santiago as a spiritual traveler who wishes to remain in the Tao, or path, of correctness and right action.

Taoism is a fluid concept that has carried many connotations in the roughly 2,200 years since the appearance of the *Tao-te Ching* (ca. 200 B.C.), the classic text of this philosophical tradition. Tao may be roughly translated as “the path” or “the way,” and refers to the passage of the spiritual initiate who attempts to remain balanced or centered in the world, neither a slave to emotions, nor an automaton resistant to the constant changes of which our lives are comprised. As Livia Kohn points out, the *Tao-te Ching*

describes the Tao as the source of all being. It is nameless, formless, not beginning, not ending, ineffable, unknowable, transcendent yet immanent, weak yet powerful, original yet developed, subtle yet huge. It encompasses all opposites yet is part of all. . . . Nothing definite can be said about the Tao. It is vague and elusive, dark and obscure, existing before time and called at most the mother of the universe. (165)

The Tao, or way, is the source of the “ten thousand things,” the world of everyday occurrence and individual experience. Later thinkers, expanding on this definition, characterize the Tao “as continuous change and transformation . . . going-with-the-flow as the proper form of mystical realization” (Kohn 165). Because it refers to the constantly changing, the Tao is necessarily difficult to define, at least to the Western mind bent on observability: “One might say that it is the absence of definition that constitutes the fundamental characteristic of Chinese religion. . . . By definition, the Tao is indefinable and can be apprehended only in its infinitely multiple aspects” (Schipper 3).

The familiar yin–yang symbol of Taoist thought arises from this notion of continuous change; the light and dark are not in opposition, but rather work in dynamic tandem.

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Each section contains the seed of its opposite to remind us that change is ever-occurring. No thing is merely *one thing*. There is light in the dark, motion in stillness, male in the female. The Taoist world-view relies on philosophical dualism to make sense of the everyday in relation to the spiritual (and vice versa, because in Taoism there is no lasting or essential difference between the two):

[T]he basic dualism is between the Tao and the world, between nature and culture, purity and defilements. The original Tao first produces the myriad beings [ten thousand things], but then it is transformed. . . . The beings it brought forth go their own way and develop consciousness and culture. Their understanding of themselves opposes them to their source. The main agent of this degeneration is attachment to sensual experience, from which cultural sophistication and luxury develop. . . . The superficial truth of this world is ultimately false; real truth is only in the Tao . . . (Kohn 167–8)

To arrive (or rearrive) at that “real truth” calls for a special kind of awareness. One must actively seek the Tao in the myriad occurrences which make up the phenomenal world. This is not simple detachment, but an awareness of the Tao in all things; a mindfulness. Or, as the *Tao-te Ching* itself would have it:

Knowing the male, keep the female;  
 be humble to the world.  
 Be humble to the world,  
 and eternal power never leaves,  
 returning again to innocence.  
 Knowing the white, keep the black;  
 be an exemplar for the world. . . .  
 Knowing the glorious, keep the ignominious;  
 be open to the world.  
 Be open to the world,  
 and eternal power suffices, returning again to simplicity.  
 (Cleary 13–14)



In *The Tao of Art: The Inner Meaning of Chinese Art and Philosophy*, Ben Willis asks “Is the Tao, then, the same thing as God?” He answers his own rather plaintive question with qualifications: “The answer is ‘yes’ if we are willing to accept God as Life, Supreme Spirit and the Source of Life, and ‘no’ if we imagine He is the Ruling General or the Great Business Executive in the sky” (16).

Taoism walks a line between strict dualism on the one hand, and full integration of body and mind (or earthly and spiritual elements) on the other. There is always tension between these two because experience is always in motion; we forever fluctuate between ontological separation and reconciliation, in both the worlds around us and within us—the world of the mind in the world of the body. For the Taoist, there is a linguistic and ideological distinction between body and mind, but “they are not understood as fundamentally different in nature” (Kohn 169). Moreover, Taoist philosophy is absolutely bound up with common (as in everyday) experience, the immediate sensory phenomena which we may filter and interpret, and to which we may train ourselves to respond in the correct, proper, and balancing way. As Richard Wilhelm, the pre-eminent introducer of the *I Ching* (the oracular “Book of Changes” in the Taoist tradition) into Western society, puts it:

Reflection on the simple fundamental facts of our experience brings immediate recognition of constant change. To the unsophisticated mind, the characteristic thing about phenomena is their dynamism. It is only abstract thinking that takes them out of their dynamic community and isolates them as static. . . . The opposite of change is neither rest nor standstill, for these are aspects of change. The idea [is] that the opposite of change is regression, and not cessation of movement . . . (Wilhelm and Wilhelm 25–6).

“The Tao which can be told is not the eternal [true] Tao,” goes the familiar opening passage of the *Tao-te Ching*, pointing out the distinction between the “ten thousand things” and the force which moves them. Perhaps not surprisingly, Taoism has produced, like most lasting systems of thought, a body of artistic work attempting to codify and represent that which the system itself admits is unsayable. Like Taoism, Willis writes, “art is also concerned with being, with the reality state. It is not only deeply involved with truth, harmony and beauty by its traditional interests, but also with nature, with the spirit of things. . . . It was no coincidence that the ancient Taoists looked on art with special interest” (17), because the artistic impulse corresponds with the Taoist impulse to interpret and respond to common experience in a frankly visionary fashion. But Willis locates Taoism’s most

fascinating property when he extends its conception of eternal flux and change to an examination of the natural world:

[T]he seasonal, evolutionary, physical and biological changes and stages of the natural world are a rich creative process, and . . . all of the universe is in a constant state of creative renewal, as even physics circuitously proves. Cyclic ebb and flow as found in nature and human life is not merely a mechanical, mindless accident of the universe, but a living, growing, changing, harmonizing state of infinite creative activity and infinite quiescence. In a physical world imbued with spirit, the vital energy generated from the latter is the sempiternal life force, the intelligent activator, the creator, the transformation dynamic of all that we can observe about us in nature. Beyond doubt here is the creativity of transformation in its most primal and elemental form. (19)<sup>4</sup>

Taoism, then, is a primarily creative principle, urging us to envision the fluctuations in our own lives as cyclical, patterned after the changes in the natural world, and therefore indicative of inner as well as outer harmony.

As Willis points out, this concept of “harmony” has implications for art. We may speak of formal harmony in the arts, and even suggest that artistic representation itself represents a kind of intrinsic Taoist leaning; in ordering and arranging words or images or sounds or any number of materials, we rebuild our experience into a coherent representational or referential form. But to equate this tendency solely with artistic impulses—to perceive the artist as somehow “more Taoist” than the farmer, for instance—would be to miss the point entirely. Right action and right thinking, those two fundamental concerns of Zen Buddhism as well as Taoism, can be cultivated in any milieu, in any setting, and in any life, from the most high-minded to the most seemingly “simplistic”: “This amounts to much more than the wedding of art to a universal system. It involves . . . the whole basis of being, mind, and reality” (Willis 21).

The unsayability of the Tao bears some relation, from a literary standpoint, to contemporary critical mistrust of *logos*, the word as privileged utterance. As Zhang Longxi observes, spiritual teaching commonly relies on exegeses and commentary related to the sacred texts, but “the ideal way of teaching . . . would be teaching by concrete examples in life rather than by precepts couched in words; a way of teaching that is effortless and wordless, totally absorbed and quietly implemented, just like the way Heaven regulates all things to perfection without saying a single word” (14). A Buddhist story tells of a monk who points to a water jug on the floor and asks his acolytes, “Who can tell me what this is without saying the words ‘water jug?’” The

apprentices construct elaborate phraseology in numerous failed attempts to describe the water jug, until finally one comes to the front of the room and, without saying a word, kicks the jug over, sending water in a thick wave across the floor. The monk congratulates the young apprentice for knowing when words will not do: in short, for knowing when to be silent and act. This is the difference between saying the word Tao and recognizing it in the “ten thousand things” which comprise the world. Knowing when to be silent, knowing when to stop thinking and talking and simply *be*, is perhaps the state to which the Tao leads us.

In 1951, as Ernest Hemingway put the final touches on *The Old Man and the Sea*, he showed the manuscript to friends, as he had done with previous works, “assuring and reassuring himself that they would find it as moving as he did” (Baker 492). Charles and Vera Scribner were among the first to see it, as was A.E. Hotchner. Hemingway’s later comment—that they had all noted a “mysterious quality not visible in his other work”—speaks to what many critics have identified as the complex knotting of spiritual and physical concerns in the novel.

Hemingway’s often-quoted letter in response to Bernard Berenson’s praise of the novel is worth quoting again:

Then there is the other secret. There isn’t any symbolysm [*sic*]. The sea is the sea. The old man is an old man. The boy is a boy and the fish is a fish. The sharks are all sharks no better and no worse. All the symbolism that people say is shit. What goes beyond is what you see beyond when you know. (*SL* 780)

The last comment is especially telling for our purposes, because it directly refers to seeing the “beyond” in the commonplace.

I propose to trace three major tenets of Taoist thought in the text of *The Old Man and the Sea*: 1) the idea of balance between apparently oppositional forces, and the embedding of one always in the other; 2) the connection between inner and outer landscapes or geography, a being-at-one with one’s immediate surroundings; and 3) the acceptance of change and cyclic movement as the pre-eminent forces in earthly *and* spiritual life.

To consider balance: Santiago has been *salao*, “the worst form of unlucky,” for eighty-four days. But he understands that even bad luck holds the kernel of good: “Eighty-five is a lucky number,” he tells the boy. “How would you like to see me bring in one that dressed out over a thousand pounds?” (*OMATS* 11). To mistake this for mere pride or boasting is to miss the philosophical underpinning of Santiago’s seeming optimism. As long as Santiago remains a fisherman, the positive is embedded in the negative; luck is located in the depths of no-luck.

Santiago's world is dualist in a very immediate sense: he has a connection with the sea born of a lifetime spent in communion with it, and often performs a kind of psychic transference with the creatures he hunts. Of the marlin he thinks, "I wonder if he has any plans or if he is just as desperate as I am" (35). Later, during the sharks' attack on the marlin: "He liked to think of the fish and what he could do to a shark if he were swimming free" (86). And, in a seemingly contradictory construction which occurs with some frequency, he thinks, "I wish I could feed the fish. . . . He is my brother. But I must kill him and keep strong to do it" (43).

The tension between Santiago's respect for the marlin and his need/desire to kill his "brother" has generally led criticism of *The Old Man and the Sea* down two paths. The first sees Santiago as some variation on a Christ-figure, as noted above. The second posits the novel as an explication of the "fighter code" so prevalent in Hemingway's fiction, and sees Santiago as either a "loser" who went out too far, or a "winner" who breaks his losing streak and re-defines himself as a fisherman.<sup>5</sup> This latter school of thought often finds itself directly at odds with the former. For example, Wolfgang Wittkowski dismisses the Christian interpretation as incompatible with Santiago's pride and fighter code:

Confrontation and victory in competitive sport serve here as the model, the ideal, and ultimately the metaphor. . . . The fully conscious pride of the fighter and killer is unmistakable. Though it is also combined with humility and modesty, the seeming humility of comparing oneself with stronger persons [DiMaggio] and not weaker ones does not destroy pride, but ennobles it. . . . For [Santiago] humility is not a primary virtue. It must adapt itself to pride, that is, subordinate itself to it. (4)

Similarly, Gerry Brenner sees in Santiago's struggle with the marlin a deep and sinister pathology, centered around "self-vindication, revenge, and self-glorification." This stems from Santiago's "need to prove himself": "His need to show himself extraordinary removes his conduct from the category of self-validation and puts it into the category of the arm-wrestling flashback—a self-glorifying power trip" (55, 56). Christoph Kuhn, echoing Charles Taylor, argues that *The Old Man and the Sea* "has more in common with Nietzsche's notion of tragic affirmation than with the Christian themes of sin, punishment, and salvation" (224).

The singular nature of *The Old Man and the Sea's* protagonist has, to a demonstrable extent, gone unnoticed due to the critical emphasis on the "Hemingway code." But Santiago is not Jake Barnes, silent and grim in his war-induced impotence; nor is he Robert Jordan, whose talents lie in destruction and martial knowledge. In a letter to Charles Scribner—the first referring to

Santiago's tale by the phrase which became its title—Hemingway articulated exactly what the story meant to him as a writer: "This is the prose that I have been working for all my life that should read simply and seem short and yet have all dimensions of the visible world and the world of a man's spirit. It is as good prose as I can write as of now" (*SL* 738). Santiago's self-reflective quality—his articulation of his own essence as he unravels the mystery of his sea-life, his visible world, and the world of his spirit—makes him unique among Hemingway's protagonists. Readings which focus on Santiago as a thinly disguised Hemingway (writer as martyr, proving himself among the sharks) or yet another spokesman for the platitudes of the "code" are, it seems to me, quite missing the point.

Definitions of Santiago as a fighter and killer underscore his pride, just as strict Christian interpretations of *The Old Man and the Sea* underscore his humility and martyrdom. Both interpretations center around victory and defeat. Such readings miss the patterns of symmetry and complementarity Hemingway sets up: all sea-dwellers—and here we must include Santiago—have a purpose, a reason to be in the ocean and doing what they do. Santiago reads the behavior of feeding dolphins as well as any native marine creature:

The old man could see the slight bulge in the water that the big dolphin raised as they followed the escaping fish. The dolphin were cutting through the water below the flight of the fish and would be in the water, driving at speed, when the fish dropped. It is a big school of dolphin, he thought. They are wide spread and the flying fish have little chance. (24).

Even Santiago's banter with the marlin shows evidence of this connection. As his commentary progresses, Santiago's articulation of the killing impulse changes from outer-directed statement to a more balanced vision of what is actually taking place on (and in) the water. In rapid succession Santiago delivers three observations on the act of reeling in the marlin: "Fish . . . I'll stay with you until I am dead" (38); "Fish . . . I love and respect you very much. But I will kill you dead before this day ends" (39); and "if he will jump I can kill him. But he stays down forever. Then I will stay down with him forever" (44). The first is a blatant threat, or, more precisely, a promise. The second is another threat, but delivered with an observation of union, equality of stamina, and mutual regard. The last, somewhat more cryptic, reinforces Santiago's connection to ocean life, the trace of the one located in the other. Linked by that fishing line, Santiago and the marlin might be an embodiment of the ancient yin-yang symbol: Santiago in the air, the marlin in the water, yoked together by the fishing line. The struggle is between equals: "I am a tired old man. But I have killed this fish which is my brother . . ." (71).

Not only can there be luck in *salao*, there can even be life in death. Santiago's meditation on his own mortality and his connection (perhaps even equation) with the sea-dwellers comes in his meditation on the turtle's heart: ". . . a turtle's heart will beat for hours after he has been cut up and butchered. But the old man thought, I have such a heart too and my feet and hands are like theirs" (26). In fact, Santiago works through his *salao* with a philosophy that is not so much a direct reference to Taoist thought as an embodiment of it.

Against such connection, Brenner suggests that Santiago's "capitalistic consciousness"—his role as a fisherman in a fishing community—is at odds with any connective awareness of ocean life:

For all his professed and portrayed beneficence, he plunders nature's bounty, as oblivious as his fellow fishermen to any obligation to be a trustee of his renewal, guarantor of its welfare, or spokesperson for laws to ensure its survival . . . once again showing his lack of transcendent wisdom and revealing his self-centered preoccupations. (66)

Yet, I would argue, the Santiago who begins the battle with the marlin is not the Santiago who finishes it; nor is the Santiago who returns to shore with the marlin's plundered skeleton the same man who set out to sea. If at the book's beginning being *salao* is a shameful thing (it certainly is for the fishing community), by the book's end that very word is shown to be part of a value system for which Santiago has little regard. Santiago's path, his *tao* or way, is the ocean itself. His sojourn on its waves is not, at its heart, commercial—we never see him *truly* impoverished—but spiritual.

Santiago has attained what the Buddhists call *satori* or enlightenment, the state wherein all actions can be chosen and performed according to centeredness, or being-in-the-way: "He was too simple to know when he had attained humility. But he knew he had attained it and he knew it was not disgraceful and it carried no loss of true pride" (9). Readings of *The Old Man and the Sea* which rely on the "fighter code" cannot reconcile the humility which allows pride; in a Taoist reading the seeming contradiction is essential. It is not contradiction, but balance, the yin and yang which always fluctuate and which follow each other constantly.

Even Santiago's body comes into balance with his surroundings: his eyes were the same color as the sea and were cheerful and undefeated" (6). Hemingway's description of Santiago's physical features in terms of the natural world find a corollary in the Taoist vision of the body as geography. Kristofer Schipper notes in *The Taoist Body* that the ancients "recognize[d] a deep relationship between a physical setting and the nature

of its inhabitants.” Quoting from the *Huai-nan Tzu*, Schipper writes, “Each region produces its class of beings. . . . [I]n every case (men) [*sic*] are the image of the wind (of their environment)” (101). Knowing the changes and spontaneity of the universe is knowing the changes within one’s own makeup. In a text from the second century A.D., the *Book of the Center* [*sic*], we find an elaborate mapping of the body as a representation of the natural world: head as mountain, kidneys as lakes, breasts as sun and moon, and so forth (Schipper 105–6). The outer flesh and the inner essence, in Taoist thought, are so bound up with one another that to see them as separate entities diminishes our connection with both of them.

Confucius reportedly took up the *I Ching* only in his seventies, as “only those advanced in years regard themselves as ready to learn from it” (Wilhelm and Wilhelm 8). Hemingway’s description of Santiago at first emphasizes his age, but only insofar as its markers correspond to Santiago’s life of fishing. “The brown blotches of the benevolent skin cancer the sun wrings from its reflection on the tropic sea were on his cheeks. The blotches ran well down the sides of his face and his hands had the deep-creased scars from handling heavy fish on the cords” (5–6). Santiago’s outer image replicates the natural world—his scars are “old as erosions in a fishless desert” (6). Fully aware of the connection between his spiritual direction and what his body can endure, Santiago’s constant fight against sleep and his cramping left hand are both manifestations of the vessel which rebels (“I hate a cramp, he thought. It is a treachery of one’s own body” [45]). We are never told how long Santiago has been fishing, but we do not need to know. We are meant to understand that all his previous life has been preparation for this marlin: “Perhaps I should not have been a fisherman, he thought. But that was the thing that I was born for” (36).

The *I Ching* speaks not only of knowing the proper course of action, but of willingness to accept nonaction when the time comes to wait. Significantly, Santiago has lost his appetite in the novel’s beginning, and will lie to the boy rather than accept food from him. Both major schools of thought on *The Old Man and the Sea* read this loss of appetite as indicating a lack of will or desire. But from a Taoist perspective, it may be read more constructively as a clearing of the inner in preparation for the spiritual test, rather than as a loss of vitality or stamina. In Taoist funerary rites, as in various ceremonies from numerous belief systems, participants prepare for the ritual by fasting. Taoism, however, places a special emphasis on the emptying of the container: the fast “represent[s] the ‘passage’, the journey in this closed universe, where one accumulates transcendent forces by completing cycle after cycle” (Schipper 76). Furthermore, Confucius saw the fast as a physical representation of the emptying which must occur before true attention can be paid to the Tao: “Concentrate your will. Do not listen with your ears, but with your heart. Do

not listen with your heart, but with your *ch'i* [life-energies]. . . . The *ch'i* are 'empty' and responsive to all beings. The Tao is found in that 'void' and that 'void' is the 'fast of the heart'" (Schipper 202). "Empty the belly, fill the mind," goes the proverb, an idea supported by a passage from the *I Ching* concerning *hui*, the hexagram of Waiting and Nourishment:

All beings have need of nourishment from above. But the gift of food comes in its own time, and for this one must wait. . . . The rain will come in its own time. We cannot make it come; we have to wait for it. . . . Strength in the face of danger does not plunge ahead but bides its time, whereas weakness in the face of danger grows agitated and has not the patience to wait. (Wilhelm and Baynes 24)

Balance and precision are an obsession with Santiago. He hangs his bait lines carefully:

so that at each level in the darkness of the stream there would be a bait waiting *exactly* where he wished it to be for any fish that swam there. . . . I keep them with *precision* [he thought]. Only I have no luck any more. But who knows? Maybe today. Every day is a new day. It is better to be lucky. But I would rather be *exact*. Then when luck comes you are ready. (22–3 [emphases mine])

*The Old Man and the Sea* contains writing as precise as any of Hemingway's descriptions of bullfights or big game hunting. Each of Santiago's movements has a clear, exact, and often defined purpose, as in this passage from early in the book:

He shipped his oars and brought a small line from under the bow. It had a wire leader and a medium-sized hook and he baited it with one of the sardines. He let it go over the side and then made it fast to a ring bolt in the stern. Then he baited another line and left it coiled in the shade of the bow. He went back to rowing and to watching the long-winged black bird who was working, now, over the water. (24).

Hemingway never used this kind of account carelessly. We cannot know how many times Santiago has performed these exact motions in just this way. His repeated, ordered action embodies his connection with his inner landscape, and arranges outer reality to match the inner. Like any visionary, Santiago has a vast repository of ritual and ceremony at his disposal: "It was considered a



virtue not to talk unnecessarily at sea and the old man had always considered it so and respected it" (28); "Then he will turn and swallow [the hook], he thought. He did not say that because he knew that if you said a good thing it might not happen" (31).

From this standpoint, Santiago's brief reference to Christian prayer is especially interesting. Virtually all readers agree that the reference cannot be anything but superficial:

"I am not religious," he said. "But I will say ten Our Fathers and ten Hail Marys that I should catch this fish, and I promise to make a pilgrimage to the Virgin de Cobre if I catch him. That is a promise."

He commenced to say his prayers mechanically. Sometimes he would be so tired that he could not remember the prayer and then he would say them fast so that they would come automatically. Hail Marys are easier to say than Our Fathers, he thought. (47)

As Wittkowski observes, this passage points up the ultimate paradox of engaging in a Christian reading of *The Old Man and the Sea*. The sea is Santiago's dwelling place, not the Christian realm; the movements he makes are a direct response to his environment, and therefore a "right" response. Santiago needs no prayer, and by the novel's end, he knows it. His connection, his ritual and awareness, are enough.

The richest section of the novel may be the shark attack which all but closes it. If *The Old Man and the Sea* is made to support a Christian reading, this is the martyrdom; if a victory/defeat model, this is where one or the other is played out. The shark attack occurs right after Santiago's meditation on sin—"If you love him, it is not a sin to kill him. Or is it more?" (78)—a passage which Wittkowski finds particularly compelling:

"I am not religious," he says. But, when Santiago does want to involve himself more deeply in matters of consequence, the simple fisherman is dependent upon the traditional concept of sin. . . . As with the iceberg, beneath the surface of these awkward sentences lies the mass of Hemingway's philosophy of killing. The explanation ends abruptly, of course, for nothing can be accomplished through the concept of sin. [W]hen he finally does return home empty-handed, after 87 days, he has repeated his record streak of bad luck. (9, 16)

Similarly, Gregory Green sees Santiago's capture of the marlin as inconsequential beside the shark attack, which he reads as the novel's true,

pessimistic core. Santiago possesses Nietzsche's "Will to Power" without the youth or strength to implement it. In Green's view the statement "I went out too far" sums up the central truth of the work: "The capture alone is useless, non-productive. Yet it is only when the promise of capture presents itself to Santiago that he comes to understand that without the child he can never win. . . . It is the child alone who knows neither destruction or defeat" (17). But Santiago can never recapture the youth represented by Manolin: "The time has passed and to endure is the best he can expect, undefeated but utterly destroyed" (18).

Hard upon Santiago's consideration of sin comes an observation which elucidates the shark attack and allows a more positive reading than Wittkowski's or Green's: "Besides, he thought, everything kills everything else in some way. Fishing kills me exactly as it keeps me alive. The boy keeps me alive, he thought. I must not deceive myself too much" (79). Here again is balance and flux. Santiago's explicit understanding of them illustrates his acceptance of change as natural and proper.

A lexical construct commonly translated as "No Blame" appears frequently in the *I Ching*. This somewhat cryptic phrase, when it appears in Taoist oracular statements, refers to the placement of all things in their wonted order, the "rightness" of a particular situation, and the opportunity for further spiritual progression (Wilhelm and Baynes 291). Significantly, Santiago's interaction with the fish never implies a concern with "fairness": he will curse, he will strike and slash, but he never thinks of blaming the sharks for being sharks, for performing as sharks are meant to perform. Glen A. Love adds an ecological dimension to Brenner's reading of Santiago's capitalistic imperative, arguing that *The Old Man and the Sea* contains no unique vision of the natural world to set it apart from, for example, *Green Hills of Africa*:

[Nature is] a "great sea with our friends and our enemies," creatures judged, in Santiago's anthropocentrism, according to how they serve or hinder him. The friends are those which promote Santiago's freedom and happiness, the enemies those which restrict that freedom and happiness.

[O]ne finds no evidence that this testament of acceptance could transcend its anthropocentrism to include such recognition that the villainous shark, for example, is no less necessary to the nobility of the sea than the marlin or the porpoise or the turtle . . . (207-8)

In fact, such acceptance is exactly what *does* set *The Old Man and the Sea* apart from other "natural visions" in Hemingway's writing, and the shark attack is the moment at which Santiago's realization comes.

The arrival of the first shark, a herald for the subsequent ones, is set in terms of rightness and the biological imperative. His “shark-ness” calls him forth: “The shark was not an accident. He had come up from deep down in the water as the dark cloud of blood had settled and dispersed in the mile deep sea” (74). Instead of reading Santiago’s struggle with the sharks as defeat or martyrdom, I read it as Hemingway’s acknowledgment, or at least awareness, of the cyclical nature of “luck,” or change, and also of the “rightness” of shark behavior. The passage will disappoint readers in search of nobility ascribed to all the ocean’s creatures, but this is because “nobility”—itself a very anthropocentric construct—is not the quality under consideration. Hemingway writes here of *essence*, not *quality*.

Santiago continues to fight even when he has little hope of victory, but victory is not so important as Santiago’s emergent awareness of his situation and surroundings: “The old man’s head was clear and good now and he was full of resolution but he had little hope” (75). Santiago’s clear-headed understanding of what is about to happen cannot be ignored: “Now the bad time is coming” and, significantly, “Don’t think, old man. . . . Sail on this course and take it when it comes” (77).

This is “centeredness”—awareness without thought, action without agonizing—the ultimate Taoist goal. During his return to shore after the sharks have taken the marlin, Santiago’s thoughts indicate a redirection of his energies. His thoughts return to the skiff that has taken him to and from this latest encounter:

He sailed lightly now and he had no thoughts or feelings of any kind. He was past everything now and he sailed the skiff to make his home port as well and intelligently as he could. In the night sharks hit the carcass as someone might pick up crumbs from the table. The old man did not pay attention to them and did not pay attention to anything except steering. He only noticed how lightly and how well the skiff sailed now there was no great weight beside her.

She’s good, he thought. She is sound and not harmed in any way except for the tiller. That is easily replaced.

He could feel he was inside the current now . . . (89)

Most criticism sees this passage, especially the section detailing Santiago’s refusal to notice the hitting sharks, as indicative of his failure, whether or not that failure is perceived as eventually overcome. But the *Tao-te Ching* points out that “Return is the movement of the Way; / yielding is the function of the way” (Cleary 14). Santiago, who recognizes the “rightness” of events, does not

cry for loss. Manolin, whose understanding of success or failure is bound up (like the townspeople's) with possession of the marlin, does weep.

Even Santiago's statement that the sharks beat him carries no blame; their shark-ness caused them to perform as sea-dwellers, just as his own essence causes him to perform as a fisherman. Santiago's capture of the marlin, and its subsequent recapture by the sharks, is cyclic rather than set in terms of winning and losing. Santiago's lion dreams have not changed. His lifestyle has not changed except that he *has* broken his losing streak; the capture of the marlin reassures him that he is a true fisherman, that his actions have been performed rightly. Once his struggle with the sharks is over, he can re-place himself in the balance of the fishing life and sail his skiff "well."

Santiago's loss of the marlin is only a failure if we define "success" 1) in terms of superiority or mastery over other beings, a view which Santiago clearly does not possess; or 2) in terms of monetary exchange, as the town certainly does, and the boy probably does (he tries to protect Santiago from visitors and weeps constantly for his "failure"). Santiago thinks of the marlin's commercial value, thirty cents a pound, only once, and fleetingly, before the initial attack of the sharks. By the novel's end, Santiago has gone beyond his experience and can sleep off his fatigue, leaving the boy, who has not yet learned the essence of a fisherman's existence, awake to cry.

I agree with Wittkowski that "To find despair in the story of Santiago one has to read it into the story" (17). But to place that story in terms of victory and defeat is to reduce *The Old Man and the Sea* to a simple story of action rather than a rumination on the awareness of essence and precision from which that action arises. A Taoist perspective may allow us a way out of strict hero/martyr, success-failure dichotomies and open the text to more complex discussion. *The Old Man and the Sea* is the story of the old man of the sea, the old man who *is* the sea. In his centeredness, in his path, there is no blame.

## NOTES

1. See especially Yasuhiko Ogawa's "*The Old Man and the Sea*: or, the Sacred and its Metamorphosis" (*Language and Culture* 6:1 [1984]: 63-91); G.R. Wilson Jr.'s "Incarnation and Redemption in *The Old Man and the Sea*" (*Studies in Short Fiction* 14 [1977]: 369-73); John Halverson's "Christian Resonance in *The Old Man and the Sea*" (*English Language Notes* 2 [1964]: 50-54); and Hamilton and Verduin in this bibliography. In addition, Kenneth Lynn's 1987 biography offers an overview of contemporary criticism of *The Old Man and the Sea*'s "pseudo-Biblical" "lachrymose sentimentality. . . that mixes cute talk about baseball . . . with crucifixion symbolism of the most appalling crudity" (565-6).

2. Larry E. Grimes's "Hemingway's Religious Odyssey: The Oak Park Years" (Nagel 37-58) offers a useful history of the utilitarian Protestant tradition into which Hemingway was born, and with which he struggled all his life. In addition, Baker's *Ernest*

*Hemingway: A Life Story* outlines the sometimes maddeningly convoluted paths which Hemingway's religious leanings took, and through which he became something very like a spiritual free-agent.

3. According to Brasch and Sigman, Hemingway's library did contain several books on China, the majority of which were travel books and historical/political studies. Because these two classifications make up the greatest number of entries for China in their *Composite Record*, it seems fair to assume that Hemingway's interest in the country ran towards its socio-political history, not its religious tradition. Moreover, Hemingway's World War II articles on his China trip for *PM* magazine (collected in *By-Line: Ernest Hemingway* 303–39) show that the primary foci of his note-taking and research were Chinese military organization, the Sino-Japanese war, and America's emerging role as an anti-fascist power.

4. Actually, current study in particle and quantum physics has become less circuitous in its relation of physical law to Taoism and patterns of continuous change. Fritjof Capra's recently revised *The Tao of Physics* is one attempt to bridge these two strains of inquiry.

5. For an especially detailed survey of one aspect of *The Old Man and the Sea* and the winner/loser paradigm, see C. Harold Hurley, ed. *Hemingway's Debt to Baseball in The Old Man and the Sea: A Collection of Critical Readings*. NY: Mellen, 1992.

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DWIGHT EDDINS

*Of Rocks and Marlin: The Existentialist Agon  
in Camus's The Myth of Sisyphus and  
Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea*

It has long been clear that certain authors of the 1920s—I am thinking particularly of Fitzgerald and Hemingway—discovered existentialism in practice before it was theorized by the likes of Heidegger, Sartre, and Camus. They sensed without the help of formal philosophy that, as John Killinger puts it, “God is dead in our time, and the traditional ethic is invalid,” and that the only valid response is the “founding” of the “self” through “aesthetic and ethical” experiences (98–99). But as physicists know, vacuums have their own dynamics, and this is no less true of a vacuum of values. And it is true in turn that different perspectives on these dynamics and emphases on different aspects of them produce individual notions of what experiences most authentically found the self.

In this regard, we might even speak of “existentialisms” as they represent the various philosophical grids that help us parse particular 20th century fictions from distinctive angles. Kumkum Sangari, for instance, in “Touting the Void,” asserts that “Hemingway’s existential value structure depends heavily on subjective versions of authenticity and death similar to those developed by Heidegger,” and goes on to apply these—with essentialist reservations—to such works as *A Farewell to Arms* and *The Old Man and the Sea* (170). Stephen Croft, on the other hand, finds Karl Jaspers’s existentialist theory of tragedy highly applicable to *The Old Man*

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*and the Sea*, in particular jasper's notion of the tragic hero whose "existence is shipwrecked by the consistency with which he meets some unconditional demand, real or supposed" (8).

What I wish to argue here is that the perspective and the prescription of Albert Camus—in particular, the Camus of *The Myth of Sisyphus*—have a unique value in this explicatory enterprise. Numerous commentators have rounded him up, along with the other usual suspects, by way of sketching a general existential framework; but few have developed his peculiar relevance at any length. Two exceptions are the articles of Uma K. Alladi and Wayne C. Holcombe. Alladi argues for parallels between the novels of Hemingway and Camus, with emphasis on a human alienation from real "feelings and emotions" and a lack of metaphysical orientation afflicting the 20th century (43). Holcombe develops various Camusian aspects of Hemingway's fiction, but insists on a crucial epistemological difference between the two authors—a point to which I shall return.

We might note, first of all, a pragmatic, hands-on quality in the existentialism of the 1920s novelists that corresponds to the way Camus so lucidly grounds his own analysis in the immediacies and urgencies of everyday human experience. For Camus, the nihilistic void functions as an inescapable generator of absurdity, undermining every human enterprise and thought by revealing its ultimate pointlessness and meaninglessness. He locates the only intellectually defensible response to this absurdity in acts of rebellion that maximize available life and its intensity, even as the cosmic futility of these acts is kept uncompromisingly in mind.

Fitzgerald describes a dynamic much like this as he looks back with rueful nostalgia at his life in the 1920s, ten years before his crack-up, and reflects on his personal philosophy of those days:

One should, for example, be able to see that things are hopeless and yet be determined to make them otherwise. . . . I must hold in balance the sense of the futility of effort and the sense of the necessity to struggle; the conviction of the inevitability of failure and still the determination to succeed. . . . If I could do this through the common ills—domestic, professional, and personal—then the ego would continue as an arrow shot from nothingness to nothingness with such force that only gravity would bring it to earth at last. (69–70)

It is, of course, "gravity," as a *reductio ad absurdum* deep in the scheme of things, that Camus's Sisyphus battles in pushing his boulder up the hill, and that inexorably brings the boulder back down to the value-negating nihil where he began his struggle. Between these negations, provisional values have their

brief moments as underwriters of a heroic significance, however doomed, that humanity forces on the scheme of things.

The Sisyphean protagonists of Hemingway face this gravity as a vortex of random, quasi-malignant forces that constitute a steady—and ultimately effective—resistance to dreams of love and achievement. The rebellion of those initiated into this dark gnosis by experience centers on the assertion of such provisional values as honor, courage, decency, generosity, and stoical fortitude—in other words, the code. This assertion—embodied constantly in actions—is a way of establishing an island of human dignity in the middle of the cosmic mess without losing sight of the certainty that the island will eventually be overwhelmed.

I want to use *The Old Man and the Sea* as my extended case in point because it captures this struggle with a peculiar simplicity and lucidity that stem from a drama stripped to its essentials—a lone man who is, like Sisyphus, engaged in an isolated, repetitive struggle that must end in defeat, but who refuses the escape of some ultimate religious consolation. The relation between the profound simplicity of Santiago's ordeal and the clear assertion of certain values is the burden of Joseph Petite's observation that "Santiago, plain and unsophisticated, is man in the natural state, a perfect subject for this trial. He has only the strength of his spirit and his determination to sustain him. The fishing episode here is . . . a crucible, a battle where the issue is whether a man wants badly enough to struggle to assert his own existential value" (162). That the physical immediacies of human struggle can be used to illustrate the cosmic pathos of the human situation is a precept central to the aesthetics of both Camus and Hemingway. This parallel is especially striking when we consider Camus's concluding section, where he quotes Homer's description of Sisyphus as "the wisest and most prudent of mortals" (88) and goes on to give us his own grippingly visual vignette of Sisyphus in the underworld:

[O]ne sees merely the whole effort of a body straining to raise the huge stone, to roll it and push it up a slope a hundred times over; one sees the face screwed up, the cheek tight against the stone, the shoulder bracing the clay-covered mass, the foot wedging it, the fresh start with arms outstretched, the wholly human security of two earth-clotted hands. . . . A face that toils so close to stone is already stone itself. (89)

Hemingway's old fisherman Santiago also bears stigmata that are an outward and visible sign of an inward grace under pressure—an existential pressure that includes a perpetual sentence to labor and loss: "The old man was thin and gaunt with deep wrinkles on the back of his neck. The brown

blotches of the benevolent skin cancer the sun brings from its reflection on the tropical sea were on his cheeks. The blotches ran well down the sides of his face and his hands had the deep-creased scars from handling heavy fish on the cords. But none of these scars were fresh. They were as old as erosions in a fishless desert” (9–10). Just as the body of Sisyphus has taken on the nature of the earth and stone with which he struggles, so the body of Santiago represents a constant organic reaction with the sun and the sea and the sea’s creatures that are his tireless antagonists. At the same time, however, they provide both the setting and the challenges that give his victories—however provisional and short-lived—their existential significance.

His skin cancer, ironically, mirrors this duality. It is the result of neutral cosmic processes that appear malignant or malevolent in their assault upon the well-being of the organism, but are in another sense “benevolent” in what they force the organism to become through overcoming them. This is the source of Wallace Stevens’s poignant apologia for human suffering in “*Esthétique du Mal*,” a suffering unable to understand how the cosmic indifference that “rejects it saves it in the end” by elevating human fate to the level of tragedy (2.21). The “blotches” on Santiago’s skin thus serve as badges of existential courage. So also the ancient “deep-creased scars” on his hands like “erosions in a fishless desert.” The scars actually illustrate his provisional triumphs as a lone fisherman over the sea’s adversarial forces, but these minor victories do not add up to a lasting, determinative victory in the “fishless desert” of an absurd universe. Even Santiago’s shirt serves as a symbol of his heroically futile struggle. It is described as “being patched so many times that it was like the sail and the patches were faded to many different shades by the sun” (18), a comparison that achieves full significance when we recall that the patched sail is described as looking, when furled, “like the flag of permanent defeat” (1).

The particular defeat on which the novel focuses, the catching of the huge marlin that will be devoured by sharks, is obviously Sisyphian in its combination of prolonged, repetitive, painful struggle and the clear-eyed knowledge of that struggle’s ultimate futility. Camus’s conqueror, an absurdist hero and spokesman, phrases it pungently:

I esteem the individual only because he strikes me as ridiculous and humiliated. Knowing that there are no victorious causes, I have a liking for lost causes: they require an uncontaminated soul, equal to its defeat as to its temporary victories. . . . I establish my lucidity in the middle of what negates it. I exalt man before what crushes him, and my freedom, my revolt, and my passion come together then in that tension, that lucidity, and that vast repetition. (64–65)

Santiago's struggle is at its most lucidly Sisyphean when he battles the sharks, who have more or less infinite reserves of numbers, energy, and vicious determination. Driving a harpoon at the first, he hits it "without hope, but with resolution and complete malignancy" (102). Having lost the harpoon in this encounter, he continues to improvise weaponry from materials in the boat in the face of hopeless odds: "Now they have beaten me, he thought, I am too old to club sharks to death. But I will try it as long as I have the oars and the short club and the tiller" (112). Having lost the battle, with the marlin reduced to pure skeleton, he spits scornfully into the ocean and says to the sharks at large, "Eat that, *galanos*. And make a dream you've killed a man" (119).<sup>1</sup> He then puts the episode behind him and sails home, reflecting insouciantly on what it means to be beaten: "It is easy when you are beaten. And what beat you, he thought. 'Nothing,' he said aloud. 'I went out too far'" (120).

The word "nothing" has a particular existential resonance in Hemingway's fiction, most explicitly in "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place, where *nada* is a specter of pointlessness and meaninglessness inseparable from the human condition. To go out "too far," beyond safe, familiar waters, is to encounter *nada* in all its life-denying force. And to battle this force unavailingly again and again without yielding to despair is the essence of absurdist heroism. As Camus says of Sisyphus, "his scorn of the gods, his hatred of death, and his passion for life won him that unspeakable penalty in which the whole being is exerted toward accomplishing nothing. This is the price that must be paid for the passions of the earth" (89). And, again, "Sisyphus . . . powerless and rebellious, knows the whole extent of his wretched condition. . . . The lucidity that was to crown his torture at the same time crowns his victory. There is no fate that cannot be surmounted by scorn" (90).

Charles Taylor focuses on the "went out too far" passage to make a point closely allied to my own in his Nietzschean reading of the novel. In contradistinction to the Christian interpretation that finds a sinful hubris in transgressing appointed limits, Taylor emphasizes the life-affirming excess of a Dionysian mode that posits "the value of the heroic individual taking the greatest risks in order to achieve the greatest fulfillment." Santiago's "need to 'prove himself'" again and again is "the need to participate in life and affirm it in the highest manner possible by going far out" (642). Agreeing with Taylor, Christoph Kuhn points out that "Santiago's adventure has more in common with Nietzsche's notion of tragic affirmation of life than with the Christian themes of sin, punishment, and salvation" (224).

The absurd has its own temptations to heresy, and chief among these is hope, which is, in effect, a failure of lucidity and philosophical courage in the face of certain negation. Camus is at once both absolutist and full of human understanding with respect to this transgression. For him, the absurd world

is “a world in which thoughts, like lives, are devoid of future. Everything that makes man work and get excited utilizes hope. The sole thought that is not mendacious is therefore a sterile thought” (51). And, again, “men who live on hope do not thrive in . . . [the absurdist] universe, where kindness yields to generosity, affection to virile silence, and communion to solitary courage” (53). But even the hard-core existentialist remains prey to hope as temptation, so basic is it to the human condition. Camus, reflecting on Dostoevsky’s difficulty in expunging belief in some future life, concludes that the Russian ultimately arrives at the notion of existence as being both “illusory and . . . eternal” (83). “At this point I perceive,” says Camus, “that hope cannot be eluded forever and that it can beset even those who wanted to be free of it” (83).

Santiago is afflicted by the same philosophical ambivalence. As the first shark attacks, he realizes from his Sisyphean experience that the struggle to come can have only one end: “The old man’s head was clear and good now and he was full of resolution but he had little hope. It was too good to last, he thought” (101). He then drives his harpoon into the shark “without hope but with resolution and complete malignancy” (102). Even so, after fashioning a makeshift weapon to replace the lost harpoon, he stares only at the undamaged part of the fish as though to nurture a stubborn optimism: “some of his hope returned. It is silly not to hope, he thought. Besides I believe it is a sin” (104–105).

The notion that not hoping may be a sin inverts the notion that not hoping is an existential virtue. What Santiago tentatively regresses to here is the Christian concept of despair as the unforgivable sin, a belief as deeply rooted in his Roman Catholic background as the belief in a future life is rooted in Dostoevsky’s Russian Orthodoxy. But it is precisely such transgressions, according to Camus, that help the absurdist to clarify and fortify his position: “At the very conclusion of the absurd reasoning . . . it is not a matter of indifference to find hope coming back in under one of its most touching guises. That shows the difficulty of the absurd asceticism” (84). Thus, Santiago, aware that he is straying into apostasy with regard to his own experience, refines his position: “I have no understanding of it [sin], and am not sure that I believe in it” (105). Reflecting that there are people, i.e., priests, who are “paid” to think about sin, he concludes, “Let them think about it. You were born to be a fisherman as the fish was born to be a fish” (105).

This passage is cited by Wayne Holcombe as evidence for his thesis that the “Not to think about it” attitude of Hemingway’s protagonists represents a sharp and significant divergence from Camus’s injunction to keep the absurd lucidly in mind even as we strive against it (22). The thesis itself is well taken, in a purist sense, but we have seen that Camus himself allows for bouts of recidivism in the face of this merciless clarity. And in the case of this particular refusal to “think,” the rejection of “sin” as a theological concept represents an underwriting of the absurdist metaphysic.

What we have here, and in other passages such as those where Santiago promises to say prayers when he is not so immersed in the task at hand, is a dialectic between the Christian negation of despair as a damning illusion and the absurdist affirmation of despair as a truth that opens the way to an authentic existence. We must reconsider Christian interpretations of Santiago's struggle in the light of this tension, and of Hemingway's privileging of its existential side. As Wirt Williams makes clear, anyone attempting to find a larger non-Christian dynamic in the novel—such as “naturalistic tragedy” or a “parable of art and artist”—must come to terms with a complex set of Santiago–Christ parallels, such as “the agony of his [Santiago's] back braced against the line (in the New Testament reference, Jesus' back against the cross); the easing of the contact with a burlap sack (the cloak or robe); the raw rim his straw hat makes on his forehead under the scorching sun (the crown of thorns); the bleeding hands (the nail wounds); the forcing of his face into the raw dolphin (an act of communion); his hunger and thirst and the need to eat and drink to keep sufficient strength” (173, 177).

Williams's solution is to consider the novel as “a deliberately constructed, three-tiered . . . fable” in which “the naturalistic, the Christian, and the art–artist modes are all constructed carefully enough to stand alone, yet are so tightly laminated that no joining shows” (174). I think it a workable solution, but would like to add a fourth mode—the existentialist which ends up placing the Christian mode in a subordinate status.<sup>2</sup> As we have already seen, Santiago himself subordinates the Christian mode to the realities of the human struggle as he understands them. Ultimately, Christianity is not much more for him than a trove of sentimental relics, to which he occasionally returns in a moment of conditioned reflex. The formulaic “Our Fathers” and “Hail Marys” that he utters “mechanically” make him feel better, but he continues to suffer “exactly as much and perhaps a little more” (64–65). The prayers are momentary distractions, but ineffective anodynes for the relentless suffering that is his inescapable reality and demands his full attention. Camus's quotation from Alain is apropos here: “Prayer . . . is when night descends over thought” (48).

Santiago also has in his trove the religious “relics” of his dead wife—pictures of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and of the Virgin of Cobre that hang on the walls of his shack (16). Hemingway specifies that these walls are made of guano, “the tough budshields of the royal palm,” but the more common meaning of “guano” inevitably reverberates here to suggest an elemental and excremental reality papered over by illusory hopes of transcendence (15). Santiago's admission that he is “not religious” and his dismissive relegation of belief in sin to priests with a commercial interest in it hint at a larger relegation of Christianity itself to the status of a sophisticated bureaucracy, one that does not answer to the experiential immediacies of his life.

These considerations prepare the ground for applying an existentialist perspective to the novel's Christian allegory, which reaches its climax in Santiago's "crucifixion." Shouldering his heavy mast like a cross, he starts to climb up hill, but has to collapse in fatigue and then resoulder the mast five times before reaching his shack. In Christian terms, of course, the crucifixion of Christ represents a definitive suffering that makes a definitive salvation—including an eternity of compensating joy—possible. But it does so by way of a transcendental dynamic that the absurdist rejects as metaphysical illusion. In this world that is the only world, one bears one's cross again and again *ad absurdum* in repetitive acts of rebellion against the crucifying nihil. But the existentialist who refuses to abandon, in Camus's words, "his revolt and lucidity," who "has forgotten how to hope," discovers that "this hell of the present is his Kingdom at last. All problems recover their sharp edge. Abstract evidence retreats before the poetry of forms and colors. Spiritual conflicts become embodied and return to the abject and magnificent shelter of man's heart. None of them is settled. But all are transfigured" (39).

Similarly, the Santiago who stumbles up hill with the mast after yet one more defeat is the Santiago who had thought to himself earlier, during the battle with the marlin, "The thousand times he had proved it meant nothing. Now he was proving it again. Each time was a new time, and he never thought about the past when he was doing it" (66). It is an attitude that incarnates the Sisyphean rejection of metaphysical resolutions and its embrace of a *Realpolitik* that is actually a *Realmetaphisik*, a philosophy that locates a stark unresolvability deep in the scheme of things, and prescribes courage and dignity in the face of it.

#### NOTES

1. Eric Waggoner rightly recognizes the shark episode as an interpretational crux in his Taoist reading of *The Old Man and the Sea*. Here the reader must decide to lean toward an example of "Christian . . . martyrdom" or a "victory/defeat model"—or toward a Taoist harmonization of opposing forces (99). Waggoner makes a convincing argument for a Taoist element in Santiago's connectedness with the life of the sea and his acceptance of cyclical swings, but is less persuasive when he suggests that Santiago accepts the "'rightness' of shark behavior" (101). After all, he attacks them with what Hemingway terms "complete malignancy" and tells them contemptuously to devour his spittle in the delusion that they have devoured a man. It would seem that in this instance the defiance of the defeated in the "victory/defeat" model is being evidenced—a reaction that fits well into the victory-within-defeat of the absurdist hero.

2. In this same connection, it seems to me useful to add an "existentialist" reading to the variety of readings—feminist, religious, heroic, psychological, etc. that Gerry Brenner summarizes as workable grids for *The Old Man and the Sea*. Brenner is concerned with demonstrating the suggestive ambiguities of the novel and its resistance to a monistic (what he calls a "mounted-on-rails") interpretation (102). My own critical bias (quite frankly pro-

railroad) is that some interpretive grids are, in George Orwell's famous phrase, more equal than others because they spring directly from the writer's *Zeitgeist* and from the conceptual constants of his/her corpus. Thus—for example—Christian allegory in Hemingway becomes an aspect (partly ironic) of existential allegory, rather than vice-versa.

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SUSAN F. BEEGEL

*Santiago and the Eternal Feminine:  
Gendering La Mar in  
The Old Man and the Sea*

“Hemingway is always less embarrassing when he is not attempting to deal with women,” Leslie A. Fiedler writes, with some smugness, of *The Old Man and the Sea*, “and he returns with relief (with what we as readers at least feel as relief) to that ‘safe’ American Romance of the boy and the old man” (“Adolescence” 108). Like Fiedler, most critics of this novella overlook the fact that *The Old Man and the Sea* has a powerful feminine persona in a title role. Hemingway tells us that Santiago “always thought of the sea as *la mar* which is what people call her in Spanish when they love her. Sometimes those who love her say bad things of her but they are always said as though she were a woman” (29). If the novella is an “American Romance,” it is not the love story of Santiago and Manolin but of the old man and the sea, conjoined in the title like Hero and Leander, Troilus and Cressida, Antony and Cleopatra, Tristan and Isolde. Given the nature of the sea in Hemingway’s novella, this is not a “safe” romance at all but a story about the tragic love of mortal man for capricious goddess.

I propose a reading of *The Old Man and the Sea* that abandons the anthropocentric critical practice of relegating nature to the role of setting—of thinking like the novella’s young fishermen, who consider the sea to be “a place” rather than a living being (30). When we recognize that the sea, as the novella’s title suggests, is a protagonist on an equal footing with Santiago, we

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see how Hemingway—using a rich tapestry of images drawn from mythology, folklore, religion, marine natural history, and literature—genders the sea as feminine throughout the text, thereby raising key questions about the right relationship of man and nature.<sup>1</sup> Although one strand of ecofeminist thought argues that men characteristically gender nature as female to justify treating the land in a dominating, exploitative way (virgin land), while expecting unending forgiveness (Mother Earth), Hemingway argues that the true sin is masculinizing nature, treating nature as an enemy or contestant to be met in combat. Examining the role played by the feminine sea in this story may reveal that *The Old Man and the Sea* has a stronger ecological ethic than previously supposed.

Santiago genders the sea early in the novella as he rows out to fish in the early morning darkness. He begins by “feeling sorry for the birds, especially the small delicate dark terns that were always flying and looking and almost never finding” (29). Then he wonders, “Why did they make birds so delicate and fine as those sea swallows when the ocean can be so cruel? She is kind and very beautiful. But she can be so cruel and it comes so suddenly.” This is the moment when we learn that Santiago “always thought of the sea as *la mar*, which is what people call her in Spanish when they love her.” We learn further that

[T]he old man always thought of her as feminine and as something that gave or withheld great favours, and if she did wild or wicked things, it was because she could not help them. The moon affects her as it does a woman, he thought. (30)

These few sentences propose a complex persona for the sea that resonates throughout the novella. I want to begin by examining how they suggest the sea’s connection to a spiritual and biological principle of the Eternal Feminine. The sea’s kindness, beauty, and generosity—the zenith of the natural cycle involving fecundity, copulation, birth, and nurture—offer important suggestions about right relationship to nature. Next, I want to look at the sin of masculinizing the sea instead of honoring her feminine nature, then examine the “bad things” said about the sea as though she were a woman—that she is cruel, wild, and wicked, and represents the nadir of the natural cycle—the inexorability of the death and decomposition that nourishes life. Throughout, I want to refer not only to published criticism on *The Old Man and the Sea* but also to the voices of those women students who seem less culturally conditioned than men to accept this as a story of contest and who are more likely to question the novella’s violence. Finally, I will consider how gendering the sea relates to the tragedy of Santiago and its redemptive message.

Those, like Santiago, who gender what is supremely dangerous in nature as feminine (hurricanes, for instance, were traditionally called by women's names before the National Hurricane Center decided this folkloric practice was "sexist") and especially as maternal (the Tibetan name for Everest is Jomolungma, Mother Goddess of the World) do so in part as a form of appeasement. They hope if they approach with love, understanding, and respect, nature will treat them with feminine gentleness and especially with the unconditional love of a mother. Walt Whitman provides an example in "As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life" that illuminates Santiago's professions of love for *la mar*:

Ebb, ocean of life, (the flow will return,)
 Cease not your moaning you fierce old mother,
 Endlessly cry for your castaways, but fear not, deny not me,
 Rustle not up so hoarse and angry against my feet as I touch you
 or gather from you.
 I mean tenderly by you and all,
 I gather for myself. (186)

Santiago's hope that the sea will not rise up angry against him as he gathers for himself explains in part his need to gender the "cruel" sea as feminine.

Santiago begins his consideration of *la mar* from a pagan or "primitive" viewpoint. The words "why did *they* make" imply his belief in a pantheon of gods responsible for natural creation. At once kind and beautiful, cruel and capricious, the sea is goddess and member of that pantheon—"they" know this "she"; "they" should have considered "her" cruelty when they made terns. Associated with the creative and destructive forces in nature, the sea in this novella represents the Eternal Feminine. She might remind us of a figure from Greek or Roman mythology—Tethys, wife of Oceanus and daughter of Uranus and Gaia, or Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus and Dione. Santiago, however, knows her as "*la mar*."

The novella also draws from Catholic imagery in representing the sea as the Eternal Feminine. A devotional picture of the Virgin of Cobre, the patroness of Cuba, hangs next to an image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus on the wall of Santiago's shack.<sup>2</sup> The Virgin is a feminine icon, relic of his dead wife (16). During his agon at sea, he promises to make a pilgrimage to the Virgin of Cobre's shrine if he should catch his fish, and the prayers that he offers are "Hail Marys," which he finds "easier to say" than "Our Fathers" (65). She too is a sea goddess. Santiago acknowledges this when he prays to her for a great favor—"the death of this fish" (65). Bickford Sylvester recounts the Cuban legend of how this small statue of the Virgin, now enshrined in a sanctuary at Cobre, arrived from the sea. She was "floating on a wooden board off the

coast . . . in 1628, when . . . found by two Indians and a Creole in a rowboat” (“Cuban Context” 252).

The Virgin Mother of Christ is most familiar to us in her medieval roles as Mater Dolorosa and mediatrix: kind and beautiful, meek and mild, sorrowing for the suffering of man, compassionately interceding for him, offering clemency “at the hour of our death,” in the words of the Ave. But mariologists remind us that she is also the descendant of the pagan Magna Mater and Eternal Feminine (Katainen) and of Old Testament figures including Eve and the bride of the erotic “Song of Songs” (Johnson). Her biblical foremothers are tricksters Tamar and Ruth, the prostitute Rahab, and the adulteress Bathsheba—brave and holy women, to be sure, but scarcely meek and mild (Schroer). Mary functions “as a bridge between cultures and traditions” (Johnson), linking both paganism and Judaism to Christianity. Ben Stolfus notes that “the effect of the christological imagery” in *The Old Man and the Sea* “is essentially non-Christian,” that the novel is less “Christian parable” than “pagan poem,” and this is certainly true of the Virgin of Cobre (42–43).

Insofar as she represents the Eternal Feminine and *la mar*, the Virgin of Cobre’s origins reside deep in humanity’s primitive past. In *The Log from the Sea of Cortez*,<sup>3</sup> John Steinbeck and Edward F. Ricketts suggest how the Virgin may be more pagan than Christian as they describe the Virgin of Loreto. Patroness of a Mexican fishing village on the Sea of Cortez, she is a sister to Hemingway’s Virgin of Cobre:

This Lady, of plaster and wood and paint, is one of the strong ecological factors of the town of Loreto, and not to know her and her strength is to fail to know Loreto. One could not ignore a granite monolith in the path of the waves. Such a rock, breaking the rushing waters, would have an effect on animal distribution radiating in circles like a dropped stone in a pool. So has this plaster Lady a powerful effect on the deep black water of the human spirit. She may disappear, and her name be lost, as the Magna Mater, as Isis have disappeared. But something very like her will take her place, and the longings which created her will find somewhere in the world a similar altar on which to pour their force. No matter what her name is, Artemis or Venus, or a girl behind a Woolworth counter dimly remembered, she is as eternal as our species, and we will continue to manufacture her as long as we survive. (207–08)

In the *la mar* passage, Santiago continues to gender the sea in a pagan vein when he considers that “The moon affects her as it does a woman” (30).

Now he invokes the ancient personification of the moon as a feminine principle in nature, the monthly lunar changes affecting both the tides of the sea and woman's cycle of ovulation and fecundity, her provision of "the nutriment, the catamenia, or menstrual blood" (Merchant 13, 18–19), the nourishing matrix from which life grows. "Moon and sea and tide are one," write Steinbeck and Ricketts, and:

The imprint [of tidal forces] is in us and in Sparky and in the ship's master, in the palolo worm, in mussel worms, in chitons, and in the menstrual cycle of women. The imprint lies heavily on our dreams and on the delicate threads of our nerves. . . . (37, 39)

The disciplines of oceanography and marine biology both supply a scientific basis for Santiago's mythologizing the sea-as-matrix, a Mother Goddess obeying the cycles of the moon, with "changing woman" her acolyte. In *The Sea Around Us*,<sup>4</sup> Rachel Carson explains in a chapter titled "Mother Sea" how all life evolved from the sea and how the development of the human embryo recapitulates this evolutionary history.

Fish, amphibian, and reptile, warm-blooded bird and mammal—each of us carries in our veins a salty stream in which the elements sodium, potassium, and calcium are combined in almost the same proportions as sea water. . . . Our lime-hardened skeletons are a heritage from the calcium-rich ocean of Cambrian time. Even the protoplasm that streams within each cell of our bodies has the chemical structure impressed upon all living matter when the first simple creatures were brought forth in the ancient sea. And as life itself began in the sea, so each of us begins his individual life within his mother's womb, and in the stages of his embryonic development repeats the steps by which his race evolved, from gill-breathing inhabitants of a water world to creatures able to live on land. (*The Sea Around Us* 28–29)

Carson postulates that man's love for and desire to return to "mother sea," his mythologizing and gendering of the sea as female, springs from his evolutionary history and longing for "a world that, in the deepest part of his subconscious mind, he ha[s] never wholly forgotten" (29).

Santiago knows the maternal, womblike space the fishermen call "the great well," a sudden deep hole teeming with life, where the current stirs a nutrient upwelling and brings "all the wandering fish" to feed on "shrimp and bait fish and sometimes schools of squid" (28). He also experiences the sea-as-matrix when he looks at plankton and feels happy because it means fish:

The water was a dark blue now, so dark that it was almost purple. As he looked down into it he saw the red sifting of the plankton in the dark water and the strange light the sun made now. He watched his lines to see them go straight down out of sight into the water and he was happy to see so much plankton because it meant fish. (35)

“Plankton,” Thor Heyerdahl explains in *Kon-Tiki*,<sup>5</sup> “is a general name for thousands of species of visible and invisible small organisms which drift about near the surface of the sea. Some are plants (phyto-plankton), while others are loose fish ova and tiny living creatures (zoo-plankton)” (138). Where there is plankton, Steinbeck and Ricketts write, the sea “swarms with life.” Plankton water is “tuna water—life water. It is complete from plankton to gray porpoises” (54). “These little animals, in their incalculable numbers, are probably the base food supply of the world”—their disappearance would “eliminate every living thing in the sea” if not “all life on the globe” (256).

Hemingway’s sparing lines hint at all of this when Santiago experiences the plankton as a “red sifting” in the water (35). It’s a “strange light” that makes translucent zooplankton and greenish phytoplankton appear red. But this coloring aligns the plankton with all of the blood of life spilled in the sea throughout the novella, and especially with the nutritive blood of the womb. Heyerdahl calls it “plankton porridge . . . the squashy mess . . . magic gruel” (140). From it, Mother Sea brings forth life.

The sea, Herman Melville reminds us in *Moby-Dick*, has its “submarine bridal-chambers” as well as its nurseries (400), and of this, Santiago is well aware. To him, “a great island of Sargasso weed that heaved and swung in the light sea” looks “as though the ocean were making love with something under a blanket” (72). In the night, two porpoises come around his boat, and Santiago “could tell the difference between the blowing noise the male made and the sighing blow of the female.” He identifies with and values the porpoises for their mated love: “They are good. . . . They play and make jokes and love one another. They are our brothers . . .” (48). Later, he dreams of “a vast school of porpoises that stretched for eight or ten miles and it was in the time of their mating and they would leap high in the air and return into the same hole they had made when they had leaped” (81).

Asked in class how Hemingway’s seemingly simple and objective prose could achieve such poetic quality in *The Old Man and the Sea*, a woman student gave this explanation: “It’s the difference between a man taking a photograph of a woman and a man taking a photograph of a woman he loves.” Throughout the novella, the images selected to represent *la mar* establish that she is indeed “very beautiful,” and that Santiago is a lover, engaged in what Terry Tempest Williams has called an “erotics of place,” a “pagan” and “primal affair” (84).

The sea itself is sublimely beautiful, with its deep blue waters and shafts of sunlight, as is the sky with its canyons of clouds. All of the sea's creatures except the *galano* sharks are beautiful, even the mako and the poisonous jelly fish, and some are exceptionally so, like the dorado that takes Santiago's bait from beneath the erotically heaving blanket of Sargasso weed: "He saw it first when it jumped in the air, true gold in the last of the sun and bending and flapping wildly in the air" (72).

Always the prose seeks what Hemingway called "the action that makes the emotion" ("Monologue" 219), and the emotion is love: "In the dark the old man could feel the morning coming and as he rowed he heard the trembling sound as the flying fish left the water and the hissing that their stiff wings made as they soared away in the darkness" (29). Or, "as the old man watched, a small tuna rose in the air, turned and dropped head first into the water. The tuna shone silver in the sun and after he had dropped back into the water another and another rose and they were jumping in all directions, churning the water and leaping in long jumps after the bait" (38). "Listen to Hemingway write!" responds another woman student. "Gorgeous!" (Gensler). Most "gorgeous" of all is the giant marlin that is the sea's great gift to Santiago:

The line rose slowly and steadily and then the surface of the ocean bulged ahead of the boat and the fish came out. He came out unendingly and water poured from his sides. He was bright in the sun and his head and back were dark purple and in the sun the stripes on his sides showed wide and a light lavender. (62)

Although *The Old Man and the Sea* may seem to be about "men without women," the figure of a man *wedded* to a feminine sea is omnipresent in our culture, from ancient myths of Venus rising from the foam of the sea to be given as bride to Vulcan, to a contemporary rock ballad such as E. Lurie's "Brandy," where a sailor tells his human lover, "[Y]ou're a fine girl. What a good wife you would be. But my life, my lover, my lady is the sea." Santiago is no exception. He is a widower and feels his loss—" [T]here had been a tinted photograph of his wife on the wall but he had taken it down because it made him too lonely to see it" (16)—and his loss gives him empathy and compassion for the marlin. "The saddest thing [he] ever saw with them" was the reaction of a male to the capture of his mate. "He was beautiful, the old man remembered, and he had stayed" (50). But now the beauty of the sea assuages Santiago's loneliness for his flesh-and-blood wife: "[H]e looked ahead and saw a flight of wild ducks etching themselves against the sky over the water, then etching again and he knew no man was ever alone on the sea" (61).

In the course of the story, Santiago becomes wedded to the marlin. His angling uses the language of seduction: "Yes", he said. 'Yes.'" (41). "Come on



... Aren't they lovely? Eat them good now and then there is the tuna. Hard and cold and lovely. Don't be shy, fish" (42). "Then he felt the gentle touch on the line and he was happy" (43). Even after the marlin is firmly hooked and Santiago's ordeal begins, his developing sense of connectedness with the fish is expressed in language from the sacrament of marriage: "Now we are joined together" (50) and "Fish . . . I'll stay with you until I am dead" (52).

This sense of the sea-as-wife is not incompatible with Santiago's calling the marlin his "brother." Porpoises and flying fish of both sexes are Santiago's "brothers," too (48), and the word "brother" is neither gender-specific nor used only of humans in Hemingway's work. In "The Last Good Country," Nick's sister Littless looks like a "small wild animal" (*SS* [*The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*] 101), and wants to be both his "brother" (95) and his "wife" (104). In *The Garden of Eden*, Catherine Bourne tells David that he is "my good lovely husband and my brother too" (29), and David comes to understand that the elephant also is his "brother" (197).

Brothers are children of the same mother, living together in an implied state of equality and fraternity, depending on one another for mutual support. In *To Have and Have Not* Captain Willie says, of the human community at sea, "Most everybody goes in boats calls each other brother" (83). In *The Old Man and the Sea*, that marine community expands to include sea creatures. The man o' war bird is "a great help" to Santiago in locating fish (38), and Santiago in his turn aids the exhausted migrating warbler, "Take a good rest, small bird" (55). Hemingway's signature use of the word "brother" reflects longing for an Eden where men and women, husbands and wives, as well as birds, beasts, and fish might live together on such terms. Such an Eden would bring male and female principles, as well as man and nature, into harmony and balance.

How then may Santiago ethically "live on the sea and kill [his] true brothers" (75)? To render sea creatures as children of the same mother raises vital questions about right relationship to nature. Hunter-philosopher Ted Kerasote proposes some answers. "Hunting," he writes, should be a "disciplined, mindful, sacred activity. . . hav[ing] much to do with kindness, compassion, and sympathy for those other species with whom we share the web of life. . . based on the pre-Christian belief that other life-forms, indeed the very plants and earth and air themselves, are invested with soul and spirit" (191). Here we recognize the "primitive" Santiago who fishes with unmatched physical and mental discipline and with prayers, the Santiago who hits the landed tuna on the head "for kindness" (42), who begs the female marlin's pardon and butchers her promptly (50), and who understands that the great marlin not only is his "brother," but suffers as Santiago himself suffers (92). In his introduction to *Atlantic Game Fishing*, Hemingway writes that "Anglers have a way of . . . forgetting that the fish has a hook in his mouth, his gullet, or his

belly, and is driven to the extremes of panic at which he runs, leaps, and pulls to get away until he dies” (qtd. in Farrington II). Santiago never forgets the “fish’s agony” (93).

Ethical killing, Kerasote tells us, is not for “the cruel delight that comes at another’s demise,” but for “the celebratory joy inherent in well-performed hunting that produces a gift of food” (190). The blood of life may only be spilled to nourish life. Here we recognize the Santiago who sacramentally partakes of the flesh of every fish he kills—dolphin, tuna, marlin, and even tiny shrimp from the floating blanket of Sargasso weed. This is the Santiago who seeks a fish to feed “many people,” and who hopes to repay his indebtedness to his human community with “the belly meat of a big fish” (20). He is drawn in part from Hemingway’s Cuban boat-handler, Carlos Gutiérrez, who unlike the trophy-hunting sport fishermen always calls the marlin “the bread of my children,” relating it to the staff of life—and the continuity of life: “Oh look at the bread of my children! Joseph and Mary look at the bread of my children jump! There it goes the bread of my children! He’ll never stop the bread the bread the bread of my children!” (Hemingway, “On the Blue Water” 242). “Everything kills everything else in some way” as Santiago observes (106), and is ethical so long as the killing is followed by eating, the act of communion, of sharing the blood of life.

Aldo Leopold writes that all ecological ethics “rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community with interdependent parts. His instincts prompt him to compete for his place in the community, but his ethics prompt him also to co-operate” (239). Glen A. Love feels that *The Old Man and the Sea* lacks a fully developed ecological ethic, because Santiago perceives some creatures of the sea, such as sharks and poisonous jellyfish, as “enemies.” Hemingway, Love argues, does not understand that all of the sea’s creatures “are members of a community which man is not privileged to exterminate for real or assumed self-benefits” (208). Yet Love’s is an environmental sensibility that places man outside of the food web, forgetting, as Leopold does not, that survival demands an ethic that includes the necessity of competition as well as of cooperation.

Santiago, as a subsistence fisherman, knows that he is part of the web of life. His community is truly “the great sea with our friends and our enemies” (120). He loves to see big sea turtles eating the jellyfish, and then he in turn eats the eggs of the turtles that eat the jellyfish in order to be strong “for the truly big fish” he himself hunts (36–37).<sup>6</sup> Others do not like the taste, but Santiago drinks “a cup of shark liver oil each day from the big drum in the shack where the fishermen keep their gear” to sharpen his eyesight (37). Indeed, Santiago’s eyes, “the same color as the sea . . . cheerful and undefeated” emblemize that the sea and its creatures are the well-spring of his own life—“with his eyes closed there was no life in his face” (10, 19). He understands that the lives

of his “enemies” too are part of the “celebratory gift,” part of his fisherman’s communion with life.

A woman student who does not accept the primitive hunter’s communion of blood, the pagan appreciation of the intimate proximity of life and death, objects to Santiago’s slaying of the marlin in gendered terms:

Ultimately, while I pity Santiago and mourn his defeat, I can’t relate to his struggle. I do not share his need to defeat the marlin, or his desire for conquest. This type of battle is common to Hemingway, I’ve come across the same one in *Islands in the Stream* and I know he’s restaged it with bulls and matadors in other books. What I wonder is what form these epic battles would take if Hemingway had been a woman. How would she describe childbirth? Imagine, these arduous, protracted ordeals produce nothing but dead fish, but what magic, what power would be imparted to a two-day struggle to produce a screaming new human being? (Betancourt)

In one sense, *The Old Man and the Sea* may already fulfill this student’s wish for a Hemingway who places the male values of strength and endurance in the service of the Eternal Feminine, of bringing forth rather than taking life. To *la mar*, Santiago owes his disciple, the boy Manolin who is more to him than a son. Santiago has no child by his mortal wife, but has delivered Manolin from the sea in a violent birthing. “How old was I when you first took me in a boat?” the boy asks Santiago, in the manner of a child asking a parent for the legend of his birth. “Five and you were nearly killed when I brought the fish in too green and he nearly tore the boat to pieces. Can you remember?” (12). Manolin responds:

I can remember the tail slapping and banging and the thwart breaking and the noise of clubbing. I can remember you throwing me into the bow where the wet coiled lines were and feeling the whole boat shiver and the noise of you clubbing him like chopping a tree down and the sweet blood smell all over me. (12)

Fish and boy are elided here, as man-midwife Santiago forcibly extracts the flapping, struggling fish from the sea and throws the child slicked in “sweet blood” into the bow. “Can you really remember that or did I just tell you?” asks Santiago. Manolin insists that he can, but the scene is so primal that readers may share Santiago’s doubt, wondering whether the boy remembers it any more than he would remember the scene of his birth.

In an essay titled “Forceps” that is in part a history of masculine involvement in obstetrics, Hemingway’s doctor father writes that for centuries men were not

permitted to attend or witness normal births. “Men midwives,” he mourns, “were not allowed at confinements . . . except in cases where an extraction by *force* [his emphasis] of a dead fetus was required.” He celebrates the eventual inclusion of men in the process of normal birthing: “to help and share the responsibility” of the “sacred trust” (C. Hemingway 3). In the “birthing” scene from *The Old Man and the Sea*, where Santiago acts as a man-midwife, we do see how his great strength and heroism might serve the cause of life.

On the positive side of the ledger, then, Santiago’s gendering the sea as *la mar* underlies this novella’s strong ecological ethic. To gender the sea as female or as a mother goddess implies reciprocal obligation. The man who approaches nature as his lover, wife, or mother, expecting “great favours” and kindness, must also, as Whitman phrases it, “mean tenderly” by her. The concept of the sea as a feminine, living being ought to serve, as Carolyn Merchant has pointed out on behalf of the earth, “as a cultural constraint restricting the actions of human beings. One does not readily slay a mother, dig into her entrails . . . or mutilate her body. . . . As long as the earth [is] considered to be alive and sensitive, it could be considered a breach of human ethical behavior to carry out destructive acts against it” (3).

There is no more potent example in American literature of a book that genders the sea as masculine than Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick*, celebrating its centennial the year Hemingway composed *The Old Man and the Sea*.<sup>7</sup> “To and fro in the deeps, far down in the bottomless blue,” Melville writes, “rushed mighty leviathans, sword-fish, and sharks, and these were the strong, troubled, murderous thinkings of the masculine sea” (543). No character more obviously treats the sea as masculine contestant and enemy than Captain Ahab, or is more closely associated with man’s self-destructive technological assault on nature: “Swerve me? The path to my fixed purpose is laid with iron rails, whereon my soul is grooved to run. Over unsounded gorges, through the rifled hearts of mountains, under torrents’ beds, unerringly I rush! Naught’s an obstacle, naught’s an angle to the iron way!” (172)

Santiago seems to uphold an ecological ethic diametrically opposed to Ahab’s “iron way” when he recognizes that those who gender the sea as masculine treat the sea more violently than those who think of her as *la mar*:

Some of the younger fishermen, those who used buoys as floats for their lines and had motorboats, bought when the shark livers had brought much money, spoke of her as *el mar* which is masculine. They spoke of her as a contestant or a place or even an enemy. (30)

These two sentences are dense with environmental history. Aligned with technology, Santiago’s young fishermen are not only the workaday descendants

of Captain Ahab, they are the ancestors of today's long-liners. Dr. Perry W. Gilbert, a shark expert familiar with the Cuban fishing village of Cojimar where Hemingway based *The Old Man and the Sea*, explains the fishing rig described above:

[F]ishermen put out from Cojimar in their small boats, only eighteen to twenty-four feet over all, and head for the deep water. . . . [T]wo men comprise the crew, and their boat carries ten to fifteen floating fishing rigs of three hooks each . . . The hooks of one set hang at different intervals in the water, usually at twenty, fifty, and eighty fathoms. . . . The wooden buoys, spaced forty to fifty feet apart, are joined to each other by a three-quarter inch manila rope, attached at one end to a square wooden float bearing the name of the boat . . . and a four foot mast carrying a lantern and flag. . . . After the sets are all placed and the lanterns lit, they are patrolled until dawn. At daybreak the catch of dolphin, marlin, broadbill, and sharks is removed, and if the weather is fair, a set may be rebaited. . . . The "Old Man," of course, did not have this set. His lines were off his boat or in his hands. (qtd. in Farrington 28–30)

The young fishermen fish not so much for the "celebratory gift of food," Gilbert tells us, but for the "shark factory" mentioned at the beginning of *The Old Man and the Sea* (11), an industry processing their catch for the Oriental soup fin trade, for an Ocean Leather Company in New Jersey converting shark skin to wallets, belts, and shoes, and for the vitamin A in shark liver oil (in Farrington 30–31). Their motorboats are the fruits of war. "Shark livers had brought much money" during World War II, when German submarines in the North Atlantic cut off the Grand Banks and the world supply of cod liver oil for pharmaceuticals (R. Ellis 45); the Cojimar shark factory would remain profitable until 1958, when vitamin A was synthesized (Gilbert in Farrington 31).

Santiago sees in the young fishermen the death of his way of life, the end of putting to sea in small boats powered by oar and sail, of locating fish only with his own intimate knowledge of the sea and her creatures, and of catching them with the unaided strength of his body. In part, *The Old Man and the Sea* is Hemingway's elegy for the subsistence fisherman, and perhaps, as when Santiago wonders what it would be like to spot fish from airplanes (71), or to have a radio in the boat that would bring him the "baseball," but distract him from "thinking much" about the sea (105), a prophesy of things to come. Mary Hemingway recalled:

Our habit was to anchor *Pilar* in the little bay of Cojimar. . . . The town's population was almost entirely fishermen who went out as Santiago did in those days with their skiffs and were carried by the Gulf Stream, which flows from west to east across the northern part of Cuba's coast. They would then put their baits down and drift. . . . When they had their fish, or when the day was finished . . . they'd stick up their sails and come sailing back against the Gulf Stream, the wind being stronger than the current. . . . Before we left, the fishermen . . . were able to add outboard motors to their boats. (qtd. in Bruccoli, "Interview" 193)

Neither Santiago nor Hemingway could predict the modern fleet of Atlantic swordboats—long-liners assisted by global positioning systems, weather fax, down temperature indicators, Doppler radar, color sounders, video plotters, radiofrequency beeper buoys, and hydraulic haulbacks for lines twenty-five to forty miles long, indiscriminately cleansing the sea of swordfish, sharks, sea turtles, tuna, and other deep oceanic fish (Greenlaw 137). Nor could they predict a generation whose most successful fishermen would be "fishing gear engineers and electronics wizards," ignoring birds and clouds to "study data and base decisions on statistics" (Greenlaw 137–38).

But Santiago does know that the fishermen of the future will follow the "el mar" ethos of treating the sea as a masculine enemy or contestant. Contemporary swordboat captain Linda Greenlaw, ironically a woman, bears him out when she describes her work as "Man vs. Nature." She uses words like "warrior," "relentless beast," "fight," "monstrous sword," "war," "forces," and "combat" to describe a losing contest with a commodified "\$2,000 fish," and then, when the line snaps and the swordfish gets loose, leaps to the rail with her men to give the animal, perceived as "gloating" in "victory," the phallic upraised finger, and to scream "Fuck you" until her throat is raw (Greenlaw 173–75). If Carolyn Merchant is correct that gendering nature as female and as the mother-of-life acts as a cultural constraint against destructive acts, then the converse appears to be true, that gendering the sea as a masculine opponent enables destructive and violent behavior. Since the first swordfish took bait on an American longline in 1961, Santiago's "young fishermen" have swept the Atlantic of 75 percent of its bluefin tuna and 70 percent of its breeding-age swordfish (Safina, Chivers), carrying us ever closer to the "fishless desert" of Santiago's nightmare (2).

Santiago rejects those who masculinize the sea. But against his view of Mother Sea as a beautiful, kindly, and generous feminine provider—a belief that in many respects does temper his behavior toward her—he sets an opposing view of feminine nature as cruel and chaotic—spawning

poisonous creatures, sudden storms, and hurricanes. Although early in the novella Hemingway tells us that Santiago “no longer dreamed of storms, nor of women, nor of great occurrences, nor of great fish, nor fights, nor contests of strength, nor of his wife,” *The Old Man and the Sea* is a dream of all such things, and here we learn that Santiago includes the feminine principles of “women” and “wife” with “storms” and “great fish,” natural things that might be fought or engaged in “contests of strength” (25). As Merchant points out, such views of nature as a disorderly female force call forth the male need for rationalistic or mechanistic power over her (127).

Critic Gerry Brenner labels the *la mar* passage “a litany of sexist aggressions” in part for Santiago’s “metaphoric equation” of woman and the sea “as dependent on the moon or some power over which she has no control” (*Story* 84). However, the point of Santiago’s “and if she did wild or wicked things it was because she could not help them,” may be that women and the sea are not *under* control, but *beyond* control. Carson writes that man may approach “mother sea only on her terms. . . . He cannot control or change the ocean as . . . he has subdued and plundered the continents” (*Sea Around Us* 29–30). When Santiago thinks “the moon affects her as it does a woman,” he betrays male fear of female power, of the menstruous or monstrous woman, whose wildness and wickedness challenges his rationalism and control, and whose cruelty provokes his attempts at dominance. In *The Garden of Eden*, Catherine Bourne (who needs to “go up to the room” because “I’m a god damned woman”), speaks for menstruous woman, and perhaps for *la mar*, when she overrides David’s effort to silence and control her: “Why should I hold it down? You want a girl, don’t you? Don’t you want everything that goes with it? Scenes, hysteria, false accusations, temperament, isn’t that it?” (70).

Santiago believes that, in his great love for and understanding of *la mar*, he has accepted “everything that goes with” her femininity. He knows the months of the “sudden bad weather,” and is not afraid to be out of sight of land in hurricane season, because he “can see the signs of [a hurricane] for days ahead” in the sky (61). He endures the painful sting of a ray hidden in the sand, and of the Portuguese man o’ war jellyfish he genders as female and calls “Agua mala [evil water]” and “You whore.” Although the jellyfish strike “like a whiplash,” he loves to walk on them on the beach after a storm and “hear them pop when he step[s] on them with the horny soles of his feet” (82). While Brenner finds Santiago’s “vilification of the jellyfish” the novella’s most “blatant” example of “hostility or contempt towards things female” (82), Katharine T. Jobs believes the old man’s epithet—“You whore”—is familiar, affectionate, a reflection of Santiago’s “intimate at-homeness in nature” (16).

Yet despite Santiago’s apparent acceptance of the sea’s wild and wicked nature, ultimately he sins against her, and she bitches him. Gendering the sea

as feminine does not resolve the problem of man's violence toward nature, but raises even more disturbing questions about right relationship than gendering the sea as *el mar*. Our culture generally accepts male-on-male violence—such as the cock-fighting and arm-wrestling in *Old Man*—provided it conforms to the rituals of warfare, chivalry, or sportsmanship. We perceive such violence as the “natural” outcome of male competition for territory and sexual prerogative, although neither instinct bodes well when directed against nature. Conversely, male-on-female violence is taboo, “unnatural” because the biological purpose of male-female relations is procreation, not competition.

As Melvin Backman has noted, *Death in the Afternoon* provides an interpretive key to the problem of sin in *The Old Man and the Sea*: “[W]hen a man is still in rebellion against death he has pleasure in taking to himself one of the Godlike attributes; that of giving it. . . . These things are done in pride and pride, of course, is a Christian sin and a pagan virtue . . .” (233). The old man is surely in rebellion against death. His eighty-four days without a fish, the mockery of the young fishermen, the pity of the older fishermen, the charity of his village, the role reversal that sees his much-loved apprentice Manolin taking care of him (“You’ll not fish without eating while I’m alive” [19]), and perhaps most of all the loss of Manolin, forced by his parents into a “luckier” boat, conspire to make Santiago feel his proximity to death. These things send him out to sea, beyond all other fishermen, to seek “a big one” (30), and the struggle with the marlin becomes in part a struggle with the “treachery of one’s own body” (62), with his spells of faintness and blurred vision, with his cramped hand: “Pull, hands. . . . Hold up, legs. Last for me, head. Last for me” (91). Santiago’s rebellion against death draws him first into sin, and then into an orgy of violence against the sea he loves.

In Christian iconography, both the sea and the Eternal Feminine are associated with death and resurrection. *The Book of Common Prayer* makes of the ocean a vast graveyard, and, strangely for a Christian text, feminizes the sea: “We therefore commit his body to the deep, to be turned into corruption, looking for the resurrection of the body, when the Sea shall give up *her* dead” (my emphasis, 552). The Virgin of Cobre places Santiago in this cycle of death and resurrection. Opus Dei scholar Dwight Duncan opines: “Christianity is the celebration of Christ as a man, one of us. So it is natural to approach it through the perspective of the mother. Mary is the guarantor of Christ’s manhood” (Kennelly). Phrased somewhat differently, this means that the Virgin is the guarantor of Christ’s suffering and death—and Santiago’s. As his mortal progenitor, the Mother makes Christ subject—as all humanity is subject—to the immutable laws of biological nature.

Santiago kills the marlin with the most masculine of weapons, the harpoon, driving it deep into the fish’s heart, the organ of love and the seat of life:



The old man dropped the line and put his foot on it and lifted the harpoon as high as he could and drove it down with all his strength, and more strength he had just summoned, into the fish's side just behind the great chest fin that rose high in the air to the altitude of the man's chest. He felt the iron go in and he leaned on it and drove it further and then pushed all his weight after it.

Then the fish came alive, with his death in him, and rose high out of the water showing all his great length and width and all his power and his beauty. (93–94)

Three times Hemingway tells us that the old man's target was the heart: "I must try for the heart" (91); "the sea was discoloring with the red of the blood from his heart" (94); "I think I felt his heart. . . . When I pushed on the harpoon shaft the second time" (95).

The heart of the marlin recalls the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the other devotional icon that hangs on the wall of Santiago's shack next to the Virgin of Cobre (16). That heart symbolizes the love and suffering of Christ, and his sacrifice—his death that man might live. By suggesting that the marlin too might have a sacred heart, Hemingway asks us to contemplate the passion of the natural cycle, or, as Kerasote puts it, to "fac[e] up to this basic and poignant condition of biological life on this planet—people, animals, and plants as fated cohorts, as both dependents and donors of life" (191). Hemingway invites us to understand that the marlin, in the words of Santiago's "Hail Mary," is the "fruit of the womb" of the Eternal Feminine (65). Coming "alive with his death in him," the marlin conjoins the principles of life and death implicit both in natural cycles and in the iconography of resurrection that arises from them. Santiago sees the eye of the dead fish looking "as detached as mirrors in a periscope or as a saint in a procession" (96), suggesting that the marlin should remind us of our own mortality, and our own mortality should remind us to have compassion for all living things.

Santiago's harpoon, probing the sacred heart, probes again the essential question of male-on-female violence, of right relationship of man and nature. When may man ethically kill the thing he loves? "If you love him, it is not a sin to kill him," Santiago thinks of the great marlin. "Or is it more?" (105). Santiago cannot bear to pursue the question—"You think too much, old man"—he tells himself, but the text would seem to argue "more." Too late, he recognizes that "You did not kill him to keep alive and to sell for food," the only allowable answers, "You killed him for pride and because you are a fisherman" (105). Despite knowing that the marlin is "two feet longer than the skiff" and cannot be landed (63), despite believing that it is "unjust" and that he is doing it to show the marlin "what a man can do and what a man endures" (66), despite feeling that "there is no one worthy of eating him

from the manner of his behaviour and his great dignity" (75), the old man proceeds to kill the marlin anyway. When sharks attack the fish, as Santiago knows they must, his tragedy will be to recognize that he was wrong: "‘Half fish,’ he said. ‘Fish that you were. I am sorry that I went out too far. I ruined us both’" (115).

Sylvester has argued that Santiago's "slaying of the marlin and his responsibility for its mutilation are sins," but "tragic precisely because they are a necessary result of his behavior as a champion of his species" ("Extended Vision" 136). Sylvester sees "opposition to nature as paradoxically necessary to vitality in the natural field" ("Extended Vision" 132), and perhaps it's true that a man "born to be a fisherman as the fish was born to be a fish" (105) could not conceive, as Hemingway himself could conceive, of releasing a marlin and "giv[ing] him his life back" (G. Hemingway 73). Perhaps a man who fishes for his living cannot say, as young David Hudson says in *Islands in the Stream* about a marlin that escapes him after a gruelling fight: "I loved him so much when I saw him coming up that I couldn't stand it. . . . All I wanted was to see him closer. . . . Now I don't give a shit I lost him. . . . I don't care about records. I just thought I did. I'm glad that he's all right" (143). Yet if Sylvester's concept of "necessary sin" is correct, then the text violates Santiago's own philosophy—that it is wrong to gender the sea as *el mar* and to treat it as a contestant or enemy. A woman student proposes instead that Santiago's sin is both unnecessary and the direct result of the "masculine" thinking he himself has deplored:

The code of manhood that gives Santiago the strength for his battle and even the reason to begin it is completely foreign to me. He doesn't *have* to do this—a fisherman can make a living on the tuna and dolphin that Santiago uses only for bait and sustenance. . . . When Santiago says he has not caught a fish in eighty-seven [*sic*] days, he does not mean fish, he means Krakens, sea monsters. The bravery involved in just wresting a living from the sea is nothing . . . Santiago has to be a saint and fight dragons. . . . I guess what it comes down to is greatness. . . . Killing a 1500 lb. Marlin puts him on the same level with the magnificent fish, giving him a power as great as the ocean's. There is nothing about this that's hard to understand; a man wishes to be strong and so he tests himself against the strongest thing he can find. (Betancourt)

Nature's punishment for the harpoon in the heart is swift and inexorable. The heart pumps the blood of the stricken fish into the sea—"First it was dark as a shoal in the blue water that was more than a mile deep. Then it spread like a cloud" (94). The heart's blood summons the first shark, a mako, and

Santiago recognizes the consequences of his own actions: “The shark was not an accident. He had come up from deep down in the water as the dark cloud of blood had settled and dispersed in the mile deep sea” (100). Indeed, the mako almost seems like the marlin’s avenging ghost: “His back was as blue as a sword fish’s and his belly was silver and his hide was smooth and handsome. He was built like a sword fish except for his huge jaws” (100). Like the marlin too, the mako is “beautiful and noble” (106). His teeth “shaped like a man’s fingers when they are crisped like claws” (100–101), recall Santiago’s left hand cramped “tight as the gripped claws of an eagle” (63). The mako comes as a grim reminder that marlin, shark, and man—all predators—are brothers, children of the same mother.

Yet “the shadow of sharks is the shadow of death,” as Peter Matthiessen has observed (5), and when Santiago sees the mako, he curses the mother—“*Dentuso*, he thought, bad luck to your mother” (101)—and who is the Mother of Sharks if not *la mar*? Santiago assaults the shadow of death “without hope but with resolution and complete malignancy” (102). He harpoons the mako with a precision so reminiscent of the bullfight, one wonders whether Hemingway knew that the ancient Hawaiians built marine arenas in shallow water, where men armed with shark-tooth daggers fought sharks to honor Kama-Hoa-Lii, the shark god (Cousteau 205). Harpooning the mako, Santiago sins a second time, and explicitly partakes of the matador’s sin from *Death in the Afternoon*. “You enjoyed killing the *dentuso*, he thought” (105), and this is both the Christian sin of pride in taking pleasure in the Godlike attribute of giving death, and the pagan sin identified by Kerasote, of taking “cruel delight” in another’s demise (109). Again Santiago’s sin sends a blood message of life wrongfully taken into the sea: “Now my fish bleeds again,” he thinks after the dead mako sinks with his harpoon, “and there will be others” (103). Santiago’s rebellion against death, which has, from the start of the novella, underlain his quest for the marlin, now assumes crisis proportions.

Sharks begin to arrive in numbers, and they are a different species—not the “beautiful and noble” mako, *Isurus oxyrinchus*, that like the marlin preys on tuna and dolphin (Bigelow 23–25), but *galanos*, probably oceanic whitetip sharks, *Carcharhinus longimanus*, but certainly—and significantly—members of the family *Carcharinidae*,<sup>8</sup> commonly known as the “Requiem sharks” (R. Ellis 130). These sharks are not only biologically apt (whitetips are well-known to whalers and big game fishermen for feeding on their kills, and notorious for attacks on victims of shipwrecks and air disasters), but for a marine naturalist like Hemingway they also allude to the introit of the Roman Catholic mass for the dead. Santiago truly vilifies the *galanos* as

hateful sharks, bad smelling, scavengers as well as killers, and when they were hungry they would bite at an oar or the rudder

of a boat. It was these sharks that would cut the turtles' legs and flippers off when the turtles were asleep on the surface, and they would hit a man in the water, if they were hungry, even if the man had no smell of fish blood nor of fish slime on him. (108)

Rising from the sea as from the grave, their evil smell a reminder that the body is destined "to be turned into corruption," the scavenging *galanos* are the ultimate reminder of death as the reabsorption of the individual into the matrix of life. When Santiago sees them, he makes "a noise such as a man might make, involuntarily, feeling the nail go through his hands and into the wood" (107). "Old men should burn and rave at close of day," Dylan Thomas writes (942), and Santiago does indeed rage against the dying of the light, stabbing, hacking, and clubbing at the sharks with everything he has, although he knows that the fight is "useless" (118). "Fight them,' he said. 'I'll fight them until I die'" (115). Like the mako, the *galanos* too are sent by the mother, and Santiago seems to perceive himself as sending a message of defiance to her when he says to a shark he has killed: "Go on, *galano*. Slide down a mile deep. Go see your friend, or maybe it's your mother" (109).

The "evil" of the shark, emblemizing the inexorability of suffering and death in nature, has long constituted a theological problem, calling into question the benevolent intentions of God toward man, and suggesting instead cruelty and indifference. "Queequeg no care what god made him shark," pronounces Melville's savage, "wedder Fejee god or Nantucket god; but de god wat made shark must be one dam Ingin" (310). Even a marine ecologist such as Philippe Cousteau, who recognizes that it is risible to "qualif[y] one animal as 'good' and another as 'bad'" (133), can write of the same oceanic whitetip shark that Santiago finds hateful:

[O]ne of the most formidable of the deep-sea sharks, a great *longimanus*. . . this species is absolutely hideous. His yellow-brown color is not uniform, but streaked with irregular markings resembling a bad job of military camouflage. . . He swims in a jerky, irregular manner, swinging his shortened, broad snout from side to side. His tiny eyes are hard and cruel-looking. (89)

Cousteau also recognizes that his fear of sharks is related to his fear of an indifferent, inhuman creator: "The shark moves through my universe like a marionette whose strings are controlled by someone other than the power manipulating mine" (70).

*The Old Man and the Sea* suggests, through its twice-repeated reference to the "mother" of sharks, that "de god wat made shark" must be one damn woman—cruel, wild, wicked, irrational, beyond control. Santiago's battle

with the sharks, his rage and rebellion against *la mar*, is his most Melvillean moment. Like Ahab, Santiago seems to say:

I now know thee . . . and I now know thy right worship is defiance. To neither love nor reverence wilt thou be kind; and e'en for hate thou canst but kill; and all are killed. . . . I now own thy speechless, placeless power; but to the last gasp of my earthquake life will dispute its unconditional mastery in me. In the midst of the personified impersonal, a personality stands here. (512)

Santiago puts it more simply, spitting blood coughed up from his chest into the sea when the last of the shark pack leaves the ruined marlin, saying "Eat that, *galanos*, and make a dream you've killed a man" (119). The life that burns in him, the will to survive, is the source of his proud individualism and refusal to submit tamely to annihilation. Ahab proclaims "[O]f thy fire thou madest me, and like a true child of fire, I breathe it back" (512).

Ahab's defiance of a masculine god places him outside of nature and against nature, a crime for which he will be executed with a hempen cord of whale line around the neck. Santiago's defiance of the feminine "mother of sharks" places him inside nature and outside of nature. Like the turtle whose heart beats "for hours after he has been cut up and butchered" (37), like the great marlin who comes "alive, with his death in him" (94), and especially like the shark who is dead but "would not accept it" (102), Santiago is a true child of *la mar*. Her law proclaims that "all are killed," but her law also proclaims that all—turtle, marlin, shark, and man—will dispute their deaths. The sea punishes Santiago for the wrongful deaths of marlin and mako, but for the final battle with the sharks—for breathing back the fire of life—she forgives him.

When the battle with the sharks is finally and irretrievably lost, Santiago achieves a kind of serenity born of acceptance that Ahab never knows. Ahab neither repents nor relents—"for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee" (574–75). Santiago does both, apologizing to the marlin and acknowledging that he has been "beaten now finally" by the sharks (119). This the old man experiences as a lightning, a release from a great burden:

He settled the sack around his shoulders and put the skiff on her course. He sailed lightly now and he had no thoughts nor any feelings of any kind. He was past everything now. . . . In the night sharks hit the carcass. . . . The old man paid no attention to them and did not pay attention to anything except steering. He only noticed how lightly and how well the skiff sailed now there was no great weight beside her. (119)

Eric Waggoner reads this passage as a restoration of harmony, citing the *Tao-te Ching*: “Return is the movement of the Way; / yielding is the function of the way” (102). Waggoner’s Taoist perspective prompts us to understand that by yielding to the sea, by accepting his place in nature, “[Santiago] can re-place himself in the balance of his fishing life and sail his skiff ‘well’” (102). Still more important, however, is the end of Santiago’s rebellion against death, and the beginning of his acquiescence.

Now Santiago is “inside the current,” and the text restores him to his original love and reverence for the sea with all her vagaries and caprices. In this key passage, *la mar* is aligned not with an enemy wind that sends great storms, but with the friendly wind that carries an exhausted fisherman lightly home. The sea is associated not with the cruelty of a watery grave and its scavenging sharks, but with bed, where a tired man may find rest:

The wind is our friend, anyway, he thought. Then he added, sometimes. And the great sea with our friends and enemies. And bed, he thought. Bed is my friend. Just bed, he thought. Bed will be a great thing. It is easy when you are beaten, he thought. I never knew how easy it was. (120)

Now, in Whitmanian rather than Melvillean fashion, Santiago hears the word up from feminine rather than masculine waves, the word of “the sweetest song and all songs,” the word “out of the cradle endlessly rocking,” the word whispered by the sea—death (184).

Santiago’s acquiescence is not Christian. Earlier, Santiago has confessed that he is “not religious” (64); there is no hint that he believes in resurrection. But if he believes in the sea as both friend and enemy, cradle and grave, life and death, and accepts her cycles, then he may partake in the “natural” consolation of Ecclesiastes slightly revised—“One generation passeth away and another generation cometh: but the [sea] abideth forever” (1.6). The pagan—and the naturalist—both draw spiritual comfort from material immortality in the Eternal Feminine. As Carson puts it in *Under the Sea Wind*: “[I]n the sea, nothing is lost. One dies, another lives, as the precious elements of life are passed on and on in endless chains” (105).<sup>9</sup>

A text that masculinized the sea might end with Santiago “destroyed but not defeated” (103), the existential hero with the trophy of his pyrrhic victory, “the great fish . . . now just garbage waiting to go out with the tide” (126). But *The Old Man and the Sea* ends instead not only with Santiago’s acceptance of death as natural as sleep—but with the cycle of life turning upwards once more. Hemingway reunites Santiago with Manolin, the boy who is more-than-son to him, the child of Santiago’s man-midwifery, delivered from the sea. Theirs is what Claire Rosenfeld calls a “spiritual

kinship" (43); the sea as wife-and-mother joins them as father-and-son. Manolin cares tenderly for the old man, allowing him to sleep undisturbed, bringing him coffee, food, newspapers, and a clean shirt, and making cheerful talk about the future. When Santiago cannot see him, the boy weeps for the old man's ordeal and shows his understanding: he weeps for Santiago's suffering when he sees the bloody stigmata of the rope on the old man's hands (122), he weeps for the ruin of the great fish when he sees the skeleton lashed to the skiff (122), and he weeps for his mentor's heartbreak and imminent death after Santiago tells him that "something in his chest [feels] broken" (125).

Manolin will carry Santiago's legacy forward, insuring the continuity of life in the face of destruction. The boy asks for and receives the spear of the great marlin from his mentor (124), a gift that represents not only Santiago's greatness as a fisherman, but the dignity and courage and beauty of the fish himself and the lesson of his loss. The spear is also a gift from the sea that binds man and boy and fish together, a true family heirloom, and a pagan devotional icon. Having received the bequest of the spear, Manolin promises in his turn to leave the boats of the young fishermen where his other "family" has placed him, to follow Santiago for "I still have much to learn" (125). If Santiago is dying, then Manolin's discipleship may be more metaphorical than literal, but the passage of the marlin's spear to him affirms the continuation of Santiago's values, the perpetuation of a line of fishermen who gender the sea as *la mar* because they love her. That Manolin is a worthy heir, we know. From the beginning of the text, when he tells Santiago—"If I cannot fish with you, I would like to serve in some way" (12)—this filial boy has met the test of love as defined by the priest in *A Farewell to Arms*: "When you love you wish to do things for. You wish to sacrifice for. You wish to serve" (72). We expect Manolin to honor both Santiago and the sea by fishing in the disciplined, mindful, sacred way.

Making his bequest, accomplishing this transition, brings Santiago final serenity and this text full circle. We leave him asleep, the boy keeping vigil beside him, dreaming the recurrent dream of lions that has been with him from the beginning of the story (25, 127). The dream lions, we know, come to a long yellow beach to play like young cats in the dusk, and Santiago "love[s] them as he love[s] the boy" (25). "Why are the lions the main thing that is left?" (66), Santiago has wondered, and we may wonder too. Perhaps his dream of innocent predators, allied with the boy and the continuity of life, carries him to a Peaceable Kingdom, an Eden unspoiled by sin where men no longer need to "live on the sea and kill our true brothers" (75), to a place where viewing nature as a contestant or an enemy is no longer possible, and love alone remains.

## NOTES

1. This essay will refer to works Hemingway read (*Moby-Dick*, the poetry of Whitman, Thor Heyerdahl's *Kon-Tiki*) before composing *The Old Man and the Sea*, as well as books that he may have read during its composition (Carson's *The Sea Around Us* and *Under the Sea Wind*, Steinbeck and Ricketts's *The Log from the Sea of Cortez*). Hemingway drafted his novella in January and February 1951 (Baker, *Life* 489–90) but did not publish the story until 1 September 1952, in a single installment of *Life* magazine. The long lag between the initial composition of the story and its publication has interesting implications for understanding how Hemingway's reading might have influenced *The Old Man and the Sea* and its ecological ethics. During this period, Hemingway was reading Carson, Steinbeck, and Ricketts and was probably rereading *Moby-Dick*, celebrating its centennial year in 1951. The John F. Kennedy Library holds two typescripts of *The Old Man and the Sea* with corrections in ink; however, Mary Hemingway recalled that her husband "did the whole thing by hand and then I typed it" (qtd. in Bruccoli 191). No longhand draft of *The Old Man and the Sea* has yet been located, making a study of Hemingway's possible revisions based on his 1951 reading impossible.

2. When Hemingway won the Nobel Prize, in part for his achievement in *The Old Man and the Sea*, he gave his medal to the Virgin of Cobre, to be kept in her sanctuary at Santiago de Cuba (Baker, *Life* 528).

3. Originally published in 1941 as *Sea of Cortez: A Leisurely Journal of Travel and Research*, this book was reissued in 1951 as *The Log from the Sea of Cortez*, with its scientific apparatus (an appendix including a phyletic catalogue on the marine animals of the Panamic faunal province) removed.

4. Hemingway owned a copy of the 1951 edition (Brasch and Sigman).

5. Hemingway owned a copy of *Kon-Tiki*, a nonfiction bestseller of 1950, the year before he wrote *The Old Man and the Sea* (Brasch and Sigman).

6. Santiago also admires the loggerheads because they are "strange in their lovemaking" (36), and in *To Have and Have Not*, Hemingway refers to the widely held belief that loggerheads copulate for three days—"Do they really do it three days? Coot for three days?" Marie asks Harry (113). For this reason, the loggerhead eggs that Santiago eats to "give himself strength" (37) are considered an aphrodisiac (Dennis), and some of this folklore may resonate in his three-day battle with the fish.

Hemingway's description of the loggerhead turtle eating jellyfish with its eyes closed is probably drawn from Thomas Barbour's *A Naturalist in Cuba*, a book in Hemingway's library (Brasch and Sigman). Barbour writes:

I saw an enormous loggerhead ease up to a Portuguese man-of-war, close its eyes, and nip at the beast. Physalia is well provided with stinging cells and its tentacles are dangerous things to touch. It was amusing to see the old turtle close his eyes as he made his dab at the jellyfish. I have no doubt that the membranes surrounding his eyeballs were the only place where the stinging cells of the siphonophore's arms would have been effective. All other regions were protected by heavy armor. (76)

7. Malcolm Cowley notes that when *The Old Man and the Sea* was published, it was widely referred to as "the poor man's *Moby-Dick*" ("Hemingway's Novel" 106).



8. In Caribbean Spanish, the word *galano*, when applied to an animal, simply means having a dappled or mottled skin (Mandel, e-mail to Beegel). Hence, the Cuban common name for this shark helps with identification. Shark expert Dr. Perry Gilbert notes that near the village of Cojimar a “grande Galano” may be a bull shark (in Farrington 32), or *Carcharhinus leucas*. However, this species, which can inhabit fresh and brackish water as well as saltwater, is never found far from land (R. Ellis 139) and hence cannot be Santiago’s deepwater *galano*. Miriam B. Mandel located among Hemingway’s papers a 1936 list of commercially valuable fish published by the Cuban secretary of agriculture giving for a *galano* the scientific name of *Charcharias limbatus* (*Reading Hemingway* 352), probably an error for *Carcharhinus limbatus*. But the characteristic black-tipped fins of *C. limbatus* (R. Ellis 302) mean it cannot be Santiago’s *galano*, which has “white-tipped wide pectoral fins” (107). Mandel’s correspondence with Dr. José I. Castro, senior research scientist of the National Marine Fisheries Service, Miami Branch, identifies the *galano* as the oceanic whitetip, *Carcharhinus longimanus* (*Reading Hemingway* 352, 522). In my opinion, this is the only identification that satisfactorily covers the shark’s deepwater habitat, mottled skin, white-tipped fins, aggressive scavenging behavior, and notoriety as a man-eater.

9. Rachel Carson first published *Under the Sea Wind* in 1941. The book was republished in April 1952, when it joined *The Sea Around Us* on the *New York Times* bestseller list (Lear 226). Hemingway owned a copy of the 1952 edition (Brasch and Sigman).

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THOMAS STRYCHACZ

*The Self Offstage:  
“Big Two-Hearted River” and  
The Old Man and the Sea*

“Be a man, my son,” exhorts Sam Cardinella’s surrogate Father (the priest) before he skips back from the gallows in Chapter XV of *In Our Time*.<sup>1</sup> The irony—that Cardinella will soon not “be” at all—is not merely a joke at the priest’s expense. Hemingway’s heroes are typically supposed to comport themselves as men at the moment when being itself is most under threat, and in this sense Cardinella reveals himself desperately in need of the priest’s admonition. Lacking dignity and grace, Cardinella shows no sign of “holding tight on to himself” (65) in the time-honored way of Hemingway heroes: he is carried and “held . . . up” by the guards, “[loses] control of his sphincter muscle,” is dropped on to the floor, regarded with disgust, and blindfolded. Holding tight is replaced by the straps that hold him immovably to the chair on the gallows. None of the humiliations he suffers need impair his dignity, as numerous examples from Hemingway’s work attest. The seriocomic hero of “A Very Short Story” succeeds in holding tight on to himself despite enemas and anaesthetics. The pain-ridden Belmonte of *The Sun Also Rises* prefigures Manuel Garcia in “The Undefeated,” who (if we are to trust most interpretations of the story) rises in manly stature the more he resists surrendering to the humiliations inflicted on him by the crowd. Robert Jordan in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, knowing his death approaches, bravely prepares to buy his comrades some time to escape. But Cardinella, the narrator explains

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From *Hemingway’s Theaters of Masculinity*, pp. 221–258. © 2003 by Louisiana State University Press.

in an enigmatic moment, has been “like that”: the guards “were carrying Sam Cardinella. He had been like that since about four o’clock in the morning.” The narrator presumably refers not to the fact of Cardinella’s being carried but to the state of mind of which being carried is the sign. Cardinella’s humiliation arises from having to be carried; he lacks the self-control and self-possession a man must exercise despite the disciplinary procedures enveloping him if he is to retain manhood. There is a sense, then, in which Cardinella has had no being as a man for two hours. He inhabits a state of manlessness, represented in the narrative by the actions performed on his passive body and represented textually by the absence of a specific reference for “that.”

As so often in *In Our Time*, Cardinella’s humiliation is intensified by his inability to control the theatricalization of his last moments. Unlike Robert Jordan’s end, which we anticipate as he looks from behind a tree at his unsuspecting pursuers, Cardinella’s is stage-managed by others. The scaffolding on which he is to die is constructed as a stage, for it is built in the corridor of the county jail surrounded by occupied cells. The occupants, we are specifically told, “had been brought in for the hanging.” Of the seven unimprisoned men who accompany Cardinella, three seem supernumerary to the proceedings and two have no function beyond that of silent witness. Several other details contribute to this thoroughly unpleasant piece of theater. It is the sight of the “cap to go over his head” that causes Cardinella to lose control of his body, as if testifying to the importance of the moment when his helpless exposure to watching eyes supplants his agency over his vision. At least two of those who are to share Cardinella’s fate act in a premonitory refusal to see or be seen: “One of the white men sat on his cot with his head in his hands. The other lay flat on his cot with a blanket wrapped around his head.” One implication of Cardinella and the two white prisoners being “like that” is that they surrender themselves completely to the spectatorial eye. Cardinella, refusing to look back at his captors, refusing to look death in the face, can only submit to being seen in whatever posture his captors choose to pose him. (The chair to which he is strapped after disgusting the guards is not his captors’ preferred mode of execution.) By metonymic extension, any claim he once had to manhood can now be “seen through.” It is exposed not so much by his inability to prevent himself from being watched as by his inability to be seen holding himself bravely, in which case he would still be representing himself as a man. Cardinella is in some senses the polar opposite of Villalta, who does possess the means to dramatize himself successfully before an audience. What links the two characters is the fact that in each case being a man should need to be articulated in a theater of self-dramatization.

Cardinella’s absolute inability to dramatize himself before his audience of prisoners, guards, priests, and silent witnesses takes on great importance in the context of the remarkable “Big Two-Hearted River,” whose two

parts surround and counterpoint the story of Cardinella's demise. It is not only that Nick Adams on his trip to the river lacks Cardinella's panoply of spectators; Nick draws no audience at all. The story breaks the narrative logic of individuals performing for an evaluating audience that characterizes so many of Hemingway's works and that operates with such disastrous effect for Cardinella. Profound consequences for understanding Hemingway's construction of manhood ensue. Though the stories of Cardinella and Villalta mask a deeper indebtedness to an ethos of performance, Nick's solitude in “Big Two-Hearted River” argues for a wholly new approach on Hemingway's part to the question of how men resolve their identities. Actions would now seem to be undertaken for their own sake rather than for the sake of demonstrating manly behavior. And the structure of theatrical representation that could have granted Cardinella a dignified exit had he displayed himself differently disappears in “Big Two-Hearted River,” leaving Nick without the need to transform space into an arena. The character of Nick Adams postulates the existence of a self-possessed and nontheatrical masculinity, fashioned without an empowering audience. In this respect, Cardinella's heroic opposite must be said to be the Nick Adams of “Big Two-Hearted River” rather than a Manuel Garcia or Belmonte, for these latter characters share with Cardinella a narrative premise that self-dramatization of some kind is a given. They can only represent themselves well or poorly. What they cannot do is take themselves completely out of the purview of an evaluating audience. That is Nick's prerogative alone.

This chapter explores some of the implications of Hemingway's attempt in “Big Two-Hearted River” to imagine an authentic experience of manhood independent of performance, partly by considering the problematic consequences for the construction of identity in Nick Adams, and partly by comparing the effects of Hemingway's other great tale of solitary heroism, *The Old Man and the Sea*. Traditional interpretations of these works frequently view *Old Man* not simply as like “Big Two-Hearted River” but as a kind of apotheosis of the principles of manhood-fashioning found in the earlier work. These narratives of men off alone force us to reexamine the premises of a thesis that portrays Hemingway's men as never truly off alone in their dependence on self-dramatization. Yet important differences between these two stories compel us just as obdurately into examining the ways in which readers have responded, and still might respond otherwise, to narrative dramatizations of undramatized manhood. Though superficially alike, these early and late examples of Hemingway's work are quite dissimilar in the way that they build character, explore questions of masculine identity, and shape the experience of readers. In particular, the presence of fictive audiences at the end of *Old Man* who respond to Santiago's trophy invites us to probe the role that readers are expected to play in judging and approving Santiago's conduct. And it allows

us to begin the perhaps more difficult task of considering the effect of critical performances in unfolding traditional interpretations of Hemingway and closing down others that, oddly enough, these traditional critical perspectives sometimes already imply.

If Chapter XV places Sam Cardinella within a panoply of spectators, the opening paragraphs of “Big Two-Hearted River” flaunt the lack of a watching crowd as Nick arrives in Seney to find, unexpectedly, that “There was no town” (133). Now burnt to the ground, Seney also stands in marked contrast to the burned-out town on the Italian front in Chapter VI where Nick tries to make sense of his wounding before the “disappointing audience” of Rinaldi. And unlike the character of earlier stories, Nick does not attempt to play audience to his own posturing. Though this story opens like “The Battler,” with Nick watching a train disappear, the taint of male competition and display that has him trying (unsuccessfully) to see his “shiner” in the water is now absent. At the beginning of “Big Two-Hearted River,” Nick looks *through* the surface of the water to the trout beneath “keeping themselves steady in the current.” Later, Nick closes off his only attempt to speak aloud to himself after his voice “sounded strange in the darkening woods” (139). “Big Two-Hearted River,” moreover, transforms the camp inhabited by Bugs and Ad Francis into the “good place” of Nick’s camp, devoid of human companionship or conflict. From its beginning, “Big Two-Hearted River” suggests the startling possibility that Nick’s earlier travails were more the result of contact with other humans than of specific encounters with demanding females like Marjorie or gay males like Bugs. The presence of an audience in earlier stories compelled men (including Nick) to stand within a field of vision that could not be defined solely by and in terms of the subject, transforming a code of self-determination into a play of theatrical self-fashioning. Isolation in and of itself now appears to be a virtue. “[C]rowded streams” to Nick denote botched rituals: dead, furred trout in the rivers, product of inexpert fishermen, whom Nick, off alone, refuses to emulate. And his bitter coffee at the end of Part I evokes memories of the fishing trip to the Black River, where Hopkins’s sudden wealth promotes invidious distinctions between the companions. What “broke up the trip” is not Hopkins’s leaving but the conspicuous display of gift-giving that accompanies it.

“Big Two-Hearted River” is a dramatic analogue for what critics have often considered to be the essence of masculinity in Hemingway’s work, for Nick’s experience of being alone at the river at last bears out, it seems, the many scholarly accounts—both celebratory and accusatory—that equate isolation and heroic masculinity. His solitary endeavors remind us of Benson’s “self-reliant hero,” Rovit’s “isolate man,” and Baker’s Hemingway hero who must “learn his own way to a great extent independently of every other man.”<sup>2</sup> In keeping with this potentially crucial alliance between narrative strategy

(depicting a man off alone) and theme (defining an ethos of autonomous manhood), "Big Two-Hearted River" constructs symbolic spaces in ways that recall the arenas of earlier stories but recasts them in a different mode. The "good place" of Nick's camp, for instance, is the culmination of a series of references to arenas in *In Our Time*: the cabin of "Indian Camp," the fenced-in garden and cottage in "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife," as well as the "big hot bedroom" (88) of "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot" and the claustrophobic room of "Cat in the Rain." Yet this camp differs importantly from all of them in that its space resists the characteristics that defined earlier arenas—not because it lacks human structure but because it lacks the kind of drama that transforms the cabin into an operating theater and the doctor's garden into a potent combination of courtroom and boxing ring. Nick's cleaning of the two trout at the end of "Big Two-Hearted River" recalls the caesarean of "Indian Camp," yet the results of his incisions, "clean and compact," are far removed from the terror and the struggle to dominate the operating theater of the Indian's cabin. The trout suggest a second neat inversion of details from that earlier story. The Indian father is dead when thought to be alive; the trout, dead, when held in the water "looked like live fish." Nick's distinction in "Big Two-Hearted River" is not simply to create his own space but to create one that, hosting no overt exhibition of manhood, brackets off masculine competitiveness as that which broke up a fishing trip to another river and in another time.

Indeed, it is possible to argue that Nick's camp creates a paradisaical "good place" demonstrating by contrast the lack or hollowness of prior arenas, and that actions performed there are elevated to a level of archetypal or mythic significance before which earlier experiences seem empty and inauthentic. As Joseph M. Flora has remarked, the story is in one sense Nick's account of Genesis.<sup>3</sup> Nothing suggests that more than his Adamic ability to move into a space devoid of the audience that has, in the stories of *In Our Time*, customarily watched and celebrated tough male roles or derided men's failures, and to enter a realm of experience where actions undertaken in isolation seem restored to a kind of plenitude—where, for instance, the narrative registers the ceremonial opening and eating of a can of pork and beans as if it enacted some primordial rite of bean-eating. Nick in the New World garden can be construed as Original Man, the quintessential man off by himself, representing a state and creating a space to which other damaged or humiliated males in quest of manhood should aspire, and manifesting the kind of self-possession the priest has in mind when he tells Sam Cardinella to "Be a man." Compared to the scene at the Black River or to his father's garden, which enclosed a usurping spouse and a history of land stolen, indebtedness, and labor troubles, Nick's camp signifies an economy of financial and psychic self-sufficiency.

The story's opening paragraphs corroborate this growing sense of a new representation of manhood with a visual economy that only seems similar



to earlier stories in the collection. The narrative immediately makes Nick commensurable with the function of sight. His looking and watching in the opening paragraphs unfolds the panorama of burned town, river, hills, and pine plain. And he performs no action apart from watching. The prolonged, steady gaze with which Nick regards the trout “holding themselves with their noses into the current” expresses something of a resurgence of self-control, fortitude, and quiet command over objects apprehended within the field of vision. His acts of looking, unlike similar ones in stories like “Indian Camp” and “The Doctor and the Doctor’s Wife,” neither situate him in a matrix of competitive glances nor call forth a response from the objects of his gaze (trout, kingfisher, river). Those objects offer no resistance to his gaze; nor yet do they seem dominated by his gaze. The trout pursue their lives with apparent indifference to the fact of their being watched; and the watcher, in turn, avoids the kind of technologically enhanced disciplinary gaze with which Robert Jordan surveys the surrounding country. His acts of looking might even seem equivalent to and invisible in the objects apprehended within his visual field were it not for the narrator’s persistent reminders of Nick’s agency: “Nick looked at. . . . Nick looked down. . . . Nick watched [the trout] a long time. . . . Then he saw them. . . . Nick looked down. . . . It was a long time since Nick had looked into a stream and seen trout.” These opening paragraphs thus balance Nick’s nearly complete passivity against a subtly iterated suggestion that watching, however inert and receptive its mode, appears capable of thoroughly mediating and potentially governing the field of vision. And they balance passive looking against a particularly keen sense that these moments of watching mark a regenerative return to—or even an advance beyond—the last time that Nick had “looked into a stream and seen trout.”

Nick’s acts of looking are important to the common supposition that he undertakes this sojourn at the river in order to heal his war-torn psyche. On the one hand, Nick appears to step successfully beyond the example of his father, whose looking and whose demands to be looked at constantly bring him to scenes of sexual and racial conflict. Indeed, because gazing in the company of other men (and sometimes women) leads to having one’s visual field mediated by the competitive gaze of the other, the concept of theatrical self-fashioning might be thought to presuppose the kind of warlike struggle to see and be seen that is implied by the doctor’s contest with Dick Boulton or by Jake and Bill’s show-and-tell at the Irati River. We need not adduce the trauma of war to account for a damaged masculine self, which is always damagingly incomplete if it can never be fully self-possessed, but instead possessed by the evaluating gaze of another. I have demonstrated in earlier chapters that the concept might have more benign consequences in terms of allowing men to fashion changing roles for themselves. But “Big Two-Hearted River” suggests the revolutionary possibility of stepping offstage and thus situating—indeed,

rescuing—the self beyond either the warlike or the transformative effects of theatrical self-fashioning. Nick, we might argue, offers up control over the visual field in order to gain a greater measure of self-control. The function of gazing by a man in solitude might allow the recuperation of a damaged self precisely because it rules out the act of gazing as in any way contingent upon a structure of power.

On the other hand, we might argue that Nick’s returning self-control is indebted precisely to his rediscovered ability to mediate the entire visual field. His eye, as it were, brings his “I” subtly but powerfully into being. Grammatically, the iteration of “Nick looked at. . . . Nick looked down” continues to place Nick as the predicate of every unfolding sentence. And as the sole spectator, he becomes the subject of every act of looking and perception; he is free to subject any object within the visual field to his gaze. The exception, somewhat paradoxically, is himself. Yet it is completely in line with an ethos of self-possessed manhood that Nick should secure his identity by assuming a prerogative to master all gazes by means of an authoritatively detached stance—one that is, by definition, outside the visual field it seeks to control. A master gaze must not be recognized by another lest the troubling presence of another gaze to which it is subject, and which is outside its own purview, reveal its status as a gaze among many. And that master gaze must not even be made aware of itself, lest it appear problematically exterior to itself and thus, being double or split, not detached at all from the acts of watching it purportedly stands indifferently beyond. Nick’s perspective must therefore seem not to be perspectival, and his gaze erase all consciousness of itself as a gaze, if the act of gazing is to be interpreted as signifying a self that has been realized, or is now realizing itself, beyond the purview of another’s gaze. The narrative’s seamless conjoining of acts of watching with objects that seem to exist independently of human interference—so that Nick is passively receptive yet also always in charge of bringing elements of the scene to our attention—supports the contention that he establishes his identity both powerfully and nontheatrically. Nick, as it were, exists for the first time offstage, and in so doing refuses to compromise his command of the subject position. He neither stages himself for others nor becomes the subject of a gaze exterior to his own. And he must be offstage in the sense of being detached from the whole visual field in order to master it completely. So compelling is Nick’s offstage experience at the river that performance, far from being the preferred mode of self-fashioning for men, might instead be seen as the problem with manhood-fashioning in a culture that fails to provide satisfactory outlets for (solitary) masculine experience and that urges men toward competitive displays.

It might therefore be argued that the dynamics of a self offstage in a story like “Big Two-Hearted River,” where the character of Nick Adams escapes the self-dramatizations found in earlier stories, betrays the shortcomings of

any theory of performance in Hemingway's work and validates the numerous exegeses that privilege an account of autonomous manhood. The story seems to suggest that performances of manhood are errors from which true manhood must be rescued and then revived in isolation. For that very reason it is worth pausing at this juncture to explore the irony that few scholarly appraisals of the story actually cast Nick in a heroic mold, preferring to envisage him as a man in search of a manhood that stretches, like his desire to fish the swamp, alluringly ahead of him. The story, Philip Young argues, presents a "picture of a sick man, and of a man who is in escape from whatever it is that made him sick." Carlos Baker, following the lead of Malcolm Cowley, writes that Nick resorts to the river for "therapeutic purposes." Lawrence R. Broer suggests conventionally that the story is an "attempt to find defensive structures by which the brave and simple man might survive in such a [hostile] world" and, much more intriguingly, that the tale represents a bridge between the "sterile and impotent image of the Anglo-Saxon world of *In Our Time*" and the "pattern of ritualized, primitive-defensive behavior that [later] attracts him so strongly to Spain." Nick Adams thus achieves the "same sense of emotional satisfaction in performing these simple, primitive rites as Jake Barnes soon experiences through the ritualized and ceremonial patterns of the bullfight."<sup>4</sup>

Traditional approaches to "Big Two-Hearted River" thus emphasize the therapeutic boon that isolation brings to a wounded masculine self, though in a surprisingly negative way: isolation is an "escape" and a "defensive structure." By the same logic, Nick has not yet fulfilled the priest's injunction to "Be a man." At best we discover Nick in the process of becoming a man, slowly moving in his beleaguered fashion toward an apotheosis that numerous obstacles—his weariness, the mosquito in his tent, the panic-inspiring trout, the fear of the swamp—conspire to defer. In none of these interpretations, moreover, is the dramatic situation of a man off alone considered to be an exemplary demonstration of pure and essential manhood. Instead, Nick's experience of solitude is bracketed off as a symptomatic response to conditions of wounding that emerged before the story even opens: Nick lying against a wall with a bullet in his spine, (perhaps) watching his father's humiliation at the hands of Dick Boulton, or more generally being brought up in the sterile environment of the Anglo-Saxon world. To critics, the narrative representation of solitude does not therefore necessarily bring about a state of self-possessed manhood, though solitude can be thought of as necessary for a "defensive" structuring of a damaged male self in which the conditions for a secure sense of masculinity can be forged. Those interpretations depending on some variant of a masculine code must at this point read Nick's defensive reconstruction in the context of those who have already made it to manhood: the kid of Chapter IX, Villalta, and later on in Hemingway's career Pedro Romero or Santiago.

Such at least is the case with Broer’s illuminating analysis. Broer, who cites his debt to Young’s work on the wound and the code, argues that in *In Our Time* the “highly sympathetic portraits of matadors” in the vignettes, which contrast with stories of Anglo-Saxon sterility, foretell the flowering of Hemingway’s interest in a powerful “moral code” for men drawn from the bullfight specifically and from Spain in general. This moral code is designed to counter the deficiencies of the early Hemingway hero, who is a “man without a country, without religion, without relation to any cultural or national past, and without ideological relation to the future.”<sup>5</sup> But though bullfighting might be thought an admirable vehicle for emphasizing a psychological imperative toward relationality, possibly constructed around a code of theatrical self-fashioning, Broer actually preserves the autonomy of the masculine hero. Broer’s notion of a moral code signifies the professional rules of an enterprise (in this case bullfighting) rather than compliance with the code of a group of people. Hence Manuel Garcia in “The Undefeated,” according to Broer, can be heroically committed to his craft despite the ignorance of his actual audience. And though Nick Adams mediates the entire visual terrain of “Big Two-Hearted River,” it is Garcia, constantly under the scrutiny of numerous spectators, who is “conspicuously in control of his environment,” who is “self-possessed” and a “dominator in every sense.” A similar contrast emerges in *The Sun Also Rises* between the “herding instinct of Jake’s companions” and the quality of Romero, a “man who lives and works alone.”<sup>6</sup> Broer, in other words, finesses the problem of the crowd by defining the important relationship as the one between the individual (bullfighter) and his code. And though code heroes like Romero and Garcia (and presumably Villalta) can only function by demonstrating their prowess to others, Broer subordinates the fact of demonstration to the ritual patterns such behavior is designed to convey. In so doing, Broer broaches unintentionally the problem of why an ethos of masculine autonomy should be epitomized by a matador before a crowd while Nick’s “defensive” procedures at the river camp, when he would seem conspicuously in charge of his environment, should appear so puzzlingly incomplete.

Broer’s account epitomizes, in fact, the kind of problematic reversals that characterize the discourse on “Big Two-Hearted River,” whereby a dramatic analogue for a theory of masculine self-possession is read as a case of damaged identity and a narrative strategy that seemingly grants Nick visual possession of the surrounding territory is read as depicting a precariously temporary quest for manhood. Above all, Broer’s subtextual emphasis on the performer (the matador) as Hemingway’s quintessential hero strangely—strangely in terms of his own intentions—conceives of masculinity as more pertinent to the bullring than to the isolated river camp. But Broer thereby underscores the extent to which an ethos of performance has shaped what seem to be

the most potent moments of masculine action undertaken in *In Our Time* before “Big Two-Hearted River.” Villalta, in particular, who becomes “one with the bull” and leaves the “red hilt of the sword sticking out” (105) of the bull’s shoulders, is a representation of formidable power expressed through an intense sexual potency. . . . [I]n rebutting most accounts of Hemingway’s concept of masculinity, Villalta’s potency is inseparable from its staging. The vignette begins by placing Villalta “in front of you” and in front of the roaring crowd, and thereafter every act performed [carried out] leads a double life as a performed [dramatized] act. Villalta dominates the multiple gazes intersecting the arena and in so doing controls both the bull and the play of symbolic meanings informing his acts. The corollary, as I have argued at length, is that Villalta’s being as a man depends on variable and temporary conditions of self-fashioning to which he owes his allegiance in the very act of mastering them. Though the sources of Villalta’s prowess lie in performance, his performance, crucially, does not seem to be presented ironically. Swinging back from the bull “like an oak when the wind hits it”—a force of nature incarnate—Villalta in Chapter XII underscores the ways in which a potent masculinity might be exercised by and through self-dramatization. Unless we write off the performative aspects of Villalta’s bullfighting as somehow out of bounds, Nick’s solitary endeavors in the wilderness cannot be thought of as uniquely responsible for bringing about a state of manhood.

Yet there is a sense in which performance can be thought of as the dilemma of manhood-fashioning that Nick must negotiate in the wilderness. For the second problem with reading Nick in “Big Two-Hearted River” as the archetype of autonomous and therefore unsullied masculinity is what so many conventional interpretations imply yet have never considered appropriate to the story, namely that solitude, deemed to help remedy a damaged masculine self, might aggravate or even bring about that damage by denying the protagonist his opportunity to perform for an evaluating audience. Critics, in other words, have insisted that the story represents a parlous state of manhood while excluding as a problematic the process of manhood-fashioning itself, which, conventionally, represents Nick’s efforts to discover by means of his solitary activities the pure or primal man within. The difficulties Nick finds in reconstructing a damaged psyche—the metronomic attention he pays to every step of a process, his shakiness on hooking the big, uncontrollable trout, his fear of fishing the swamp—are written off as problems to which manhood will ultimately come as a solution. But many aspects of the story argue that it is precisely the nature of Nick’s strategies of manhood-fashioning, pursued in an environment lacking Hemingway’s characteristic structure of male performance and evaluating audience, that make the value of his restorative rituals debatable. The point of the story lies not in fishing the swamp—the action that, hovering beyond the bounds of narrative representation, marks a hypothetical cohesion of masculine

elements of fortitude and self-reliance—but in the fact that the very nature of the manly gestures available to Nick forever defer the moment when fishing the swamp alone would become a possibility.

The problematic of manhood-fashioning is brought home most clearly in those moments when narrative gaps interrupt the ostensibly seamless recording of Nick’s sensations and perceptions. The most obvious—for all that it is rarely recognized in such terms—occurs where Chapter XV, the vignette of Cardinella’s hanging, separates the two parts of “Big Two-Hearted River.” Here the impersonal and detached narrative voice brilliantly mimics the disciplinary gaze to which Cardinella is subjected. Depicted within a sequence of exterior actions, statements, and glances, he is the focus of this penal theater. He appears exclusively under conditions of performance, witnessed by assorted characters within the story as a body dragged to the scaffold. Responding to the theatricalization of Cardinella’s demise, the narrator’s detached stance creates a kind of simulacrum whereby we know Cardinella solely through a display of external actions. We may choose to read those actions as pertaining to certain states of mind: being carried “like that,” for instance, might signify Cardinella’s cowardice; losing control of his bowels might represent a loss of grace under pressure. Or we might choose to read those actions as signifying a complete voiding of identity: Cardinella is nothing beyond the actions that, displaying and representing him, occupy the entirety of his being. The narrative mode of Chapter XV thus contributes to a sense of the progressive annihilation of the masculine I (and eye) under conditions of total theatricality. Those conditions should also obtain, moreover, had Sam Cardinella held tight to himself and demonstrated his contempt for the proceedings while arraigned before the disgusted or terrified eyes of the onlookers. In that case he would still fail to secure the perfect self-possession we have stipulated as Nick’s (possible) prerogative at the river camp, where he is alone and, in the senses I have discussed, offstage. Because we can only know his state of mind from his actions, Cardinella can only stage himself or be humiliatingly staged. To the extent that we insist on autonomy as an archetypal condition of manhood, we rule out those male characters who depend on displaying tough, heroic actions in order to make known a sense of their interior worth as men.

But in “Big Two-Hearted River” itself conditions of non-performance—under which we should (at last) be able to stand in the presence of the absolute masculine self, entirely unaffected by any demand for or threat of self-dramatization—lead to a puzzling sense of psychological displacement in Nick’s character. This is particularly evident at the point when the profound shock of Nick’s battling the dangerously large trout brings about a sequence of thought that culminates in “I” irrupting into the text: “By God, he was the biggest one I ever heard of” (151). The remark draws our attention squarely to Hemingway’s curious transformations of narrative voice in “Big Two-Hearted

River,” for it breaches the narrative logic of third-person omniscient and free indirect discourse that has so far governed Nick’s experiences and that leads us to expect phrasing like “he was the biggest one *he* had ever heard of.” Shortly before this moment, in fact, the narrator informs us “He had never seen so big a trout” (150). We are attuned early in the narrative to a strategy that replicates the kind of careful control Nick wishes to exert on his environment. He is screened from our gaze, as it were, by the position of a narrator who stands authoritatively separate from Nick or who covertly mediates his thoughts in such a fashion that they appear to be the provenance of a third person (thus “*He* had never seen so big a trout”). Under what conditions, then, is Nick suddenly capable of speaking directly for himself? As brief as it is, this intrusion into interior monologue forces us to the disconcerting possibility that the entire narrative turns upon an erasure of the self-possessed *I/eye* (for which interior monologue seems the appropriate narrative mode) and the substitution of third-person narration. The irruption of “*I*” suddenly makes us aware of the kind of self-reflexive consciousness that might have been present from the beginning had not Nick carefully choked off the thoughts and memories (and his actual voice) that would force him to become aware of himself. It suggests the extent to which Nick is at every other point little more than a recording consciousness. By the logic of this reading, the lonely, meditative gazing at nature that early on seemed to portray a character in charge of the terrain visible from the standpoint of the *eye/I* can now be seen to signify a general and profound sense of displacement that governs the substitution of one narrative mode for another and that reduces Nick to the function of sight alone. Nick is the subject of multiple acts of seeing; but the discourse of *I/eye* of which he is at least once capable has been appropriated and his subject-position filled with the gaze of a third-person narrator: Nick, not “*I*,” looks at the trout in the river. In these senses Nick stands enigmatically center stage and offstage; speaking once in his own person, thinking once in his own person, and mediating the visual terrain, yet never on other occasions dramatically visible at all.

The story’s bravura insistence on solitary experience—Nick alighting to find that “There was no town” of Seney—leads back, by a new route, to the same dilemma that haunted “The Battler.” Ad Francis’s desperate attempts to dramatize himself disguised a malleable and amnesiac self characterized by incessant transformation rather than stability. In a sense, Nick wishes to iterate Ad Francis’s capacity for amnesia; Bugs’s certainty that Francis “won’t remember nothing of it” is picked up by Nick’s knowledge that he could “choke” the bad memories of the Black River. Critics have tended to view this displacement as a psychologically necessary strategy for healing Nick’s war-fragmented self and have argued about whether his final promise to “fish the swamp” signifies the completion of that process. Such analyses, however, invert the meanings of Nick’s actions. Significant as those actions are on a

symbolic level, they cannot fashion a self because Nick constantly defers the self-awareness that would make them psychologically potent. Nick, as Peter Schwenger puts it, has “no way to deal with the emotion . . . except by the very strategies of detachment which threaten him” (46).<sup>7</sup> If Nick comports himself as a man at the sacred river, no one (scarcely even Nick himself) is there to acknowledge and validate it. While the absence of audience removes the need for the puerile self-display of “The Battler” and “The Three-Day Blow,” that same absence erases all opportunity for the self-dramatization that empowered characters like the “kid” and Villalta, and that might indeed have accorded Sam Cardinella their heroic status had he possessed their ability to perform in front of a crowd.

“Big Two-Hearted River” delicately probes the question of how and under what circumstances it is even possible to represent a man off alone, if by “man” we mean a male who is self-possessed and self-determined. Taking a cue from critical reactions to the story, I argued that the fact of Nick’s isolation does not guarantee an ethos of masculine autonomy. Despite the early promise of Nick’s seemingly poised spectatorial role, the story’s narrative mode gradually betrays an amnesiac self whose gestures toward self-control involve a profound displacement of the “I” into a depersonalized third-person narrator. For all the humiliation visited upon Sam Cardinella in Chapter XV, the vignette’s narrative of a male conducting himself (in this case badly) before an evaluating audience conforms more closely than “Big Two-Hearted River” to the theatrical acts that identify the most authoritative male characters in story after story of *In Our Time*. Whatever therapeutic actions Nick generates from his experience on the river can only be partial gestures toward a manhood whose completion depends on the legitimating function of an audience. It is not the case, then, that a man offstage is unrepresentable in Hemingway’s work; but the implications of its representation turn out to be very different from the conventional depiction of the autonomous and self-determined man. Hemingway’s exploration of the world of the solitary male suggests a curious dead-end and an intriguing dilemma for a writer so fascinated by masculine experience: how could one successfully write of the nontheatrical situation of being off alone if the masculine self can be constructed only through self-dramatization? The late novella *The Old Man and the Sea* provides Hemingway’s only other fully developed answer.

READING THE BONES: SANTIAGO’S AUDIENCES IN  
*THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA*

If the publication of *The Old Man and the Sea* inspired critics and prize committees to reevaluate an author many considered artistically exhausted, the novella itself has generally had the effect of confirming major lines of



inquiry into Hemingway's work. Early reviewers and scholars emphasized continuities of philosophy—particularly his philosophy of masculinity—and aesthetic strategy. To Philip Young, for instance, Santiago is the “first of the code heroes to have grown old”; to Arvin R. Wells, borrowing Young's concept, he is the “apotheosis of the code hero”; to Delmore Schwartz, the “old fisherman is the quintessential hero of Hemingway's fiction,” for he represents the “solitude which requires absolute courage and complete self-reliance.” Joseph Waldmeir puts a similar sentiment in terms that make clear the link between autonomous action, self-assertion, and manhood: “A man must depend upon himself alone in order to assert his manhood, and the assertion of his manhood, in the face of insuperable obstacles, is the complete end and justification of his existence for a Hemingway hero.” Even critics' caveats—and there were many—have the effect of confirming commonplace ideas about Hemingway. Robert P. Weeks sees the story as so much fakery; Nemi D'Agostino remarks that the story's “symbolism remains a fictitious disguise,” while Claire Rosenfield condemns passages of the tale for its sentimentality and its “patent attempt at manipulating our responses.”<sup>8</sup>

Philip Toynbee, in an attack on what he calls a “meretricious” story, supplies an intriguing reason for this constellating of critical opinion: the book is “stuffed with the burden of all the theses which had been written about Hemingway's message and philosophy. . . . What must follow, of course, are the hundred exegeses. The book is doctor-bait, professor-bait.”<sup>9</sup> According to Toynbee, the book is the outcome of an authorial and scholarly feeding frenzy. Hemingway feeds off critical opinion and in turn trails in his wake bait to attract further schools of thought, those “hundred exegeses.” Toynbee's attack thus makes absolutely unremarkable the number of critics who perceive Santiago as code hero. How could they not when Hemingway had the example of John McCaffery's convenient anthology (1950), and when the opinions of Edmund Wilson, Malcolm Cowley, and Robert Penn Warren were finding more general and systematic form? And Toynbee allows us to read the oddly similar attacks on *The Old Man and the Sea* as a function of Hemingway's same meretricious tactics. These critics perceive that the author is at best parlaying an oversimplified interpretation of his work into narrative form or at worst conforming to critical dictates—impressions that form a particularly delicious riposte to Hemingway's longstanding and very public abhorrence of critics and reviewers.

One consequence of Toynbee's censure, surprisingly, is that by referring to the story only in terms of a complicity between author and audience he obliterates the solitariness of the old man. The novella becomes a kind of group exercise in intertextuality whereby what seem to be Santiago's specific and individualized attributes can only be read as textual echoes of readers' generalized comments about Hemingway's characters. It is not so much

that Santiago endures in magnificent isolation as that the enduring legacy of Hemingway heroes who were once truly autonomous and individualized speaks through him. Santiago is never self-defined, Toynbee implies, but a palimpsest: he is not *Santiago* but the Hemingway hero; and not even the Hemingway hero so much as Hemingway's reductive rewriting of the critics' rewriting of narratives that may originally have tendered fluid and powerful conceptions of heroic conduct. The writings of Hemingway's audience—the critics he pretended to despise—have become the subject of the novella. The alleged fraudulence of Hemingway's style and criticisms that Hemingway is trying to steer his material and audience into conformity with preconceived and narrowly conceived notions of heroic manhood all bear out Toynbee's point, as does any interpretation that marks out a quintessential (rather than unique) role for Santiago.

Picking up Toynbee's criticism, Philip Rahv elaborates the notion that hidden audiences play an unexpectedly large role in the novella when he argues that Hemingway's aesthetic self-control has slipped into an unsavory self-dramatization. For Rahv, the story “exhibits” the “credentials of the authentic.”<sup>10</sup> The term is neatly chosen, for it bespeaks the story's status as a perfect likeness—a simulacrum—of earlier works. It can only put on exhibition narrative strategies and philosophies that were once an integral function of Hemingway's texts. The narrative crafting that must have been once an act of aesthetic discovery, fresh, original, and ever different, has shifted into a deliberate attempt to recall and display the results of that discovery. The author's role that once must have been detached from, or ancillary to, or at least indistinguishable from the stories themselves has become the governing impulse behind this novella. The novella could not even be considered a self-parody, which would at least imply some conscious reflection about the roles pertaining to an author like Hemingway. It is instead an odd parody of self-consciousness whereby celebrated (and by now routine) ideas are paraded in an attempt to draw responses from a preselected audience of professors and doctors. That Rahv and Toynbee do not fall for Hemingway's trick as good as proves their case, for in not responding like some colleagues they show that this text does not have the power of authentic literature to put its value beyond debate. Such value is demonstrable but, crucially, in no need of exhibition. Toynbee in fact concludes by inviting “any sane critic” to compare this latest work to “The Killers” or “The Undefeated,” whose value, in the absence of any discussion about their merits, must simply be self-evident. Such criticisms no doubt tell us much about the proclivities of Rahv and Toynbee, who favor an ethos of originality over (self-)imitation, authorial detachment over the manipulative hand of the writer, and ironic distance over the author's celebration of his own famous ideas. One more hidden irony of Hemingway's supposed volte-face over his old dislike of literary critics is that it

is now critics like Rahv and Toynbee who speak for concepts that Hemingway helped shape in the early modernist period, and who even use those concepts as tools to expose the author's contemporary work as counterfeit. Both critics thus interestingly uncover some of the assumptions that go to the reading of Hemingway's work in general.

The primary value of Toynbee's and Rahv's work for our purposes lies in what it reveals about the possible functions of an audience in a fiction that seems to put such considerations out of bounds. A work like *The Old Man and the Sea*, which focuses so intensely on Santiago's solitary heroic struggle against the elements, appears capable only of ratifying principles of masculine conduct that affirm (in Santiago's classic statement) "what a man can do" rather than what a man displays.<sup>11</sup> As the comments of Schwartz and Waldmeir suggest, readers tend to see Santiago as quintessential precisely because he is alone and thus the paradigm of what is usually only intimated in Hemingway's fictions. Because stories like "Big Two-Hearted River" that explicitly fictionalize a man alone are rare in Hemingway's canon—and even then, as we have seen, hardly unambiguous about the psychic health of the solitary man—Santiago's exemplary actions must represent what other male characters covertly desire or unconsciously need in order to attain essential manhood. By this logic, Hemingway must have been searching all along for a narrative vehicle that could dramatize a nontheatrical presentation of manhood and make visible what can be seen only in the absence of spectators.

Toynbee and Rahv turn this logic on its head. Far from noting a thematics of solitude, they read the work as completely dependent on one audience of critics to which Hemingway's ideas are indebted and another to which it is addressed. For them, Santiago's solitude is meaningful only in terms of the various audiences who have construed and who are to construe its meaning; the absence of fictive spectators merely "exhibits" itself to the critic's eye. Santiago is irredeemably a function of the interpretive gaze. It should be noted, however, that for Rahv and Toynbee this return of the repressed audience is exactly the problem with the story. What is suspect is not an aesthetics of authorial detachment and a philosophy of masculine autonomy but Hemingway's failure to implement them—a failure that is all the more profound because the novella speaks so blatantly for the very values it destroys. In distancing himself from the "hundred exegeses" the book will inspire, Toynbee covertly puts into play through the figure of the responsible critic the detached, self-reliant, and self-possessed role Hemingway's heroic male characters used to exemplify but which this novella insists on perverting amid various acts of narrative theater. The responsible critic might even appear all the more self-possessed because Hemingway's abandonment of the principles governing authentic literary art leaves the critic to speak for them alone. The disgust that Toynbee clearly evinces for *Old Man*, however,

suggests a measure of ambivalence. If Toynebee arrogates Hemingway’s now-abandoned role, the critic’s act of having to speak of and for an authentic work like “The Undefeated”—that which depends on no other text and makes a claim on no other text, if Toynebee is right—nonetheless marks a potentially perilous moment when what should be self-evident suddenly needs to be made evident after all. Toynebee faces the distinct possibility of having to exhibit the credentials by which authentic texts like “The Undefeated” may be known and thus reproducing the dilemma he sees as a function of Hemingway’s text when theatrical representation stands in for self-presence. The act of directing readers to works that are by his definition independent of other texts inscribes Toynebee in a logic of display barely masked by his insistence that their essential worth need not even be spoken. Toynebee’s maneuver restores faith in the unique and autonomous text while drawing attention to his own acts of critical performance.

Toynebee’s and Rahv’s narratives of Hemingway’s decline into theatrical narrative can be read very differently. My interpretation of *The Old Man and the Sea* corroborates their sense that the question of audience keeps obtruding in a work where “what a man can do and what a man can endure” seems to position Santiago outside the purview of a watching and evaluating audience. What Toynebee and Rahv see as a problem with the story, however, might be read more profitably as the story’s problematics of audience. Though their point about the novella’s address to an audience of critics is provocative and worthy of careful consideration, *The Old Man and the Sea*, like “The Undefeated,” implies not one but various kinds of audience. The several different groups of spectators whose inspection of the marlin’s skeleton closes the story play a particularly crucial role. They restore the act of interpretation as an element of plot. And, retrospectively, they invite readers to compare their experience of the text with those offered within the fictive world of the novella. The fictive spectators do not act as paradigmatic readers so much as bring pressure to bear on the work’s actual readers to examine their own interpretive performances, and indeed to see the act of interpretation as a performance rather than a set of responses predetermined by a monologic text. For, in the same way that Rahv and Toynebee read a tale about solitude in terms of its special demands on an audience, this story whose plot so carefully removes spectators from Santiago’s scenes of conflict constantly returns its readers to the scene of conflicting interpretations. That these interpretations once again focus on issues of Santiago’s manhood is only appropriate to a character whose performance is always under scrutiny and in question.

In the quiet moments before hooking the giant marlin, Santiago observes that “nothing showed on the surface of the water but some patches of yellow, sun-bleached Sargasso weed and the purple, formalized, iridescent,

gelatinous bladder of a Portuguese man-of-war floating close beside the boat" (35), which was floating "cheerfully as a bubble with its long deadly purple filaments trailing a yard behind it in the water." The old man reserves much scorn for the Portuguese man-of-war—he loves to see the sea-turtles eating them—for though the "iridescent bubbles were beautiful," they were "the falsest thing in the sea." The reason for Santiago's animus is not on closer inspection obvious, for other creatures of the sea, including the hooked marlin with his purple stripes and "great length and width and all his power and his beauty" (94), hold similar attractions. Presumably Santiago has in mind the notion that beauty itself should not be invested in the business of killing, or that, conversely, correct methods of killing parlay attractiveness into the truly beautiful; the powerful marlin and mako shark (100), whom Santiago depicts as great fighters and great beauties, have no need of tricking their prey. Or perhaps Santiago disdains the fact that the Portuguese man-of-war's beauty is so purposefully on display. We do not even need to note the hollowness of this "bubble" and "gelatinous bladder" to see the connection to other scenes in Hemingway's work where theatrical display appears to be written off as the one truly inauthentic term in a discourse of heroic manhood. In the *Old Man*, this "falsest thing in the sea" perhaps points us toward the truest: the old man himself who, outfacing even the admired turtles who "shut their eyes" (36) when approaching the man-of-war, studies and sees through its deadly deception.

Out at sea, Santiago resolutely sets about reading sea-signs, employing all manner of glances in seeking to interpret the seascape surrounding him: "If there is a hurricane you always see the signs of it in the sky for days ahead, if you are at sea. They do not see it ashore because they do not know what to look for, he thought. The land must make a difference too, in the shape of the clouds. But we have no hurricane coming now" (61). Subtly distinguishing between himself and "they" who inhabit the land, Santiago quietly speaks for his greater abilities of perception. He even implies that his skill only manifests itself on the sea: he ponders that the "land must make a difference" in the shape of clouds as if on land he has never bothered to look for signs of hurricane. From the sea, in contrast, cloud-shapes over land have precise significance: the "strange light the sun made in the water . . . meant good weather and so did the shape of the clouds over the land" (35). The difference the sea makes is that looking must be exercised for practical advantage (and indeed survival). Santiago is "happy to see so much plankton because it meant fish" (35), and, seeing that a bird is "circling again" (37), he comments "He's found fish." The same bird is said to have "got something. . . . He's not just looking" (33). Like Santiago, the bird places vision at the service of purposeful and pragmatic action; "just looking" as an enterprise without design or goal is ruled out as a worthwhile activity. This does not mean that Santiago can render all sign-

reading into purposive action. His observation that “Everything that shows on the surface today travels very fast and to the north-east” (40), for instance, makes him wonder “it is some sign of weather that I do not know?” But Santiago accepts the riddle as his limitation. The sign is knowable; and it is partly because all signs in this seascape appear meaningful and decidable that “just looking” seems a particularly pointless endeavor.

Importantly, the act of looking reveals meanings that seem independent of the observer. Skilled observers drawing on a fund of knowledge gained through experience are certainly necessary to realize and act on signs like plankton (meaning fish) and strange light in the water (meaning good weather). But a different perspective on or misinterpretation of natural signs could not disturb their true meaning. Santiago actually ponders “what the sea looks like from [the] height” (71) of an airplane and remembers that from the cross-trees of a turtle boat the “dolphin look greener . . . and you can see their stripes.” It could not be said, however, that different perspectives transform the dolphin; Santiago is merely recognizing the logic by means of which the same animal looks different from various angles, heights, and qualities of light. Similarly, sea-readers who mistook the meaning of plankton could not change its significance; they would simply be poor readers. This fact that meanings at sea operate independently of the observer potentially bestows great authority on the independent observer. Plankton continues to signify fish and strange light to signify good weather to the truly perceptive observer even if all other observers who are “just looking” fail to see the connection. Sea-knowledge that operates independently of any communal interpretation or evaluation thus offers crucial philosophical support for a narrative of actions undertaken outside the purview of any watching audience. In particular, it seems to guarantee the meaning of Santiago’s manly actions in lieu of the evaluating audience that typically records and negotiates the meaning of deeds performed by Hemingway’s male characters. Potentially, we comprehend Santiago’s manly credentials with the serene confidence with which he grasps the meaning of plankton. If we did not, the narrative seems to suggest, those meanings would nonetheless be there.

The act of looking positions Santiago within a swiftly changing but eminently readable seascape where confident action depends on straightforward acts of perception that may be undertaken by any experienced individual. But Santiago also shows a preterite ability to see through and beyond what is immediately apprehended by the physical eye. He is a sea-borne seer, his visionary gaze accentuated by his habit of looking into the sun (32–33) and his once-preternatural ability to see “almost as a cat sees” (67) in the dark. At dusk Santiago guides the skiff by the star Rigel (75) even though Rigel, so Robert P. Weeks complains in “Fakery in *The Old Man and the Sea*,” is apparently invisible at that hour.<sup>12</sup> Merely seeing “one of the projecting

green sticks dip sharply" (41), Santiago knows "exactly what it was": "One hundred fathoms down a marlin was eating the sardines that covered the point and the shank of the hook." Similarly, after the marlin jumps for the first time Santiago finds he can "picture the fish swimming in the water with his purple pectoral fins set wide as wings" (67). As many commentators have suggested, such moments culminate in the scene of the marlin's death when Santiago, nearly fainting with exhaustion, "looked carefully in the glimpse of vision that he had" (94). It is the moment when Santiago realizes the mythic knowledge obtained from this "angling vision into the heart of mysteries."<sup>13</sup> In these senses, Santiago is closer to Pilar than to Robert Jordan, who chooses to trust what is within the field of sight and its technologically enhanced extensions but who rejects, or finds too threatening, the uncanny mode of foresight offered by Pilar when she reads his hand.<sup>14</sup> Santiago, it might be argued, possesses the deeply pragmatic ability to interpret sea-signs through the evidence of his senses as well as the visionary ability pertaining to the mythic quest hero. This mastery of the natural and supernatural spectrum of vision counters the kind of criticism Robert Weeks levels at the novella in complaining that only a description of fish and stars present to the physical eye legitimately conveys Hemingway's own aesthetic of precise, factual detail. For those reading Santiago as quest hero, no extraordinary or transcendent glimpse of nature could be too miraculous.

Santiago understands the true nature of the Portuguese man-of-war, whose deliberate display of beauty foists a merely theatrical (that is, fake) meaning on its observers, as well as the nontheatrical display of sea-signs that do not demand any response from their observers. And he comprehends the numinous, archetypal images that cannot even be apprehended by the physical eye. Santiago thus plays the almost unique role in Hemingway's fiction of a potent observer who is not in turn under surveillance. Indeed, Hemingway quietly emphasizes the old man's ability to evade surveillance. He is soon out of sight of the other fishermen, and in sight only of creatures who do not seem to comprehend him: the tuna with its "big, unintelligent eyes staring" (38), and the marlin whose "eye is huge" (67) but "as detached as the mirrors in a periscope" (96). Moreover, Santiago goes unnoticed by "coast guard and . . . planes" (124) sent out to search for him for the "ocean is very big and a skiff is small and hard to see." Santiago's mastery of vision should then properly be seen as the inverse and the consequence of his removal from the watching and evaluating crowd. Unlike Jake Barnes, Santiago need not place his capacity for expert observation at the service of anyone else or partake in competitive masculine displays. And unlike Barnes or Robert Jordan, he need not stage himself before an evaluating audience. Beyond the confines of the closed arena and watching crowd, it seems, Santiago can indulge the full range of perceptions available to the man off alone. We are close here to agreeing with

Joseph Waldmeir’s apothegm that a “man must depend upon himself alone in order to assert his manhood” and simultaneously standing Hemingway criticism on its head, for, in terms of my argument, such agreement would make Santiago a unique figure among Hemingway’s fictional characters rather than his quintessential hero. A narrative that demonstrates “what a man can do and what he endures” (66) rather than what he performs in front of an audience justifies the preponderance of Hemingway criticism—in this one work.

But doubts about the potent yet monocular role I have sketched for Santiago remain, and not only because of reviewers like Rahv and Toynebee who are skeptical about the originality of Hemingway’s novella. Gerry Brenner, in particular, has asked the kind of awkward questions that compel us to revise our understanding of Santiago’s role. Brenner asks why Santiago needs to kill the fish if symbolic mastery of the fish is all that counts and, even more important, why Santiago must then expose his mastery to the evaluation of others: if the beautiful marlin is destined to become a “spectacle to stupid tourists,” Brenner inquires, “Must Santiago return with the mutilated carcass?”<sup>15</sup> It is worth noting that Brenner’s questions anticipate the kind of arguments I made about *Green Hills of Africa* and “The Undeclared.” If what counts in the articulation of a masculine self is the experience of comporting oneself as a man, the expression of masculinity in the form of trophies and other signs—whether kudu horns, trout, marlin, bull’s ears, or pigtailed—should be absolutely immaterial. Santiago has already proven himself, triumphing over his pain and fatigue and over the marlin’s strength. One could hardly have thought less of Santiago as a man if the marlin had escaped at the last or even if he had released it. The thrust of the harpoon, which occurs with the marlin already passive and defeated, seems curiously anticlimactic (particularly because a canny sea-reader like Santiago must be aware, and has already half-admitted [68], that there is little likelihood of returning the marlin intact). And returning the trophy to land seems even more superfluous to the business of being a man once Santiago has given his “all” (93) and defined his masculinity most perfectly at the moment of the marlin’s death.

A rationale can be found for Santiago’s trophy among conventional interpretations of the novella, particularly those that uncover the mythic significances of the text. Earl Rovit’s reading is worth quoting at length:

The kind of experience which Santiago undergoes is an incommunicable one, but it is not without value to the community of men. He has been a champion of mankind for men and not for himself. He has brought back from his isolation a fragmented gift offering to his fellows, an imperfect symbol to suggest where he has been and what he has found there. There are those within



the community with the experience and the imagination and the necessary love to project on that skeletal symbol a feeling of the experience which it represents. For them the world has been redeemed; a shaft of knowing has pierced like a thunderbolt into their awareness of what it is to be a man and the image of mankind has been immeasurably enhanced.<sup>16</sup>

For Rovit the presence of the “skeletal symbol” is crucial to persuade the “community of men” to flesh out hidden, archetypal meanings, a task that is actually facilitated by its skeletal nature: because its lack of flesh strips away any commercial value it might have had, spectators cannot confuse “what it is to be a man” with a male’s earning power. Moreover, its “fragmented” and “imperfect” nature suggests the extent to which mythic experience is essentially “incommunicable.” The “community of men” must intuit from the adventure’s bare bones—the quest hero’s boon to his people—the archetypal wholeness and plenitude that can only be experienced, not transmitted. Rovit’s answer to Brenner’s question “Must Santiago return with the mutilated carcass?” is thus to rewrite the context in which the question becomes meaningful. The trophy is useless to *Santiago*; it is the community of men who require a metaphoric glimpse of the “glimpse of vision” Santiago experienced at the marlin’s death. For the same reasons, dumping the skeleton at sea could not affect the old man’s heroism, though it would of course prove a loss to his community. The fact that the carcass inadequately reveals Santiago’s manly “all” should then be seen as a consequence of the shortcomings of representation, which cannot possibly be commensurate with the transcendent and thus unrepresentable experience itself. It would be churlish to accuse Santiago of needing to signify “what it is to be a man” when he is the one who has stepped beyond the bounds of representation.

To Brenner, Santiago’s self-representation is the key that unlocks the story’s true significance: Santiago, desiring Manolin to hero-worship him and win Manolin back from the “fathers who have demanded Manolin’s obedience,” indulges a selfish but common-enough desire to dramatize his skill. Santiago must bring home the mutilated carcass “because without proof of his exploit he can not show his superiority to such lesser men.”<sup>17</sup> The important distinction between those readings is that for Brenner the activities of fictive audiences within the text and the interpretations of the story’s readers make a sudden and profound difference. In Rovit’s mythopoeic reading, interpretations of the sign of the skeleton have no effect on the heroic actions that precede them, for no amount of (mis)interpretation could add to, detract from, or transform the archetypal plenitude from which this fragmentary gift offering appears. The bones are not strictly in need of readers at all, for a receptive audience is exterior to the universal significances liberated by the story (though the very

universality of the story of course makes such an audience a likelihood). The boon the quest hero brings to his community in Rovit’s reading becomes in Brenner’s the sign of Santiago’s theatricality: he is theatrical because he desires to signify his heroism to a watching audience of fishermen, boy, and boy’s father rather than acting in complete, sign-less indifference to the opinions of others. Even more surprising, it begins to appear that Santiago must all along have been pursuing his lonely battle with the marlin with one eye on a prospective audience. Though he does not dramatize his deeds for an audience, every action he undertakes is a kind of proto-performance, setting the stage for a triumphal and wholly theatrical return.

The traces of a barely disguised desire for an audience in the novella are in fact present throughout. Away from the pitying or derisive glances directed at Santiago on the Terrace, the old man insists over and over again on his solitude, referring for instance to his habit of speaking to himself and his penchant for going out beyond all other people. “I wish I could show him what sort of man I am” (64) says Santiago of the fish at another point, guilelessly commanding our attention for the show that the old man never appears to make even when he and the fish confront each other face to face. And other potential but absent audiences are frequently on Santiago’s mind. Brenner notes the old man’s refrain “I wish the boy were here” (56), interpreting it as a prolegomena for his later more blatant bid for an audience. The insight is an acute one. At one point, for instance, Santiago says out loud “I wish I had the boy. To help me and to see this” (48). The moment represents a complicated transaction for the reader. The fact that the boy is not there to see something worth seeing appears to remove all taint of theatricality. If Santiago ever performs for an audience (as he perhaps does when handwrestling or in bringing back the marlin’s carcass), he clearly cannot be performing now for the boy. His remark laments and thus underscores the absence of spectators. Yet it demonstrates to the *reader* that there is indeed something worth seeing. Santiago’s complaint is something of a red herring. Specifying an onlooker who is absent has the effect of dramatizing Santiago’s solitariness; but the spectator-function the absent boy would have provided is transferred to the silently present reader. Indeed, because we cannot help as the boy would have done our only possible role is to “see” and evaluate Santiago’s exploits. The very stridency with which the novella rejects audiences for Santiago’s exploits at sea, then, keeps putting back into play its rhetorical manipulation of the reader.

But the key to the function of audiences in *The Old Man and the Sea* is Santiago’s return with the marlin skeleton, when proliferating fictive audiences mark a more obvious return to theaters of masculinity and pose in suddenly striking ways the question of how readers judge and evaluate Santiago’s actions—and why they must. I argue that the conclusion of the narrative forces us to reconstruct the nature of our reading experience by asking us to see it

first and foremost as a reading *experience* that has unfolded temporally and is now susceptible to transformation (though, by the same token, the possibility of a saintly Santiago must at first be entertained rather than dismissed as hypothetical). By introducing fictive audiences at such a late stage, *The Old Man and the Sea* invites us to discover retrospectively the reading processes we have undertaken from the beginning, but which have been disguised as the seemingly natural business of recording determinate and possibly universal meanings about (in Rovit's words) "what it is to be a man." In alienating what seemed natural and unproblematic, the novella asks us to act as audience to our own activity and thus belatedly to uncover that activity as a performance that has only temporarily purveyed certain meanings as inalienable and non-theatrical. That logic of interpretive performance enacted by the work has another consequence. As the reader's role grows in importance, a burgeoning awareness of multiple interpretations begins to erode the distinction between the masculine performance the work seems above all to value (an action done truly and well) and the notion of performance as self-dramatization, which *Old Man* seems to write off as unimportant or (in the guise of the Portuguese man-of-war) lethal.

One answer to the question of why Santiago must return with the mutilated carcass is that a series of perspectives on the carcass compel the reader into realizing the power of the interpretive actions of audiences. No fewer than five distinct sets of spectators attend to the marlin's carcass as it drifts in the harbor. Perhaps unexpectedly, given that he confesses "he did not want to look at the fish" (110) after the second shark attack, the old man is himself the first spectator as he "looked back and saw in the reflection from the street light the great tail of the fish standing up well behind the skiff's stern. He saw the white naked line of his backbone and the dark mass of the head with the projecting bill and all the nakedness between" (121). Santiago's backward (and here narcissistic) glance sets in train a series of interpretive glances that corroborate the undoing of his heroism. Looking back at the proof of his endurance and courage suggests to what extent the trophy matters to him; the look confirms that the trophy is worthy of being looked at and that others after Santiago will want to look at it. Manolin iterates this deceptively disinterested glance. In response to the fisherman who informs him that the marlin "was eighteen feet from nose to tail" (122), Manolin replies only "I believe it." But we have been told that the boy has already "been there before" (122) the other fishermen. One implication is that the boy, worried about Santiago, has arisen early; having had time to digest its size, his current lack of interest in it could be put down to his preoccupation with the suffering it must have caused his mentor. Another possibility, however, is that having seen the marlin earlier the boy can safely leave others to exclaim over its size (just as Santiago must know others will exclaim over it). What allows his ostensible

disinterest is the enormity of the fish and of the struggle it must have cost the old man, for Manolin (like Santiago) need not dramatize what no one could help looking at.

Santiago's spectacular success is that he stage-manages his return in such a way that his presence is no longer required on stage. Unlike the character of Ernest Hemingway in *Green Hills of Africa*, whose trophy horns are consistently out-trophied and voided of meaning by Karl's triumphs in a theater of masculine display, Santiago sets out a hitherto undreamt-of and surely unsurpassable exhibition of his prowess. If Hemingway never succeeds in playing the part of the father with the biggest (phallic) horns in the earlier book, Santiago masterfully plays "Pop" to Manolin, even making him a gift of the marlin's huge spear ("as long as a baseball bat" [62]) in metonymic tribute to his manly powers and to his powers of mentorship. But though Santiago merely lies in his shack, bestowing gifts on Manolin and Pedrico, while others gaze in awe at the giant skeleton, it could not be said that he has obliterated all traces of the theatricality by means of which he represents his manhood to the community. His theatrical gesture is precisely to remove himself from the stage; he refuses to appear before his peers secure in the knowledge that the trophy, and the damage done to it and the skiff, adequately dramatize his endurance, strength, and skill. Oddly, this interpretation both substantiates and inverts common readings that emphasize Santiago's brotherhood with and likeness to the marlin. Doubling for Santiago, the marlin-trophy bespeaks his mastering and shaping hand. It accounts for Santiago's incapacity or refusal to make his deeds signify by completely and very successfully taking over the signifying function. Santiago's peers cannot help but read these signs: the marlin's enormous size (hence the superhuman powers its capture must have taken), its stripped carcass (hence prolonged shark attacks), the missing gaff and wrecked rudder (hence the old man's efforts to beat off the marauders). Indeed, it might be argued that the carcass's principal function is to represent the act of representation: stripped of all commercial value, it can function only as sign, standing for Santiago and for the acts of theatrical representation he appears not to be making.

The ways in which Hemingway shapes readers' responses in the closing scenes support the sense of a character enmeshed in a complex scheme of stage-management. As I have argued, Santiago's return with the marlin-trophy potentially subverts assumptions about his heroism that have been gradually accruing over the course of his solitary voyage and identifies the real problem of the text as the question of why there is a conclusion at all. The reader cannot know more about Santiago's heroism than at the moment of his supreme victory over the great fish; we see that up until that moment his victory seems to be untarnished by theatrical motivations; reading on ensures the old man's fall into the commonplace of displaying his heroic worth.

Why, then, does the reader need to read the sign (the marlin's carcass) that simply refers us back to the story we have just read? One answer is that most readers who enjoy reading the novella experience its conclusion as much more than an iteration of Santiago's story. However intellectually inappropriate the conclusion may be to a concept of autonomous manhood, its primary function is really a profoundly emotional appeal to the reader to participate in the communal (re-)negotiation of the meaning of Santiago's manly actions. What that process of retrospection suggests, however, is that the sequence of events leading to the death of the marlin, far from being the final word on the old man's masculine prowess, has all along been puzzlingly incomplete, and that the backward glance or retrospect instigated by Santiago is of hitherto unsuspected importance.

After Santiago falls asleep in his shack, Hemingway carefully defers his awakening until four separate groups of spectators have begun to unfold some of the emotional complexities of the old man's return. To be sure, the spectators—the boy who hardly seems to look at all, the fisherman in the water measuring the skeleton, the other fishermen who stand watching, and the proprietor at the Terrace—seem to play insignificant roles. But the very reticence of their response is crucial. We realize first that perceptive members of Santiago's community have no need to question or interpret Santiago's adventure. They know what must have happened with the immediacy embodied in the proprietor's terse "What a fish it was. . . . There has never been such a fish" (123), Manolin's "*He* didn't beat you. Not the fish," and the waiter's wonderfully abridged retelling of the story: "Tiburón. . . . Eshark" (127). These mini-narratives point toward the expert appraisals that need not be elaborated because no expert could possibly interpret the evidence differently. The fish is beyond misinterpretation by those who know the sea (though not by the tourists, as we shall discover). Perhaps more to the point, the size of the fish and the grandeur of Santiago's exploits exceed the boundaries even of expert appraisal. When the proprietor remarks to Manolin, "Those were two fine fish you took yesterday too" (123), the boy replies, "Damn my fish," as if conventional appraisals were suddenly meaningless. Similarly, his "I believe it" might suggest to us the pointlessness and even impropriety of measuring a marlin the like of which has never been measured before. As Carlos Baker writes, "Santiago knows, has known all along, that there are other standards of measurement than feet or inches on steel tape," and Manolin's reactions bear out his debt to his mentor.<sup>18</sup>

But the measurer and the silent group of "Many fishermen" (122) do play important roles. They counter any suspicion that the boy's response is exaggerated or sentimental; indeed, they intensify by their silence and their numbers the grandeur of the marlin precisely because it is their everyday job to catch marlin. It is therefore not the actual size of the marlin that counts

but the fact that even these experienced fishermen feel the need to watch and put a number on the incomprehensibly large marlin (and by implication on Santiago's exploits). Moreover, the fact that the measurer calls to Manolin rather than the other fishermen that the carcass is “eighteen feet from nose to tail” suggests a new respect for the old man's pupil, who can now order with an authority borrowed from his mentor “Let no one disturb him.” The group of watchers by the carcass convey a profound collective respect for Santiago and his deeds that is all the more moving because among the watchers are presumably those who earlier laughed at or pitied Santiago: “many of the fishermen made fun of the old man. . . . Others, of the older fishermen, looked at him and were sad. But they did not show it” (11). The later description of reticent watching thus inverts the earlier scene on the Terrace. The men watch with awe rather than pity or scorn, and it is again testimony to the overwhelming impact of Santiago's deeds that the spectators have gone beyond shame at their behavior into awe at his. A theater of humiliation has become one of respect.

The fact that it is the older fishermen on the Terrace who do not laugh out of greater respect or experience (knowing that the younger men might also have to suffer bad luck) adds one more twist to this scene, which amply repays their earlier esteem. Their lack of show translates now into the stunned restraint that characterizes all the fishermen; their pitying looks at Santiago are transformed into the display that signifies to the gathered crowd of young and old the plenitude of the old man's manhood. The scene ratifies their wisdom; and the fact that their response is shown to be wise confirms that much old wisdom might be learnt from looking at the marlin's carcass. Part of the emotional complexity of this simple scene lies in the fact that those who earlier scorned Santiago are now forced to look differently through the eyes of their wiser elders. They repeat, in fact, the look-without-show that the older fishermen practiced on the terrace and that Santiago models for us as he “looked back” at the marlin and then leaves it for others to discover and celebrate. Even more subtly, Hemingway introduces us to the skeleton-watchers—Manolin, the proprietor, the fishermen—after their vigil has begun. Since the narrative does not record the beginning of their watching nor whatever variety of responses might have been theirs initially, it gives the impression that the period of watching has been going on for an indeterminately long time. It forecloses any question about why the trophy-skeleton should be gazed at; it merely registers the fact that the trophy has been and is being gazed at by those who have already read the signs and who have had their early differences of opinion about Santiago, transformed into unanimity. Awed watching, the narrative maneuvers us into believing, is the only appropriate response because it is the only response the narrative describes.

One emotion the narrative makes available to us at this moment is thus satisfaction that the doubters have been so effectively silenced—a satisfaction doubled because the solemnity of all the watchers at the scene precludes even the need to ridicule those who earlier scorned the old man. We only know to feel that satisfaction, however, because of a more compelling identification with those experts who stand stunned into silence. We interpret their silence as awe because we are familiar with the details of the old man's exploits and can therefore confirm the legitimacy of their response. We have experienced the struggle whose marks the men of Santiago's community endeavor to read, and know beforehand that this is the "biggest fish that [Santiago] had ever seen and bigger than he had ever heard of" (63). Yet there is a sense in which the communal response nonetheless confirms the legitimacy of ours. Though we come to the final scenes as expert witnesses of Santiago's adventure (if not of the sea), we lack precisely what the crowd of spectators possess in abundance: the shared sense of expert knowledge and the consequent ability to forge a communal appraisal of the marlin's significance. While on first reading the text we have no particular reason to disbelieve Santiago's impression that it is the "biggest fish that he had ever seen," we also have no reason to believe that despite his age and experience a bigger one could not have been seen or heard of elsewhere. The proprietor's statement, the measurement of the skeleton, and the crowd's silence do not disclose additional information, but they do inspire us with the confidence of an expert consensus that we, knowing the whole story, can share. In this respect, my argument completely reverses Rovit's claim that a select few among Santiago's fellows can interpret the meaning of his quest to future generations. It would seem more likely that readers might not trust the mythopoetic significance of the quest until expert witnesses have retrospectively guaranteed its extraordinary nature. We see the true extent of the old man's strangeness only when his peers fall dramatically silent; and only their evaluations persuade us that his experience is worthy of evaluation.

One consequence of this short but crucial interval before Santiago awakes is that we awaken to a collective sense of the old man's achievements. What makes Hemingway's tactic so subtle is that he effects a considerable increase in emotional intensity by repeating what we already know; and the fact that Santiago's community repeats what we know disguises our new orientation from a single to a communal perspective. Signs of that change can be found, however, in the tourists' glances and interpretations that complete the novella. Though the (presumably American) tourists see exactly what Santiago and his peers see—the "great long white spine with a huge tail at the end"—the man and woman insist on promulgating a complete misinterpretation of the marlin. Failing to understand the waiter's explanation, the woman comments, "I didn't know sharks had such handsome, beautifully formed

tails,” which receives only a dull-witted “I didn’t either” from her companion. We are suddenly situated within a tangle of (mis)interpretive gestures. The tourists cannot understand the waiter’s language or the iconography of great fish, though they do agree (mistakenly) with each other. Like the prey of the Portuguese man-of-war, they are taken in by an aesthetic experience removed from pragmatic reality. Unlike the fishermen who once laughed at Santiago, moreover, they have no way of correcting their misjudgment. They represent a boundary condition in the spectrum of fictive audiences that takes us from the wise, older fishermen to the impetuously scornful (but educable) younger ones and thence to the tourists who are satisfied with the wrong explanation. The tourists’ downfall, curiously, is their having to ask for an explanation. The logic of the language of fish and fishing is that it need not be articulated. The question (“What’s that?”) reveals their lack of the kind of practical experience that frees the members of Santiago’s community from having to ask or explain at length the significance of the fish.

A reader might legitimately feel a sense of loss as the numinous quality of Santiago’s exploits fades so quickly into dull-wittedness and error. To do so, however, merely confirms and celebrates the difference between tourist and reader. We know that difference in the rapidity with which we understand the waiter’s little tale and in the vapidly we remark in the tourists’ easy acquiescence to a faulty solution. (In case we speak no Spanish, the narrator even explains that the waiter was “meaning to explain what had happened.”) But it is not that the tourists stand as a warning to identify a role we must refuse or a role poor readers might unwittingly enact, for the tourists are not just poor readers. They are simply wrong. The marlin is not a shark. Though we might fail in more abstruse matters like understanding the motivations of a group of silent fishermen or reaching agreement about the moral significance of Santiago’s quest, we cannot possibly miss the tourists’ simple error, see it as anything but an error, or fail to make the simplest possible substitution of marlin for shark. That righting of error is surprisingly crucial to the reader’s role in the final scene of the novella. Like Hemingway’s earlier almost invisible iteration of what we already know, this scene works so brilliantly because we are placed in a position of already having made the correct substitution. The reader is helpless to make the wrong decision because the scene so successfully masks the fact that a decision is being made. The scene seems to confirm an ethos of interpretive certitude not by asserting the possibility of correct reading but by withdrawing any question of or even any need to articulate the problem of incorrect reading. As readers of faulty readers, we are barely aware of what we have learnt in order to read the bones accurately.

One effect of this nearly impalpable act of reading is that we find ourselves seeming to enact the role of the fishermen, who also as the very premise of their knowing need not articulate or even consciously bring to



mind their comprehension of Santiago's struggle. Like the fishermen, we are sufficiently expert to disparage the inexpert tourists without even considering the sources or manner of our expertise. We share the waiter's ability to make "Tiburón. . . Eshark" signify as an adequate account of Santiago's struggles. We share the fishermen's ability to look pragmatically at the whole skeleton and the whole story to which it refers rather than confining its handsome tail to a purely aesthetic domain. In the process, we step without really knowing it into a situation where secure knowledge is the condition of the kind of communal experience Hemingway describes. Nonetheless, enough points of difference remain between reader and fisherman to make that security suspect. The fishermen, for instance, read our narrative in reverse: we experience the gradual stripping of the carcass and see the bones as its outcome; they see the bones and read back to what must have happened. And part of what makes the fishermen's stunned tribute to Santiago's exploits so emotionally satisfying to the reader is the abruptness of their response. They act as an emotional exclamation point by immediately confirming the responses that have accumulated for us over the course of the narrative. And they do so by reading, as it were, the bare bones of the fish. Few readers without benefit of the narrative could hope to emulate their skill. Having read the narrative and being in a privileged position to confirm their insight, however, we assume that we can read the bones as well as or better than they. Our relationship to the fishermen's expertise is thus managed by a kind of narrative sleight of hand. The structure of the narrative demands that the fishermen reach their conclusions quite differently from the reader. Our knowing that the fishermen are right, however, disguises the difference in their interpretive experience and in their textual intervention as bone-readers. Difference is experienced as a double affirmation of what really counts: Santiago's heroism.

Like the audience of fishermen whose startlingly different response we read, oddly, as if it were our own, the trophy-sign is put into play as an enigmatic but important component of our negotiation of the tourists' error. As we have seen, the very presence of the trophy poses a dilemma because it runs contrary to the logic that men discover themselves in isolation. Yet by subtly maneuvering us to identify the egregious mistake of the tourists, the narrative asks us to respond to the sign as though it carried the real meaning of the quest. We do not pause to think as we silently correct the tourists that the sign is suspect because it displaces into metaphor the original purity of Santiago's actions, or that it is in fact the tourists who do most to raise to consciousness the metaphoricity of the trophy by showing how easily it can be (mis)interpreted. This is the case partly because we do not pause to think through the implications of or to think that we even are correcting the tourists. Our roles as observers and interpreters barely register as significant; the tourists' error seems self-evident; and for that reason our confident ability to

know the true meaning of the bones (by virtue of which we know the tourists' error) passes unchallenged. We are invited against our better intellectual selves into an invisible alliance with the sign that threatens to undo a man's essential autonomy, but in such a way that we read the sign as being identical with whatever makes a man. The “great long white spine” is of course a marlin and not a shark; it is naturally the consequence of a man's great courage; it is Santiago's backbone against the tourists' spinelessness: these or other similar assumptions are what must structure our reading experience in the act of writing off the tourists. We simply expunge—because we know so well—the process of reading that brings us to this act of representation and thus erase from our experience of the text the metaphoricity of the trophy-sign. It is only when we articulate these final acts of reading that we begin to be aware of the potential metaphorical freeplay that opens in the space between the signifier (the bones) and the signified (the sequence of heroic exploits that cause it to signify), and thus begin to ponder the puzzle of why Santiago needs to haul back a trophy to his manhood at all.

My argument suggests that after Santiago's return the narrative compels the reader toward a profoundly satisfying emotional resolution by closing gaps between readers and fishermen and between the reader and the sign, and persuading us that the trophy-sign is identical with and exchangeable for the man. Problematic as it is to a theoretical understanding of Hemingway's concept of manhood, the sign is necessary to a resolution of the reader's experience of the text. The narrative invites us to watch, admire, and judge the trophy and the fishermen's responses to the trophy while Santiago lies sleeping in his shack, thus appearing to solve at a single stroke the dilemma of how the nontheatrical actions of a man off alone can be understood as self-dramatization, and how crucial acts of self-dramatization can be masked by the signs that represent them. The trophy-sign allows Santiago's actions to be retrospectively deemed and now judged as a performance without his ever appearing on stage. It allows us to preserve the illusion of Santiago's heroic independence. And, as we join the other fishermen in a collective appreciation of a man's exploits, the narrative “pays off” with a rare emotional satisfaction all the more striking for being constructed out of one's solitary experience of a solitary man's adventure.

Yet the very strategy that seems designed to preserve the old man's lonely courage—substituting the trophy-skeleton as a trope for Santiago's offstage self—is the one that reveals the narrative's profound emotional and thematic debt to the presence of audiences. Nudging us to inquire “Must Santiago return with the mutilated carcass?” these closing scenes hover on the edge of making us retrospectively aware that our firsthand and ostensibly unshaped experience of Santiago's exploits has been something of a ploy to repress our activities as readers. It appears, in fact, that our

firsthand experience of Santiago's deeds can be further enriched and made more meaningful by reprising and reviewing the same information through the eyes of others and that we and the trophy-sign and the late fictive audiences are vital to the shaping and finalizing of Santiago's manhood. By this logic, the concept of a quintessential male performing unstaged actions uncompromised by metaphoric trophies substituting for manhood disappears. The final scenes represent a crucial supplement to what seemed initially a whole and perfect narrative of heroic conduct, revealing the story of Santiago's solitary heroism to have been after all incomplete and his manhood not final or self-evident at all.

As we saw early in this chapter, suspicious readers (like Benson, Rosenfield, Rahv, and many others) have often fuzzily registered their experience as "manipulation," as if they were aware that they have been invited to play a role without quite being able to articulate it. Readers like this experience the text as an exhibit: a rhetorical and artful (rather than artistic) attempt to persuade them of a significance that Hemingway can no longer produce as a simply natural, immanent, and undramatized consequence of his fiction. The problem with the novella is that it is deeply rhetorical; and its rhetoricity is a problem because the primitive simplicity characterizing a real man is not supposed to be rhetorical. Simplicity of style and simplicity of (male) character should both preclude rhetoricity. These interpretations are correct insofar as Hemingway's text theatrically exploits its own processes of construction, leading the reader to experience Santiago's heroism relatively unchallenged before in its closing scenes revealing what seemed to be a direct simplicity of style as a subterfuge and the reader's first-time experience as problematic. But the problematic of the first-time reading, I have argued, need not be a problem; the final scenes can, in other words, *restore* to our imaginations a powerfully emotional sense of a theatrical and rhetorical construction of manhood. In this reading, "manipulation" loses its negative connotations and becomes the strategy through which one begins to recognize Hemingway's delicate grasp of manhood-fashioning.

Santiago may then be "perfectly male" and the "quintessential hero of Hemingway's fiction" but my account of how the narrative seeks to shape spectatorial roles for the reader ironically reverses those claims.<sup>19</sup> Santiago, I contend, is quintessential Hemingway insofar as his exploits take place in anticipation of and before the actual or implied presence of an audience. Santiago's and the narrator's insistence that the old man is alone serves to make us aware of how we fulfill the role Santiago seems to feel lacking; and the multiple audiences in the novella's finale guarantee, and urge us to guarantee, the significance of actions that neither seem perfectly complete nor attest to the perfect completeness of Santiago's manliness. It is that which Santiago's deeds ostensibly lack—an audience—that the novella succeeds so well in

manufacturing. As Philip Toynbee notes in his criticism of the book being “doctor-bait, professor-bait,” there is a powerful sense in which the novella throughout invites and guides our responses, though Toynbee sees the return of the reader as alarmingly decentering the authentic presentation of a manly hero. But the logic of a theatrical representation of manhood, which I have argued characterizes Hemingway’s questioning approach to the construction of masculinity from the beginning of his work, reverses this criticism. *The Old Man and the Sea* composes a studied reinscription of the function of audiences. And its corollary, the undermining of a concept of masculinity beyond the purview of an evaluating audience, implies a work that is—against all the odds—deeply imbued with a theatrical fashioning of manhood.

NOTES

1. Hemingway, *In Our Time*, 65. This work will hereinafter be cited parenthetically by page number in the text.
2. Benson, 30; Rovit, 37; Baker, *Writer as Artist*, 156.
3. Joseph M. Flora, *Hemingway’s Nick Adams* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 157.
4. Young, 19; Baker, *Writer as Artist*, 127; Broer, 39, 46, 44.
5. Broer, 46, 43.
6. *Ibid.*, 48, 49, 51.
7. Peter Schwenger, *Phallic Critiques* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), 46. The direct context of Schwenger’s comment here is Hemingway’s “A Way You’ll Never Be.”
8. Young, 96; Arvin R. Wells, “A Ritual of Transfiguration: *The Old Man and the Sea*,” in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of “The Old Man and the Sea,”* ed. Katharine T. Jobes (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 56; Delmore Schwartz, “*The Old Man and the Sea* and the American Dream,” in ed. Jobes, 98; Joseph Waldmeir, “*Confiteor Hominem: Ernest Hemingway’s Religion of Man*,” in *Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters*, vol. 42 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1957), 146; Robert P. Weeks, “Fakery in *The Old Man and the Sea*,” in ed. Jobes, 34; Nemi D’Agostino, “The Later Hemingway,” in ed. Jobes, 109; Claire Rosenfield, “New World, Old Myths,” in ed. Jobes, 51. The list could be extended. According to J. Bakker, “Santiago is the Hemingway hero” whose “ultimate satisfaction lies in the fact that he has asserted his manhood in the face of insuperable obstacles,” despite the “falseness” in the story. Richard Hovey remarks that “we have something of the story as before: a hunt after big game, a test of manly courage, a proof of grace under pressure, and a theme like that of ‘The Undeclared.’” Hovey, too, regrets that the stripped-down narrative results in unfortunate oversimplifications, for “the hero this time is for the most part uninvolved with any person other than himself.” And Jackson J. Benson argues that the “primitive simplicity of Santiago must be felt as a kind of hypocrisy expressed by an author who seems to be trying to manipulate his audience.” Bakker, 229, 232, 231; Hovey, 191; Benson, 185.
9. Philip Toynbee, “Hemingway,” in ed. Jobes, 87, 88.
10. Philip Rahv, “Hemingway in the 1950’s,” in ed. Jobes, 111.
11. Ernest Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea* (New York: Scribner’s, 1950), 66. This work will hereinafter be cited parenthetically by page number in the text.

12. Robert P. Weeks, "Fakery in *The Old Man and the Sea*," in ed. Jobes, 40. Weeks derides fakeries such as the fact that Santiago sees stars that cannot be seen, endures the struggle with the marlin for three impossibly fatiguing days, and knows from the first touches on the bait that the marlin is a male.

13. Rovit, 90.

14. Hemingway, *Bell*, 33.

15. Brenner, 177.

16. Rovit, 90.

17. Brenner, 180, 178.

18. Baker, *Writer as Artist*, 297.

19. Benson, 176; Schwartz, 98.

EDWARD O. AKO

*Ernest Hemingway, Derek Walcott,  
and Old Men of the Sea*

The sea and the island appear as elemental divine forces against which man is pitted to survive. Afa, the bravest of the fishermen, is a captain Ahab, an old man of the sea who seeks by challenging God.

—Bruce King, *The New English Literatures*

At first sight, the browsing reader may be tempted to think that besides the fact that Ernest Hemingway and Derek Walcott were Nobel Prize winners for literature, they have nothing else in common. They belong to different literary generations and traditions: the one to the American postwar literary scene, the other to the post-World War II generation of Caribbean writers. The one is a white Anglo-Saxon protestant, the other, a West Indian mongrel.

This sentiment is strengthened when it occurs in most studies of Walcott's *The Sea at Dauphin* (1954). Critics hasten to add that the obvious influence is Synge's *Riders to the Sea*.<sup>1</sup> Walcott himself also strengthens this feeling when he states that when he

read Synge's *Riders to the Sea*, [he] realized what [Synge] had attempted to do with the language of the Irish. He had taken a fishing port kind of language and gotten beauty out of it, a beat, something lyrical. Now that was inspiring and the obvious model for *The Sea at Dauphin*. (Breslin 85)

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Be that as it may, we are not in this essay concerned with what the dramatist has stated as his source of influence, his inspiration. Rather, we are interested in exploring what seems to us to be interesting parallels or analogies between Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952) and Walcott's *The Sea at Dauphin* (1954).<sup>2</sup>

Concerning literary influences and analogies, Francois Jost in *Introduction to Comparative Literature* reminds us that

[a] study in influences or analogies is a species of literary research that focuses upon the interactions and resemblances between two or more national literatures, works, or authors, or upon the particular function of certain personalities in the transmission of various literary doctrines or techniques. (33)

There is, however, a difference between literary analogies and literary influences. There can be talk of analogies or parallelisms or affinities if writers in comparable social circumstances produce works which exhibit the same literary moods though they may not be acquainted with each other's works. Even when the social circumstances are not the same, affinities can still be found between the works. Thus, affinities, as A. Owen Aldridge notes, "consist in resemblances in style, structure, mood or idea between two works which have no other necessary connection" (145). Our task, therefore, will consist in establishing the various resemblances between the two works by Hemingway and Walcott. We intend to lay particular emphasis on the comparable socio-historical environments, characterization, and mood or idea.

We will begin by examining the socio-historical environments or worlds which begat the two literary works: the America of the 1920s and the situation in the Caribbean. For each of the two areas, the most important factors that moulded attitudes was, in the one case, World War I, and in the other, slavery and colonialism.

Literary historians have established that the writers of the Lost Generation: F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, E. E. Cummings, etc., were generally born between 1891 and 1905, thus spanning both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They were therefore in their teens when the First World War broke out, and many participated in noncombatant positions in Italy and in France. The war turned out to be different from all that their parents had told them, as they saw their friends, acquaintances, and loved ones fall "ungloriously" on the battlefield. This, for the youth, was an act of betrayal by the older generation which they could, of course, no longer trust. Revolt against this betrayal took various forms, one of them being an espousal of all the values represented by their parents.

Malcolm Cowley best explains why this generation was declared by Gertrude Stein as “lost.” For Cowley,

[i]t was lost because its training had prepared it for another world than existed after the war (and because the war prepared it only for travel and excitement). *It was lost because it tried to live in exile. . . .* The generation belonged to a period of *transition* from values already fixed to values *that had to be created*. Its members began writing for magazines with names like *Transition*, *Broom* (to make a clean sweep of it), *1924*, *This Quarter* (existing in the pure present), *S4N*, *Secession*. They were *seceding from the old* and yet could *adhere to nothing new*. They groped their way toward another scheme of life, *as yet undefined*. In the midst of their doubts and uneasy gestures of defiance they felt homesick for the certainties of childhood. (*Exiles Return* 9; my emphasis)

And so, the United States was considered a culturally barren land, an area that could not nurture and sustain the production of the finer things in life. As Harold Stearns put it in *Civilization in the United States* (1922), “The most amusing and pathetic fact in the social life of America today is its emotional and aesthetic starvation” (Allen 191), and James Truslow Adams voiced the feelings of many when he said, “I am wondering, as a personal but practical question, just how and where a man of moderate means who prefers simple living, simple pleasures, and the things of the mind, is going to be able to live any longer in his native country” (Allen 198). The answer, of course, was that this was not going to be possible because the young Americans of this period were fed on a curriculum that was geared towards making them “homeless citizens of the world” (Cowley 27), were being exhorted into entering that “international republic of learning whose traditions are those of Athens, Florence, Paris, Berlin and Oxford” (Cowley 28). Again, Cowley, one of the actors of this period, states:

Everywhere, in every department of cultural life, Europe offered the models to imitate—in painting, composing, philosophy, folk music, folk drinking, the drama, sex, politics, national consciousness—indeed, some doubted that this country was even a nation. *It had no traditions except the fatal tradition of the pioneer.* (Cowley 94; my emphasis)

Thus, the “psychological” or “unreasonable” wound inflicted by World War I, the fact that the youth found themselves in a world from which they



were not prepared, that the education they received only helped to deepen their deracination and to reinforce their homelessness, coupled with Hemingway's personal family tragedy, pushed him to create characters who showed courage in the face of adversity, who realised that they had to hold tight against pain, because they could count on themselves and on no one else.

The transatlantic slave trade that saw the removal of millions of Africans from their homeland to the New World created a number of psychosocial situations during and after the "middle passage." The slave trade became a tremendously important factor in European economic life, and as the colonies in the New World increased, there was a pressing need for labour to do the job of clearing the land and tilling the fields, first for tobacco and later for sugar. The fierce rivalry among European countries for these colonies—notably Spain, France, and England—brought about the extermination of the aborigines of these islands (the Arawak Indians) by the pirates, who were recruited by the various powers, and also by the new diseases introduced by the Europeans.

With the founding of the Dutch West India Company in 1640, Spain lost all claim to exclusive control over the islands, and as tobacco gave way to sugar plantations, the problem of labour became acute and, consequently, there arose the need for more slaves.<sup>3</sup> However, when England and the United States outlawed the slave trade in 1807, English plantation owners turned to India and China for indentured workers. Eventually, when slavery was outlawed in 1838, the rainbow of humanity in these islands—people especially west from Africa and India—were condemned to live together and form a nation. The problem, though, was that for most of the people, "home" was somewhere else, not the West Indies. They tended, at various times and depending on world events, to identify either with England, with Africa, or with India. The sad part, of course, was that when they went to any of these places, they were not received as native sons; they did not belong.<sup>4</sup>

The curriculum in the islands was geared towards creating in the colonials a sense of alienation, a perpetual sense of exile and of homelessness. As Amon Saba Saakana so well puts it,

[s]econdary school education had its own purpose: to foster a sense of belonging to Britain and to perpetuate that country's cultural traditions, thereby creating indigenous elite, into Caribbean societies.... English History and English took a prominent role on the syllabus. With history the young Caribbean intellectual would be familiar with all the colonial details of Britain's imperial glory, and in literature the model of the English poem or short story, with its quaint language and

images, would foster in the youths an inner *longing and dream to migrate away from the islands of their birth*. By providing a false consciousness, hence a divided self, Britain was creating an artificial crisis in personality. (13; my emphasis)

Unlike the French, who made it clear in the history books for the colonials that their ancestors were the Gauls, Saakana states that the British were subtler: for example, they simply “removed any historical record of the existence of African society before the period of colonization. Consequently, the Afro- and Indo-Caribbean intelligentsia were mental migrants, yet physically stationed in a different environment” (102). He adds that “the logical development of mental exile is physical exile. Many Caribbean writers have, therefore, spent a great deal of their lives in Europe, emotionally and physically” (102).

This feeling of alienation, this tendency to long for other shores, was expressed by V. S. Naipaul in his much quoted pronouncement in *The Middle Passage*, in which he asserts:

Nothing was created in the British West Indies, no civilization as in Spanish America, no great revolution as in Haiti or the American colonies. There were only plantations, prosperity, decline, neglect: the size of the islands called for nothing else. . . . History is built around achievement and creation, and nothing was created in the West Indies. . . . When I was in the fourth form I wrote a vow . . . to leave within five years . . . and for many years afterwards in England . . . I had been awakened by the nightmare that I was back in tropical Trinidad. (8–11)

As we have already indicated, neither India nor Africa nor London was “home”; if anything, the Londoners from the West Indies could only be at best, as Samuel Selvon has indicated, “lonely Londoners.”<sup>5</sup> The ideal thing in such a situation, the rational thing to do in such a situation, because one can expect succour from nowhere, is to rely on oneself, to face every passing day with courage and determination. These, in effect, are the qualities with which Derek Walcott endows his fishermen, especially Afa. In his very important essay “The Muse of History,” Walcott more or less declared his independence when he said, “I felt both a rejection and a fear of Europe while I learned its poetry. . . . I would not longer wish to visit Europe as if I could repossess it than I wish to visit Africa for that purpose” (Coombs 26). He further adds, “I say to the ancestor who sold me, and to the ancestor who bought me, I have no father, I want no such father, although I can understand you, black ghost, white ghost” (27).

In “The Marlin and the Shark: A Note on *The Old Man and the Sea*,” Keichi Harada notes that

from such great literary works as the *Odyssey*, *Moby Dick* or “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” a great number of writers have used the sea as something that reveals deep realities of man and the universe. It is a place where man’s destiny and identity are sought after, dramatized, clarified. (269)

In *The Old Man and the Sea*, Santiago, the old fisherman, has been at sea in the Gulf Stream off the coast of Cuba for very many days without catching a fish. Alone at sea, his sail seems to bear the “flag of permanent defeat” (9) though his eyes, the reflection of his innermost self, bore the “same color as the sea and were cheerful and undefeated” (10). A widower, Santiago is convinced that he has the worst form of bad luck, of *salao*, but he still carries himself with pride and dignity. He will not borrow, for he knows that borrowing later leads to begging. The sea is the theatre where Santiago must act out his life; or better still, it is the world promising what it will not give, taking back with one hand what it gives with the other, kind and beautiful, yet cruel, at once *la mar* and *el mar*. And as John Thieme notes, the sea “comes to signify the existential condition and going to sea a primal encounter with death” (52).

The fish that Santiago catches, the sale of which would have taken him away from his condition of poverty, at least temporarily, never comes to be, for by the time he gets to the shore, sharks have eaten all the fish, and all he has to show is the skeleton of the marlin. His two bleeding hands, broken harpoon, and broken back are a testimony of the heroic battle he had to wage with both the mysterious fish and the killer sharks. The old man, alone at sea, ends up talking to himself, calling on his hands and head not to let him down and, above all, saying over and over again, so much so that it becomes a refrain: “I wish I had the boy. To help me and to see this” (48).<sup>6</sup>

Santiago, who is not religious and who, like Catherine Barkley in *A Farewell to Arms*, could equally have described himself as a “rotten Catholic,” nevertheless decides to summon the help of the almighty by saying “ten Our Fathers” and “ten Hail Marys” (64), albeit mechanically. Not only do the prayers not help, but the pain in his hands and body increases, as if to remind him that he is alone and should expect succour from nowhere. Not that the old man does not know that he can count only on himself. He compares himself—or rather, his heart—to that of a turtle whose heart will keep beating long after the turtle has been cut into pieces (32). He is an epitome of courage in the face of adversity. Talking to the fish and to himself, he says:

“But I will show him what a man can do and what a man endures. I told the boy I was a strange old man. . . . Now is when I must prove it.” (66)

And the narrator adds:

The thousand times that he had proved it meant nothing. Now he was proving it again. Each time was a new time and he never thought about the past when he was doing it. (66)

Santiago, who started his struggle with the fish at noon, continued till late, and “by midnight he fought and this time he knew the fight was useless” (118). That notwithstanding, he was still buttressed by his philosophy of life, which is that “man is not made for defeat. A man may be destroyed but not defeated” (103). And so, in spite of the ordeal he has gone through, or perhaps because “every day is a new day” (32), he decides to take a well-earned rest before going back out to sea, this time with the boy Manolin.

Derek Walcott’s Afa, like Santiago, is also a lonely, widowed fisherman who has to confront the unpredictable sea on a daily basis, not only because if a man does not work he will starve but also because even when a man does work, it is not certain that he will be compensated for his effort (45). Gritty tempered, with no love, child, dog, or friend, he is angry not only because the land at Dauphin is an arid dry area that cannot sustain life, where food cannot be grown for children, but also because a man “can’t catch enough fish to sell and buy a new sail” (53). Unlike those who farm on solid ground, the fisherman has to be constantly on the move, because “sea-food does move” (53).

And that partly explains the predicament of the fishermen, for the brave among them—Habal, Raphael, Anneles, Boileau, and St. Pierre—are all in the bottom of the sea serving as food for the fish. And Afa cannot understand “why a man must work so hard / To eat for worm to get more fat” (61), why a man “can break your back for seventy cane reap times / And then is ashes” (68). That the “basin men call the sea never gets red” because of men’s blood it has (61) is simply indicative of the indifference and heartlessness of the sea and, by extension, of the universe in general.

For Afa and for the people of Dauphin, where poverty is the norm, where there seems to be a conspiracy between God, the church, and the colonial system to keep the people perpetually in poverty, life is like a “net in your hand to catch the wind” (66). He puts it thus:

God is a white man. The sky is his blue eye. His spit on Dauphin people is the sea. (61)<sup>7</sup>

And the ordinary peasants of Dauphin, who do not yet seem to have a proper grasp of their condition, spend what little money they have to “build the church and pray” (68), though there are dirty women and children everywhere. And the dirt and prayers are not only characteristic of Dauphin life, but also of the life in the Canaries and in Micoud. God and his extensions, the church and priests, are nothing but predators. Afa, in perhaps one of his most virulent outbursts, says:

God! (*He turns and empties the fish pail on the sand*). That is God! A big fish eating small ones. And the sea, that thing there, not a priest white, pale like a shark belly we must feel until we dead, not no young Frenchman lock up in a church don't know coolie man dying because he will not beg! . . . (*He turns and tears a scapular from his neck and hurls it to the ground*). Mi! Mi! Pick it up, *père*, is not ours. This scapular not Dauphin own! Dauphin people build the church and pray and feed you, not their own people, and look at Dauphin! *Gadez lui!* Look at it! You see? Poverty, dirty woman, dirty children, where all the prayers? Where all the money a man should have and friends when his skin old? (73)

The worldviews expressed in the novel and in the play intersect at several points, and the protagonists, through whom these worldviews are dramatized, have much in common. Afa, like Santiago, is a lonely fisherman without a woman. He owns nothing and has just the basics in life for survival. The worlds of both works can be described as worlds without women. In *The Old Man and the Sea*, there are virtually no women involved in the action of the novella. And in *The Sea at Dauphin*, Paul Breslin reminds us that

women appear briefly and anonymously, entering as a chorus and speaking only a few individual lines assigned to a “woman,” “another” and “first woman.” Like so many of Walcott’s plays since, *The Sea at Dauphin* depicts a *predominantly male experience*. (86; my emphasis)

Again, like Santiago, Afa is not religious. His rejection of God and Catholicism goes further than the former’s because he associates all the forms of oppression with the white man and the colonial system. John Thieme states that

[t]he ocean is an element which offers release from the constraints of the social world of the island, and for the fishermen it becomes a *religion which is preferable to the Catholicism that controls* the lives of the St. Lucian peasantry. (53; my emphasis)

We feel that Thieme overstates the case. It is not the ocean that becomes a religion, but man, for both Afa and Santiago know that they can count only on themselves, that man has replaced God at the center of the universe.

In pointing out that there is obvious Christological imagery in *The Old Man and the Sea*, John Killinger notes that Santiago may be a kind of Christ. However, he hastens to add: "If he is, it is . . . the humanistic Christ in a world without God, not the metaphysical Christ" (80).

And it is because of the unjust and oppressive order in which they and their ilk find themselves that they have to summon the courage to confront the challenges of everyday life. In spite of everything, in spite of the impending death that is associated with their profession, they still hold their heads high, even when they know that a "man can only lose." As Philip Young notes, all they do is ensure that a man "can dominate in such a way that his loss has dignity, itself a victory" (99). And that is why, in *The Sea at Dauphin*, in spite of the fact that the East Indian fisherman Hounakin is drowned, Augustin and the other fishermen still prepare to confront the unpredictable sea.

Afa, looking at the sea, ruminates: "Last year Annelles, and this year Hounakin. . . . And one day, tomorrow, you Gacia, and me. . . . And Augustin. . ." (80). In spite of this, Afa and Gacia have to set out "tomorrow again. Un autre demain" (80). But unlike in the past, they will go fishing this time accompanied by the young boy Jules, who will become a kind of disciple who will have to learn not only fishing but also, and above all, the art of living in a far-from-perfect world.

In *The Old Man and the Sea*, we see this passing on of the legacy between Santiago and Manolin, what Philip Young calls the handing "over of experience and craft" (103). To the tired Santiago the boy Manolin says, "Now we fish together again," and as he objects, saying he no longer has luck, the boy tells him, "I do not care. I caught two yesterday. But we will fish together now for I still have much to learn" (125). A little further in the narrative he says, "You must get well fast for there is much that I can learn and you can teach me everything. How much did you suffer? (126).

In the end, for Santiago and for Afa, it all sums up to the fact that man has "to face the truth, to acknowledge his fundamental aloneness and solitude in a universe indifferent to his fate. . . . Man must accept the responsibility for himself and the fact that only by using his own powers can he give meaning to his life" (65).

## NOTES

1. For example, Bruce King in *West Indian Literature* states: "In *The Sea at Dauphin* . . . the obvious acknowledged model is J. M. Synge's *Riders to the Sea*. But Walcott's naturalistic play is grounded in the life and language of St. Lucian fishermen and has its own authentic

force" (155). In *The New English Literatures: Cultural Nationalism in a Changing World* (126), he makes the same point. John Thieme in *Derek Walcott* also states that *The Sea at Dauphin* remakes *Riders to the Sea* (37).

2. It should be stated, though, that Walcott reviewed books by a number of American authors, amongst whom were James Baldwin, Norman Mailer, Muriel Spark, and Ernest Hemingway. However, we do not know which of Hemingway's works was reviewed; it could very well have been *The Old Man and the Sea*. For now, our research has not yet provided us with an answer. Hemingway was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature the year Walcott published *The Sea at Dauphin* (1954).

3. For more on this, see John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans* (New York: McGraw, 1994).

4. Edward Brathwaite notes in "Timehri" that after his studies in England it was clear that he could not go back; he had to look for a "home" somewhere else. He says, "For me, too, child and scion of this time, there was no going back. Accepting my rootlessness, I applied to work in London, Cambridge, Ceylon, New Delhi, Cairo, Kano, Khartoum, Sierra Leone, Carcassonne, a monastery in Jerusalem. I was a West Indian, rootless man of the world. I could go, belong, everywhere on the world-wide globe. I ended up in a village in Ghana. . . . And I came home to find that I had not really left. That it was still Africa, Africa in the Caribbean. The middle passage had now guessed its end" (Coombs 33-34).

5. Samuel Selvon in his novel *The Lonely Londoners* (1956), which depicts the pathos of Afro- and Indo-Caribbeans in London, has the narrator observing: "Oh what it is and where it is and why it is, no one knows, but to have said: 'I walked on Waterloo Bridge,' 'I rendezvoused at Charing Cross,' 'Piccadilly Circus is my playground,' to say these things, to have lived these things, to have lived in the great city of London, centre of the world" (121).

6. This leitmotif, which only helps to underscore Santiago's loneliness, can be found on pp. 45, 50, 51 and 56.

7. On this point, Nana Wilson Tagoe in *Historical Thought and Literary Representation in West Indian Literature* (1998) says: "In the people's mind and especially in Afa's sea, God, priest and white man are linked in a relentless battering of the folk, so that Afa's curses of the sea are also rather ineffectually curses of God and priest and colonial master" (170).

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## *Chronology*

- 1899 Born July 21 in Oak Park, Illinois, the second of six children of Clarence Edmonds Hemingway, a medical doctor, and Grace Hall Hemingway, a singer and music teacher.
- 1917 Graduates from Oak Park High School; rejected by U.S. Army for service in World War I because of eye injured in boxing; works as cub reporter for *Kansas City Star*.
- 1918 Serves in Italy as Red Cross ambulance driver; suffers severe injury to legs under heavy machine-gun fire; meets and falls in love with nurse Agnes von Kurowsky while recuperating in Milan. She rejects him as too young.
- 1919 Returns to United States.
- 1920–24 Reporter and foreign correspondent for *Toronto Star* and *Star Weekly*.
- 1921 Marries Hadley Richardson; moves to Paris.
- 1922 Reports on Greek–Turkish war for *Toronto Star*. Meets Ezra Pound and Gertrude Stein. Hadley loses all of Hemingway’s unpublished manuscripts on a train.
- 1923 *Three Stories and Ten Poems* published in Paris. Goes to Spain for bullfights in Pamplona; returns to Toronto for birth of son, John Hadley (Bumby) in October.
- 1924 *In Our Time* published in Paris.
- 1925 *In Our Time*, American edition, published; includes fourteen stories that were not in Paris edition. Meets and becomes friends with F. Scott Fitzgerald.

- 1926 *Torrents of Spring* published in May; *The Sun Also Rises* published in October.
- 1927 *Men Without Women* published; contains fourteen short stories. Divorces; marries Pauline Pfeiffer.
- 1928 Moves to Key West, Florida; son Patrick born. Father commits suicide.
- 1929 *A Farewell to Arms* published.
- 1931 Son Gregory Hancock born.
- 1932 *Death in the Afternoon* published.
- 1933 *Winner Take Nothing*, a collection of stories, published. Publishes first of thirty-one articles and stories to appear in *Esquire* during next six years. Goes on safari to Africa.
- 1935 *Green Hills of Africa* published.
- 1936–37 Writes, gives speeches, and raises money for Loyalists in Spanish Civil War; works on propaganda film *The Spanish Earth*.
- 1937 *To Have and Have Not* published. Returns to Spain as war correspondent, on Loyalist side, for North American Newspaper Alliance.
- 1938 *The Fifth Column and the First Forty-Nine Stories* published.
- 1939 Separates from wife and moves to Finca Vigia, a house near Havana, Cuba.
- 1940 *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is published. Divorced; marries Martha Gellhorn. Buys house in Cuba.
- 1942–45 War correspondent in Europe for newspapers and magazines.
- 1944 Begins relationship with news correspondent Mary Welsh. Divorced by wife in December.
- 1946 Marries Mary Welsh in March.
- 1950 *Across the River and Into the Trees* published.
- 1952 *The Old Man and the Sea* published in *Life* magazine.
- 1953 Returns to Africa for safari with Mary.
- 1954 Awarded Nobel Prize for Literature. In January, severely injured in two plane crashes in Africa; reported dead.
- 1959 Health declining; follows bullfights in Spain, where he observes sixtieth birthday.
- 1960 Returns to United States and settles in Ketchum, Idaho.

- 1961 Undergoes electroshock treatment for depression. On June 2, dies at home of self-inflicted gunshot wound.
- 1964 *A Moveable Feast* published.
- 1970 *Islands in the Stream* published.
- 1972 *The Nick Adams Stories* collected in one volume; includes previously unpublished stories and fragments.
- 1986 *The Garden of Eden*, Hemingway's last manuscript, heavily edited and rearranged, published.



## *Contributors*

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