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THE THEME OF DEATH IN ERNEST HEMINGWAY

being a Thesis presented by

Robert Taft Olmstead Jr.

to the University of St. Andrews

in application for the Degree of Bachelor of Philosophy



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Declaration by Adviser

I certify that this Dissertation is the work of Robert Taft Olmstead Jr., that it was composed by him, under my supervision, during the Academical Years 1961-62 and 1962-63; and that Mr. Olmstead has fulfilled the requirements of Ordinance 61 (General No. 23) of the Commissioners under the Universities (Scotland) Act 1889 and of the University Court Ordinance 277 (St. Andrews No. 50).

Adviser.

Declaration.

I hereby declare that the following dissertation has been composed by me, and it has not been accepted in any previous application for a degree.

Robert Taft Olmstead Jr.

Declaration of Qualifications.

I matriculated at Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, in September, 1957 and graduated in June, 1961 with a Bachelor of Arts, magna cum laude, in English.

During the Martinmas and Candlemas terms of the academical year 1961-62 I was a matriculated student at the University of St. Andrews and devoted my whole time to a course of higher study under the guidance of Professor A.F. Falconer. During the Whitsunday term of 1961-62 I was at Yale University where I was engaged on research pertaining to my thesis in the University Library.

During the academical year 1962-63 I was a matriculated student at the University of St. Andrews and devoted my whole time to a course of higher study under the guidance of Professor A.F. Falconer.

FOREWORD

The genesis of this thesis lies in a long and great admiration for the works of Ernest Hemingway and in my belief that the best way to understand and appreciate any one of his pieces of fiction is to examine it within the context of the rest of his work. The organizing principle behind this thesis is an examination of Hemingway's literary achievement from the point of view of the theme of death.

As an examination of Hemingway in depth from the vantage point of one particular aspect of his work, this thesis has had of necessity to be limited in its scope. It is for this reason that certain works of Hemingway, most notably The Old Man and the Sea, are not included, as it was felt that they fell outside the particular area to be covered. In particular do I feel that such a work as The Old Man and the Sea is outside the main tradition of Hemingway's other work, especially in its departure from objective reality, its obvious use of symbolism, and its intrusive religious allegory. It is, to use Nemi D'Agostino's phrase, "a late work by a tired writer."⁽¹⁾

The general plan of the thesis is as follows: Chapter I seeks/

(1) "The Later Hemingway", Nemi D'Agostino Hemingway: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Robert Weeks Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, 1962. p. 159.

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seeks to put Hemingway's fiction in perspective by examining the various factors that have stood in the way of critical appreciation of him; Chapter II is an examination of the Nick Adams stories in which the effect the wound and its knowledge of mortality has on Nick's innocence is demonstrated; Chapter III is devoted to an examination of the Hemingway code of conduct as it is embodied in Death in the Afternoon, an important and often neglected work; Chapter IV is an examination of how Hemingway embodied this code of conduct in his fiction, particularly in The Sun Also Rises and some of his longer stories; Chapter V takes two of Hemingway's major novels, A Farewell to Arms and For Whom the Bell Tolls and demonstrates how Hemingway made use of the theme of death in a full length production; and Chapter VI uses "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" and Across the River and into the Trees to summarize the essential characteristics of Hemingway's fiction and as a demonstration of the conclusion to which the theme of death led Hemingway.

Needless to say this thesis could not have been written without the help of many people. I wish to thank Professor Thomas Bergin, Master of Timothy Dwight College, Yale University, for his kindness in allowing me to stay at/

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at the College while I was engaged in research at the University Library. I owe a particular debt to Mr. Tom Coulson, formerly of St. Andrews University and now at Edinburgh University, for sharing with me his special knowledge of Hemingway and the bullfight. And in particular I wish to thank Professor A.F. Falconer of St. Andrews University for his generous help and advice throughout my career at St. Andrews. Lastly, and for many reasons, I wish to thank my wife.

INTRODUCTION.

In a century in which man has devised more and more ingenious and effective means of killing each other and indulged in two world wars to prove it, one of the curious facts that emerges from even a casual glance at our time is the almost/^{complete} lack of interest in death or the process of dying. To be alive is of necessity to face the possibility of death, and man alone knows consciously that he is going to die, but in spite of this there exists a strange myopia about death in people to-day. Death has in many ways replaced the Victorian tabu on discussions about sex, and while to-day one would be considered narrow-minded to exclude frank discussions on sexual matters from conversation, it is considered perfectly proper to refuse to talk about death, putting down as "morbid" any desire to do so. In place of an honest appraisal of one of the inevitable facts of human existence we have taken refuge in a series of protective platitudes and institutions.

To-day people do not die, they "pass away", and until recently The Christian Science Monitor, one of America's leading newspapers, did not allow the word die to be mentioned/

(1) mentioned in its pages. The funeral parlour has taken over most of the functions pertaining to the dead once performed in the home, and their main task is to make the corpse look as alive as possible. In general we dislike the sight of aged people, and we tend to get rid of them by placing them in "homes" for the aged. To-day it is the custom to emphasize the accidental cause of death - death by mishap, by infection, by disease, as if this could change death from a necessity to an accident. All this has meant, as C.W. Wahl has pointed out, that "we flee from the reality of our eventual deaths with such purpose and persistence and we employ defenses so patently magical and regressive that these would be ludicrously obvious to us if we should employ them to this degree in any other area of human conflict."⁽²⁾

Such a refusal to face honestly the fact of death and the effect the knowledge we have of it has on our life has been reflected in modern literature with its insistence on/

- (1) "Attitudes toward Death in Some Normal and Mentally Ill Populations," Herman Feifel.
The Meaning of Death, ed. Herman Feifel
 McGraw-Hill, New York, 1959. p. 115.
- (2) "The Fear of De-ath," C.W. Wahl
The Meaning of Death, ed. Herman Feifel
 McGraw-Hill, New York, 1959. p. 18.

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on one level of the "happy ending" and on another level with its interest in death only for its violent, sensational aspects and not for its philosophical significance. But surely to be concerned about death is not to be indifferent to life or to deny its value, for an awareness of death, of one's personal mortality, can be one of the prime means of intensifying the pleasures of life and of giving that life purpose and meaning. Whether one regards death as a wall beyond which there is nothing or a doorway to a new life, an awareness of death can be made into a galvanizing force in one's life, urging one on to creativity and forcing one to evaluate the principles by which one lives; death can indeed become the organizing principle of one's life. In the same way the actual process of dying can be a final moment of affirmation, a demonstration of the validity and worth of the life that preceded it. Although we have no control over our birth, we can to some degree control the manner of our death, and even through suicide decide if life is worth living at all.

Ernest Hemingway's interest in, and at times obsession with death has often been noted, but the deep significance death and dying had for him has for the most/

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most part been ignored. Too often the errors of his imitators, with their interest in death for its purely sensational aspects, have been attributed to Hemingway as well. One of the most consistent themes in Hemingway's fiction is that of death, particularly as first discovered through the wound inflicted in the generic Hemingway protagonist, and then appearing as a dominating factor in that protagonist's life as he grows older - the line of descent from Nick Adams to Richard Cantwell is clear and direct. It is a fair estimate to say that the fact of death is the prime determinant behind Hemingway's fiction, influencing both his ethics and his aesthetics. Similarly his fiction demonstrates that for Hemingway the crucial moment in a man's life was his death, the last chance to demonstrate the values by which he had lived. It is the task of this thesis to examine this theme of death as it appears in Ernest Hemingway's fiction and to demonstrate the significance it had for him.

CHAPTER I

A CRITICAL SURVEY.

"There are certain men from whom their contemporaries do not withhold veneration, although their greatness rests on attributes and achievements which are completely foreign to the aims and ideals of the multitude."

Sigmund Freud

"But so simple I am complicated"

For Whom the Bell Tolls

Early on the morning of July 2nd, 1961, in Ketchum, Idaho, Ernest Miller Hemingway took from the gun-rack in the living room his favourite rifle, a double-barreled, silver-inlaid shot-gun, placed the muzzle to his head, and somehow managed to pull the trigger; in one tragic and paradoxical moment Hemingway had ended what was and is one of the more brilliant and controversial careers of any American writer. For some forty years Hemingway had dominated modern fiction, both in America and abroad. A man who could be both intelligent and obtuse, generous and vindictive, Hemingway aroused violent likes and dislikes, was constantly involved in feuds, controversies, and adventures, and left behind him a legend that will never be equaled. To some he was "Papa", to others a fraud, but no matter how ambiguous Hemingway appeared to the world, his complete devotion to his personal integrity could never be questioned. His brother Leicester once called him "... one of those rare humans who was truly original";⁽¹⁾ Hemingway was, as Lillian Ross put it, a man who "... had the nerve to be like nobody else on earth."⁽²⁾

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(1) My Brother, Ernest Hemingway, Leicester Hemingway
The World Publishing Co., Cleveland, 1961. p. 14.

(2) Portrait of Hemingway, Lillian Ross
Simon and Schuster, New York, 1961. p. 14.

One of the curious paradoxes of Hemingway's career is that while he was always an enormously popular writer, critical appreciation of him has been on the whole uncomplimentary and erratic in its judgements; there is a lack of any middle ground and a consequent predominance of extreme views. The purpose, then, of this first chapter will be to examine in detail the various factors that have stood in the way of a valid and honest understanding of Hemingway's fiction.

It may ironically prove to be the case that only now that the figure of Hemingway the man is gone will that of Hemingway the artist be understood, for one of the most recognizable features of Hemingway criticism is the degree to which it has been influenced by the personality of the artist. Upon surveying the opinions expressed in the anthology Ernest Hemingway: The Man and His Work, its editor John McCaffery concluded that "... Hemingway the man is at least as important to many of these critics as Hemingway the writer... with only a few exceptions, the personality of the subject has made a profound impact on the critic, and has, in almost every case, affected the tone of the criticism";⁽¹⁾ indeed, he goes on to say, he/

(1) Ernest Hemingway: The Man and his Work, ed John McCaffery, The World Publishing Co., Cleveland, 1950. p. 10.

he suspects his fellow critics of personal spite, of allowing "... Hemingway's peccadillos to serve merely as an excuse to reflect feelings about Hemingway which, in many cases, must have smoldered beneath the surface and which could not be released by the subconscious until convention had provided a convenient excuse. Excellence excites gossip which is a public expression of envy."⁽¹⁾

Regardless of whether or not such a psychological analysis of motives is valid, McCaffery has certainly pointed up one of the principal factors in the critical confusion over Hemingway's artistic merits, a confusion stemming in large part from the fact that critics have allowed their personal likes and dislikes of Hemingway the man to get in the way of their appreciation of him as an artist. The severity with which Hemingway's art was condemned because of his actions as a man is surprising.

Here is not the place to go into a biographical recital of the factors in Hemingway's life that went into the development of that unusual personality; however, a number of salient facts can be noted about it that will help to explain why this basic confusion between the man and the artist exists. To begin with Hemingway's life was pre-eminently/

(1) Ernest Hemingway: The Man and his Work, ed. John McCaffery, The World Publishing Co., Cleveland, 1950, p. 12.

pre-eminently one of action, the life of a man who sought adventure and violence in three wars and travelled on nearly every continent to find it; his was the life of the out-of-doors, not of the study, and as such it often conflicted with the stereotype of the serious artist. Joseph Warren Beach's remark that "It is painful to find that a serious artist, in the fullness of maturity and fame, can be such a boyish and bearish show-off"⁽¹⁾ is a good indication of the extent to which Hemingway offended against the critics' idea of how a serious author should conduct himself. Moreover, Hemingway was never one to hide his light under a basket, and he freely expressed his opinions, sometimes unwisely; he was a man of tremendous ego who considered himself to be in competition with all other writers, living or dead, and he felt that he had bettered quite a few of them in his time. Finally, Hemingway had a great flair to him, a certain way of doing and saying things that naturally drew public attention to him. There was a Byronic quality about him which could not help but appeal to the public's imagination, an appeal particularly strong/

(1) "How Do you Like it Now, Gentlemen?", J.W. Beach Hemingway and his Critics, ed. Carlos Baker Hill and Wang, New York, 1961. p. 227.

strong because of his knack of sensing what was "in the air" and crystallizing it in his fiction; it was for this reason so many people readily identified themselves with Hemingway's fictional characters.

The result of this sort of life was the gradual creation of the "Hemingway legend"; like most legends it was partly composed of reality, partly of myth: "The Heroic Hemingway and the Public Hemingway have produced somehow a Legendary Hemingway, an imaginary person who departs from the actual one at some point that is next to impossible to define."⁽¹⁾ By the late 1930's the legend was in full bloom, for these were the years of Hemingway the sportsman, posed grinning over his latest big-game trophy, of Hemingway the columnist, expounding with verve his opinions on any and all topics in the glossy pages of Esquire magazine, and of Hemingway the literary character, fighting with Max Eastman in the office of Scribners over the latter's charge that Hemingway had "false hair" on his chest, to the consternation of Charles Scribner and the delight of the New York newspapers. As a result of these and other escapades Hemingway landed firmly in the public eye - everything he said or did was/

(1) Ernest Hemingway, Philip Young Rhinehart and Co., New York, 1952. p. 119.

was newsworthy, and he became "the gossip columnist's delight."⁽¹⁾ What complicated matters further was the fact that Hemingway not only knew of the legend, he began to believe in it himself; in a way it seemed he was always trying to catch up with a legend only a little bit more fantastic than he himself was: "... the legend engulfed the man and he seemed bent on playing the part of a Hemingway character. He not only allowed but encouraged the world to turn him into a character."⁽²⁾

It is not surprising that one result of this legend was a tremendous popularity with the general reading public, a popularity admittedly not based solely on Hemingway's merits as an artist. In a way, however, it almost seemed as though the critics resented this general popularity, wanting Hemingway to be like, for example, James Joyce - difficult and unappreciated until his genius could be revealed by the knowledgeable critic. One catches, I think, a trace of this sort of feeling in Maxwell Geismar's remark/

(1) McCaffery, p. 12.

(2) Time (July 14, 1961) p. 87.

remark written a year after Hemingway had died: "... during Hemingway's later years the more he became a popular symbol of 'art' ... the more his serious reputation declined - perhaps because he himself no longer appeared to be serious as an artist. Perhaps this was due to the unfortunate persona, or public mask, which Hemingway chose for himself... the benign 'Papa' of American fiction, who, however benign, brooked little interference and less criticism." ⁽¹⁾ Such a statement as this illustrates the great gulf that sometimes existed between the general reading public and the literary critics over Hemingway both during his life and afterwards.

In his Studies in Classic American Literature

D.H. Lawrence cautioned potential critics: "Never trust the artist. Trust the tale. The proper function of the critic is to save the tale from the artist who created it." ⁽²⁾ Unfortunately, in Hemingway's case many critics have forgotten or ignored the importance of maintaining this basic distinction between the tale and its teller and have interpreted much of his work through his personality, either allowing their personal feeling towards the man to influence their judgements or drawing parallels between Hemingway's/

(1) "Was 'Papa' a Truly Great Writer?", Maxwell Geismar
The New York Times Book Review (July 1, 1962). p. 1.

(2) "Studies in Classic American Literature", D.H. Lawrence,
The Shock of Recognition, ed. Edmund Wilson
W.H. Allen Co., London, 1956. p. 909.

Hemingway's life and his work which simply cannot be justified. Those critics who have let personal feeling influence their literary judgement cannot be condoned, but those who have emphasized the auto-biographical elements in Hemingway's fiction have had some justification. That Hemingway's work should closely resemble in many ways the details of his life is not surprising, for one of his basic aesthetic principles was that a writer should write only of those things he knew "truly" (a favourite word of Hemingway's): "A writer's job is to tell the truth," he once said. "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."⁽¹⁾ Thus his fictional characters in many ways resemble him; Philip Young has pointed out that "... it would be hard to think of even an 'auto-biographical' writer... who has given a more exact account of his own personality in the guise of prose fiction."⁽²⁾ In responsible hands the auto-biographical aspects of Hemingway's fiction have been a valuable aid in interpreting it./

(1) Men at War, ed. Ernest Hemingway
Crown Books, New York, 1942. p. xv.

(2) Young, p. 35.

it. However, in doing this the functioning of the creative imagination which transforms the "factual" into the "true" must be taken into consideration. Although based on actual experience, Hemingway's fiction transcends a mere transcription of facts, for ultimately "... every art seeks to mirror the eternal in the temporal, the generic in the specific. For the true artist is an indefatigable seeker... for the 'concrete universal' ",⁽¹⁾ the embodiment of universal meaning within a specific fact. For some the critical formula for approaching Hemingway's fiction has become a simple equation between the man and his work: "The auto-biographical nature of Hemingway's novels and stories provides the key to their meaning. The hero of a Hemingway novel is Hemingway. His life unfolds the secret and explains the paradox of his art."⁽²⁾ This, of course, is to lay complete emphasis on a half-truth, and more important to ignore the important distinction between a novelist and his fiction.

A revealing example of what all this could lead to can be found in the critical reaction to the publication of Across the River and into the Trees in September of 1950. It was a book to which critics and reading public alike/

- (1) "Ernest Hemingway: The Missing Third Dimension", Michael Moloney Fifty Years of the American Novel: 1900-1950, ed. H.C. Gardiner Charles Scribners Sons, New York, 1951. p. 184.
- (2) Hemingway: A Pictorial Biography, Leo Lania, Thames and Hudson, London, 1960. p. 17.

alike had eagerly looked forward. It was known that Hemingway's serious illness resulting from an eye infection suffered while hunting in Italy had caused him to suspend work on his big project of the past years, a novel about which he refused to say anything more than that it was about the Land, the Sea, and the Air. Added to this was the fact that Hemingway had written nothing of importance since the publication of For Whom the Bell Tolls ten years before in 1940. As a result of these considerations and the acknowledged importance of Hemingway in contemporary fiction, a air of "subterranean excitement... infected all publishing circles... Publisher's row manifested all the anxious expectancy of a prospective father outside the delivery room."⁽¹⁾

The whole atmosphere of excitement and expectation was complicated by the fact that the now famous "profile" of Hemingway by Lillian Ross had appeared in the New Yorker magazine three months before in May. New Yorker profiles have always had a reputation of being disastrous to the subject, and Maxwell Perkins, the well-known editor of Scribners, went so far as to consult his lawyer to see if the/

(1) McCaffery, p. 11.

the impending profile of himself by Malcolm Cowley could not be stopped. The Hemingway profile, coming as it did just before the publication of his long-awaited novel, burst like a bombshell on the literary scene. In actual fact the article was an attempt by Ross to "... describe as precisely as possible how Hemingway ... looked and sounded when he was in action..."⁽¹⁾, however, the reaction to the article showed the different purposes to which the piece had been put and what violent emotions Hemingway could arouse: there were "... people who objected strongly to Hemingway's personality... who admired the piece for the wrong reasons... people who simply didn't like the way Hemingway talked.. didn't like his freedom... his not taking himself seriously... his wasting time. In fact, they didn't like Hemingway to be Hemingway. They wanted him to be somebody else - probably themselves... they had dreary, small minded preconceptions about how a great writer should behave..."⁽²⁾ Certainly the article was full of the healthy conceit that always marked Hemingway: "I've fought two draws with Mr. Stendhal, and I think I had an edge in the last one,"⁽³⁾ he said, and he was/

(1) Ross, p. 14.

(2) Ibid, p. 14-15.

(3) Ibid, p. 35.

was sure that his latest book would prove to be his best. True as they may have been, his remarks were not calculated to endear him to the critics, and Across the River and into the Trees emerged into an emotionally charged atmosphere.

The results were disastrous for any honest appraisal of the book's worth; while certainly not one of Hemingway's best novels, Across The River and into the Trees did not get the sort of consideration that it deserved. Personal feelings about Hemingway had a field day, and reviews were noted for their excrementalism if nothing else. Malcolm Cowley felt that "This is an unfortunate novel and unpleasant to review... It is not only Hemingway's worst novel, (1) it is the synthesis of everything bad in his previous work", and Joseph Warren Beach felt that the novel was a sign of "psychological regression" and wondered if ".... the faintly disagreeable odour that emanates from Across the River and into the Trees is an evidence of decay already present in the work... admired so much or simply an accidental feature of a story turned out in a moment of weakness." (2) On the other end of the spectrum of critical opinion one found John O'Hara proclaiming that the novel had/

(1) "The Champ and the Referees", Ben Redman
The Saturday Review of Literature 33 (Oct. 28, 1950).
p. 15.

(2) Beach, p. 227.

had "real class": whatever that meant, and that Hemingway was "the outstanding author since the death of Shakespeare."⁽¹⁾ The fervour that resulted in the literary world revealed with startling clarity how the loyalties and antipathies towards Hemingway inspired extravagant estimates of him as a writer. Surveying the critical scene in late October of 1950 once the initial flurry had died down, Ben Redman drew several important conclusions: it was clear that "Too many of these reviews were written with one eye on the book and the other on what the reviewers thought they knew of Hemingway's character"; too many also identified Hemingway with Colonel Cantwell, the book's hero, or regretted the interruption of the bigger novel. As a result "... moral judgements took precedence over literary judgements." "Perhaps", he regretfully concluded, "we really do know too much about Hemingway, or at least his public poses, to judge his work impartially."⁽²⁾

In effect the problem of "knowing too much about Hemingway" has been with criticism of his work almost from the beginning; it can be seen as early as 1927 when Lee Wilson Dodd wrote a particularly scathing review of Men/

(1) Young, p. 124.

(2) Redman, p. 38.

Men Without Women in which he concluded "... it is impossible to criticize a book without criticizing a man..."⁽¹⁾ a conclusion which any responsible critic of Hemingway must now reject. Summing up Hemingway's career in the memorial edition of Life magazine, his good friend Archibald MacLeish remarked that "Writers generally are judged by their work, but Hemingway's life kept threatening to get in the way of his work with the result that his critics never found themselves in agreement."⁽²⁾ Certainly knowledge of a man's life is a helpful aid, but it is only a tool, one of many, to be used with care in interpreting his fiction, and to understand Hemingway's art one must realize that "... true writing is not the natural by-product of an isolated experience nor the autonomous creation of an isolated man, but the consequence of a collision between the two."⁽³⁾ At the present time one can only hope that the reaction to the manner of Hemingway's death will not confuse the picture of his work any more than it already is; people who disapprove of suicide and feel that Hemingway/

(1) "Simple Annals of the Callous", Lee Wilson Dodd
The Saturday Review of Literature 4 (Nov. 19, 1927).
p. 322.

(2) Life (July 14, 1961), Archibald MacLeish. p. 71.

(3) Ibid. p. 72.

Hemingway betrayed his integrity may well condemn him, but these are moral, not literary judgements. Seymour Betsky cautioned the critics on this particular point shortly after Hemingway's death: "Hemingway's life lent itself to the identification of the writer with his fictional world. There is a great temptation now to relate his death to that world. But only a responsible and scrupulous critic who cares deeply about Hemingway the writer can do this - and only later with a sense of critical conscience."⁽¹⁾

Although Hemingway criticism has often been irresponsible in its identification of the man with his work, it was not all due to the critics, for Hemingway himself contributed to the state of imbalance. He was frank and outspoken in his dislike of literary criticism in general, considering it a parasitical profession at best and its members to be "... the eunuchs of literature".⁽²⁾ Lillian Ross quoted him as saying "... that of all the people he did not wish to see ... the people he wished to see least were the critics: "They are like those people who go to the ball games and can't tell the players without a scorecard."⁽³⁾ The one thing a serious writer must

never/
(1) "A Note on Ernest Hemingway", Seymour Betsky The Saturday Review of Literature (July 29, 1961), p.22.
(2) "No Money for the Kingfish Bird", Charles Fenton, American Quarterly 4 (Winter, 1952), p.347.
(3) Ross, p. 34.

never do, he warned in Green Hills of Africa, was to read the critics, for "If they believe the critics when they say they are great, then they must believe them when they say they are rotten, and they lose confidence." ⁽¹⁾ Judging from the accuracy and precision of Hemingway's counter-attacks, he rarely followed his own advice.

While Hemingway's feelings were understandable, the aura of childishness that surrounded his attacks on the critics only opened him to further attacks from them. The tenor of his feelings can be seen in a poem he wrote in 1927 in response to the review by Lee Wilson Dodd already quoted:

"Sing a song of critics
pockets full of lye
four and twenty critics
hope that you will die
hope that you will peter out
hope that you will fail
so they can be the first one
be the first to hail
any happy weakening or sign of quick decay.
(All very much alike, weariness too great
sordid small catastrophes, stack the cards on fate
very fulgar people, annals of the callous,
dope fiends, soldiers, prostitutes,
men without a gallus.)" (2)

In/

- (1) Green Hills of Africa, Ernest Hemingway
Jonathan Cape, London, 1956. p. 30
(hereafter identified as GHOA)
- (2) "Valentine", Ernest Hemingway
The Little Review XII (May, 1929), p. 42.

In spite of the fact that it would have been far wiser to ignore the critics, Hemingway never could resist the challenge of a good fight, especially when he always "... had an advantage over his adversaries in that whereas he never conceded them a thing, they have rather nervously rushed to concede him a great deal."⁽¹⁾ In 1949 he was writing in what was supposed to be an introduction to In Sicily, a novel by Elio Vittorini, what was actually a diatribe against literary critics who "... grow dry and sad, inexistent without the watering of their benefactors, feeding on the dry manure of schism and the dusty taste of disputed dialectics, their only flowering a desiccated criticism as alive as stuffed birds, and their steady mulch the dehydrated cuds of fellow critics..."⁽²⁾ It is this continual warfare between Hemingway and his critics that has contributed in large part to the extremism in Hemingway criticism.

The lack of communication between Hemingway and his critics was complicated by the fact that Hemingway never made himself readily available to them for discussion; he/

(1) Young, p. 130.

(2) In Sicily, Elio Vittorini
New Directions, New York, 1949. p. iv.

he disliked intensely talking about his work, both before and after he had completed it. This reticence on the part of Hemingway was not simply a matter of personal spite; as an artist he was seriously convinced that to talk about his art was in some way to "lose it", to dilute its impact through discussion. "You'll lose it if you talk about it," Jake warns Brett in The Sun Also Rises when she tries to explain to him how good it made her feel to send Romero away, ⁽¹⁾ and Hemingway felt the same way about his fiction. In 1958 he explained at length why he had always refused to talk about his work: "I still believe... that it is very bad for a writer to talk about how he writes. He writes to be read by the eye and no explanations nor dissertations should be necessary. You can be sure there is much more there than will be read at any first reading and having made this it is not the writer's province to explain it or to run guided tours through the more difficult country of his work."⁽²⁾

With the "discovery" of symbolic elements in Hemingway's work in the 1950's by Carlos Baker and Philip Young,

- (1) The Sun Also Rises, Ernest Hemingway
Charles Scribners Sons, New York, 1954. p.245.
(Scribners Library edition, identified hereafter as SAR)
- (2) "An Interview with Ernest Hemingway", George Plimpton
Hemingway and his Critics, ed. Carlos Baker
Hill and Wang, New York, 1961. p.29-30.

Young, Hemingway's refusal to be more explicit about the meaning of his books was held more and more against him. About The Old Man and the Sea all he would say was "I tried to make a real old man, a real boy, a real sea, and a real fish and a real shark. But if I made them good and true enough they would mean many things."⁽¹⁾ Farther than that sort of general statement he would not go: "I suppose there are symbols (in my work)", he said in an interview with George Plimpton, "since critics keep finding them there. If you do not mind, I dislike talking about them and being questioned about them."⁽²⁾ Behind Hemingway's silence to the critics lay his belief that "... writing at its best is a lonely life. Organizations for writers palliate the writer's loneliness, but I doubt if they improve his writing. He grows in public stature as he sheds his loneliness and often his work deteriorates. For he does his work alone, and if he is a good enough writer,⁽³⁾ he must face eternity or the lack of it each day." It is/

- (1) "The Marlin and the Shark", Keuchi Harada Hemingway and his Critics, ed. Carlos Baker Hill and Wang, New York, 1961. p. 264.
- (2) Plimpton, p. 29.
- (3) Hemingway: The Writer as Artist, Carlos Baker Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1956. p. 293.

is this belief in the essential loneliness of the profession of writing that explains Hemingway's refusal to converse at length with the critics or to associate professionally with other writers. If writers do join groups, they will become like "... angleworms in a bottle, trying to derive knowledge and nourishment from their own contact and from the bottle... once they are in the bottle they stay there. They are lonesome outside the bottle. They do not want to be lonesome. They are afraid to be alone in their beliefs..."⁽¹⁾

The figure of Hemingway the man has not been the only obstruction, however, to a clear view of his fiction; in fact the very nature of that work - both its style and content - have contributed to the lack of understanding. It may indeed seem strange to defend Hemingway where he is usually considered to be his strongest - his style. It is, to begin with, a style of absolute austerity and simplicity, both in diction and sentence construction. Harry Levin has pointed out that Hemingway could easily get by with the sixteen "operators", the monosyllabic verbs that/

(1) GHOA, p. 28.

(1)

that stem from movements of the body and he is equally limited in his range of nouns, which are mainly short and colloquial, and in his use of adjectives and adverbs. One of Hemingway's basic stylistic considerations was to avoid what Henry James called "looseness" in the use of words; the problem with words, as Hemingway put it to his companion the old lady in Death in the Afternoon, is that "... all our words from loose using have lost their edge..."⁽²⁾ and the simplicity of Hemingway's diction is in part due to his desire to put the "edge" back on words. Simplicity is also the keynote to his sentence construction - in general they are of the short, declarative variety, frequently joined together by the conjunction "and" with little use of subordinate clauses. The function of words in Hemingway's style is not to talk about things, to explain their significance, but to realize the actual object or situation as closely as possible, to show us "... the real thing, the sequence of motion and fact which made the emotion and which would be valid in a year or ten"

(1) "Observations on the Style of Ernest Hemingway", Harry Levin Hemingway and his Critics, ed. Carlos Baker Hill and Wang, New York, 1961. p. 107.

(2) Death in the Afternoon, Ernest Hemingway Jonathan Cape, London, 1962. p. 72 (identification hereafter as DIA)

ten years..." (1) It is this desire to exclude all emotion from the tale save those which the reader supplies in response to Hemingway's presentation of the "facts" that explains the objective, impersonal characteristic of his style. His fiction is thus a means of producing emotion rather than a description of it, although this would have to be qualified with regard to For Whom the Bell Tolls and Across the River and into the Trees where Hemingway's emphasis is more on the depiction of a state of mind. Rather than describe how a character feels about an event or suggest the emotions a reader should have, Hemingway lets the story speak for itself, usually through his use of irony and understatement.

For an example, let us consider this passage from the story On the Quai at Smyrna which formed the introduction to the 1930 edition of In Our Time:

"The worst, he said, were the women with dead babies. You couldn't get the women to give up their dead babies. They'd have babies dead for six days. Wouldn't give them up. Nothing you could do about it. Had to take them away finally. Then there was an old lady, most extraordinary case. I told it to a doctor and he said I was lying. We were clearing them off the pier, had to clear off the dead ones, and this old woman was lying on a sort of a litter. They said, 'Will you have a look at her, sir?' So I had a look at her and just then she died and went absolutely stiff. Her/

(1) Death in the Afternoon, Ernest Hemingway
Jonathan Cape, London, 1962. p. 10.

Her legs drew up and she drew up from the waist and went quite rigid. Exactly as though she had been dead over night. She was quite dead and absolutely rigid. I told a medical chap about it and he told me it was impossible." (1)

In spite of the flat, matter-of-fact statements of what happened ("She was quite dead and absolutely rigid") it is clear that the emphasis is on the impact that all this has had on the young British officer who is describing it. Behind the seemingly casual understatement, the emphatic repetition, and the irony of the narrator having seen the old lady die in such a horrible manner and then being called a liar hides a tightly controlled hysteria which threatens to break through the composure at any moment. The emotion that the scene evokes, the dull sense of the continual horror of war of which the old woman's death is only a small part, is not explicitly described, but it is there none the less in the understatement of the narrator's description and in our reaction to it. Simply stated the message of this small sketch is nothing more than the old cliché "War is hell", but Hemingway has given new impact to it by making us realize the meaning for ourselves. There is a complete lack in that scene of any textual complexity; the literal meaning of every sentence is absolutely/

(1) The Fifth Column and First Forty-Nine Stories, Ernest Hemingway Charles Scribners Sons, New York, 1938. p. 185-186 (identified hereafter as First 49).

absolutely clear. We are left in no doubt in the end as to what happened on the quay at Smyrna.

This brief analysis of Hemingway's style reveals how its sparseness and simplicity preclude any sort of textual ambiguity; there are no complicated metaphors or extended similes, no confusion of actual meaning or doubt over what happened to tantalize the brain, nothing but clear, hard, honest prose. The basic principle behind this kind of writing is that of selection, distillation out of it of everything "... not absolutely necessary and irreplaceable." (1) "Prose", Hemingway once said in a memorable aphorism, "is architecture, not interior decoration, and the Baroque is over." (2) Surprisingly enough it is this simplicity and clarity of style that has misled many critics of Hemingway. The hard brilliance of its opaque surface has fooled some into thinking that there is nothing behind it, no inner meaning to an otherwise interesting tour de force. "Hemingway's art," wrote Wyndham Lewis in 1934, "is an art of the surface - and as I look at it, none the worse for that," (3) and this sort of view still prevails in some/

(1) DIA, p. 182.

(2) Ibid. p. 182.

(3) Men Without Art, Wyndham Lewis
Cassell and Co., Edinburgh, 1934. p. 19.

some circles. Far from being an art of the surface, Hemingway's style is an art which conceals art and yet reveals it as well. As in all good literature his form is directly wedded to its content; the terseness, the flat understatement, the avoidance of the well-worn phrase - all are suited to the nature of Hemingway's protagonist, a man in danger of losing control of himself in a world he never made.

Hemingway's style has also been a liability in his critical reputation because of its appearance and continued existence during a period in which criticism came to favour ambiguity over clarity, diffusion over precision, and welcomed and indeed demanded textual and stylistic difficulties. In the late 1930's a critical school which later came to be called the Formalists or "New Critics" developed in order to interpret the difficult modern poetry that had begun with the works of Yeats and Eliot. Similarly in fiction the works of such authors as Henry James and James Joyce clearly needed the same sort of close textual analysis, and the method was soon applied over a wide range of authors and genres. This sort of criticism, with/

with its strong emphasis on critical exegesis, detailed textual analysis, and delight in ambiguity ignored or criticized unfairly Hemingway's work because of its absolute clarity; the simplicity of its diction and sentence construction seemed to preclude the kind of textual difficulties in which the critics were interested. Behind the Formalist's forbidding neo-classicism lay a disgust with modern life of the sort that Hemingway portrayed, and it was thus both a protest and a retreat.

In the 1930's, when his critical reputation was at its lowest, Hemingway made two revealing comments about his contemporaries William Faulkner and James Joyce, revealing because the comparison with him that they suggest shows in what respects Hemingway came to be outside the main-stream of criticism. Of Faulkner he remarked that through his precedent any kind of subject matter would now be allowed in fiction, and he tells his companion the Old Lady in Death in the Afternoon that "You can't go wrong on Faulkner. He's prolific too. By the time you get them ordered, there'll be new ones out."⁽¹⁾ Faulkner was in many ways an exact contemporary of Hemingway's: like Hemingway/

(1) DIA, p. 166.

Hemingway he was initially a journalist, served overseas in World War I and was wounded, and had his first book published (Soldiers' Pay) in 1926, a little less than a year after the American publication of In Our Time. Here, however, the similarities stop, for as Hemingway's comment reveals, Faulkner is indeed the more prolific writer of the two: his collected works numbers some twenty-seven in comparison to Hemingway's fourteen. Not only is there more of Faulkner, his style of writing is also of that sort which the "new criticism" has demanded, for he is "... a writer devoted to elaboration and wizardry of form, who deliberately sought to delay and obscure his readers..."⁽¹⁾ His is a method of writing which delights in ambiguities, in radical experiments with narrative technique, and critical evaluation of him in certain areas as a writer, i.e. craftsman and innovator, rank him over Hemingway. Certainly there is more there for the critics of the formalist school to work on than in Hemingway.

Faulkner himself put his finger on the essential difference between his work and that of Hemingway: "Hemingway" he/

(1) On Native Grounds, Alfred Kazin
Harcourt, Brace, and Co., New York, 1942. p. 457.

he said in 1959, "had enough sense to find a method which he could control and didn't need or didn't have to, wasn't driven by his private demon to waste himself in trying to do more than that. So, he has done consistently the most solid work of all of us."⁽¹⁾ As far as his style went Hemingway achieved maturity by 1926 and after that never made many changes in it, aside from a certain lengthening of his sentences in Green Hill of Africa and For Whom the Bell Tolls. Helped by the suggestions and examples of people like Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, and Sherwood Anderson, Hemingway "whittled a style for his time from a walnut stick"⁽²⁾ and did not waste his time in experimenting further with it. In short, the rich subtleties and nuances of Faulkner's style put him in great favour with the "new critics" after 1940 whereas the austerity of Hemingway's led them to ignore him.

Of Joyce Hemingway once said "It was nice to see a great writer in our time."⁽³⁾ A comparison reveals that the source of their greatness was the same in both cases: the/

(1) Faulkner in the University, ed. F.L. Gwynn and J.L. Blotner, University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville, 1959. p. 143.

(2) "Years of the Dog", Archibald MacLeish Act five and other poems, New York, 1943. p. 53.

(3) GHOA, p. 51.

the ordered recollection of personal experience. Here the similarity ends, however, for the differences in their use of personal experience and the style in which they expressed it are enormous. This can be best seen, I think, by a comparison of two passages from their respective works, both about injuries sustained as a child at the hands of an adult. In the first we see Nick Adams, Hemingway's fictional persona, picking himself up after having been knocked off a freight train by the brakeman:

"Nick stood up. He was all right... He felt of his knee. The pants were torn and the skin was barked. His hands were scraped and there were sand and cinders driven up under his nails. He went over to the edge of the track down the little slope to the water and washed his hands. He washed them carefully in the cold water, getting the dirt out from the nails... Nick rubbed his eye. There was a big bump coming up. He would have a black eye, all right. It ached already... He touched the bump over his eye with his fingers. Oh, well, it was only a black eye." (1)

Compare this to the scene in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man where Stephen Dedalus is beaten unjustly by the prefect of studies:

"Stephen closed his eyes and held out in the air his trembling hand with the palm upwards... A hot stinging blow like the loud crack of a broken stick made/

(1) First 49, p. 227.

made his trembling hand crumple together like a leaf in the fire: and at the sound and the pain scalding tears were driven into his eyes. His whole body was shaking with fright and his crumpled burning livid hand shook like a loose leaf in the air... Stephen knelt down quickly pressing his beaten hands to his sides. To think of them beaten and swollen with pain all in a moment made him feel so sorry for them as if they were not his own but someone else's that he felt sorry for." (1)

Although the situations are the same - the suffering of unjust physical punishment at the hands of an adult who enjoys administering it - how different are the two methods of rendering it. Hemingway's is a direct, unequivocal statement of what happened, a literal transcription of a personal experience, whereas Joyce's description transcends any literal transcription, becoming almost lyrical in its evocation of the pain of the blows, utilizing the ironic discrepancy between Stephen's kneeling position of prayer and the treatment he receives more fully than Hemingway does in having Nick get "sucked in" by the brakeman who told him he had "something for him". Even this small passage from Joyce shows the tremendous complexity of his style, and how well he could utilize all the resources of his language: the passage of his just quoted is full of emotive adjectives, particularly participles, /

(1) A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, James Joyce Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1963. p. 50-51.

participles, and language here has become a direct evocation of an emotional state as well as the description of what happened. In Joyce's description of the beating, everything is internalized in Stephen's consciousness, and his realization of the pain of his injuries takes place in his mind ("To think of his hands beaten and swollen with pain..."), whereas in the similar incident involving Nick Adams all the action and Nick's feelings are externalized; we do not see into his mind as we do Stephen's in order to comprehend his pain, but instead Nick feels his knee, washes his hands, and touches the bump over his eye.

Joyce's whole use of personal experience and the verbal texture of his style marks him off sharply from Hemingway. Joyce's style, which became more and more complicated in his later work, his use of personal experience as a kind of "stream of consciousness", created the sort of difficulties which formalist critics in particular demand. Unlike Hemingway's style, Joyce's is hard to understand at times and provides ample opportunity for critical exegesis. What these comparisons to Faulkner and Joyce have shown, I think, is how different Hemingway's style is from theirs, a difference which put him/

him outside the main-stream of twentieth century criticism. While admiring Hemingway as a stylist, critics have been put off by the apparent artlessness and simplicity of his work into thinking little depth is involved in its effects; one has only to examine the deficiencies of Hemingway's imitators to realize how incorrect this view is. In analyzing Hemingway's style it is always wise to remember, as Hubert Miller once pointed out, that "Simplicity is a deceptive quality and perhaps the most difficult to analyze."⁽¹⁾

Hemingway's content as well as his form has led to critical disapproval. In 1932 Hemingway explained what his writing programme was when he first set out to write: "I was trying to learn to write, commencing with the simplest things, and one of the simplest things of all and the most fundamental is violent death."⁽²⁾ In order to find this "simple" subject, Hemingway explains, he turned to the bullfight as the only other place where one could find death now that the war was over. It is a subject matter to which he devoted himself through out his whole career - violent death as it was experienced in war, the/

(1) Modern Fiction: A Study of Values, Herbert Muller Funk and Wagnalls, New York, 1937. p. 396.

(2) DIA, p. 10.

the bullfight, in hunting, and in the odd moments of violence in every day life. Perhaps one of the largest single blocks to a clear view of Hemingway's work has been the fact that people simply do not like the things about which he wrote, didn't like his choice of subject matter which always insisted that man is mortal. Not liking his subject matter, critics have had a propensity either to dismiss his work out of hand or to refuse to examine it in order to determine what significance and meaning it had for Hemingway. In doing this the critics have encroached upon one of the primary privileges of the artist: his freedom to write about what he chooses because it satisfies an inner need in him, because it renders the world intelligible to him. There still lingers in the critical imagination the suspicion that life and literature exist in two unrelated spheres, and that the province of literature is not to represent life but to escape from it; always "... there is a traditional difference between that which people know... that which they feel to be a part of life and that which they allow to enter into literature."⁽¹⁾ Speaking for critics in/

(1) "The Art of Fiction", Henry James
Criticism: The Foundations of Modern Literary Judgement,
Mark Schorer Harcourt, Brace and Co., New York, 1958.
p. 54.

in general, Henry James said, "We must grant the artist his subject, his donné; our criticism is applied only to what he makes of it... I do not mean that we are bound to like it or find it interesting; in case we do not our course is perfectly simple - to let it alone."⁽¹⁾

Translated into the jargon of the twentieth century, James's remark becomes in Philip Young's hands, "You can tell a writer to go to hell, or stop reading him, or read him and tear him up, in private or in public. But you can't tell him what to write."⁽²⁾

Perhaps the best example of what this dislike of Hemingway's subject matter could lead to is the critical reaction to Death in the Afternoon. Ostensibly a book about bullfighting, it is much more than that, being the closest thing we have in Hemingway's case to a writer's note book. Along with a consideration of the bullfight, Death in the Afternoon is also about Hemingway's conception of the nature of tragedy, the composition of heroism, and the value of honour, and it contains as well some of the most revealing comments he ever made about his principles of writing. As Carlos Baker has said, "For the student of/

(1) "The Art of Fiction", Henry James
Criticism: The Foundations of Modern Literary Judgement,
Mark Schorer Harcourt, Brace, and Co., New York, 1958.
p. 50.

(2) Young, p. 225.

of Hemingway who is seriously interested in the developmental aspects of his fiction, a reading of Death in the Afternoon is indispensable." (1) As a comprehensive book about bullfighting it has never been equaled and indeed has been called the best book on the subject in any language by those who should know. Not only a detailed description of the various stages of the fight, the book is also a survey of its history from mediaeval times to 1932 and an appraisal of the performance of every matador of repute of that year. Death in the Afternoon "... gives one the very rare illusion, after having completed it, that one knows all about - that there is literally nothing more to learn of - a single segment at least of human experience." (2)

However, in spite of the obvious serious intent behind the book and the skill with which it was realized, the critics have tended either to ignore the book or to condemn it because of its barbaric and cruel subject matter; the bullfight is a subject about which it is very easy to get righteously indignant without knowing much of anything about it. In his first chapter Hemingway admits frankly that the prejudices against bullfighting are enormous and that from "... a modern moral point of view..." it is indefensible; /

(1) Baker, p. 149.

(2) "The Canon of Death", Lincoln Kirstein
Ernest Hemingway: The Man and his Work, ed. John McCaffery
The World Publishing Co., Cleveland, 1950, p. 63

indefensible; his purpose in writing the book is "... to tell honestly the things I have found true about (the bullfight)", and to do this he knows he will have to be frank: "... if those who read this decide with disgust that it is written by someone who lacks theirs, the readers', fineness of feeling, I can only plead that this may be true. But whoever reads this can only make such a judgement when he, or she, has seen the things that are spoken of and knows truly what their reactions to them would be."⁽¹⁾ Hemingway's point is well taken, and one wonders how many of the critics who have condemned the book because of its subject matter have actually ever taken the trouble to witness what they so roundly dismiss.

Max Eastman's review "Bull in the Afternoon" is a representative example of the adverse sort of criticism that Death in the Afternoon received because of its subject matter. In that article Eastman accused Hemingway of being blind to what the bullfight "actually is" because "... he is enraptured with courageous killing." He undertakes to explain for us what the true nature of the bullfight is:

"You/

(1) DIA, p. 9.

"You see this beautiful animal... trapped in a ring where his power is nothing, and you see him put forth his utmost in vain to escape death at the hands of those spryer and more flexible monkeys... you see him baffled, bewildered, insane with fright, fury, and physical agony.. brought dreadfully down from his beauty of power, until he stands horribly torpid... faint falsetto cries of anguish... coming out of him, and you see one of those triumphant monkeys.. dash in ... and plunge a sword into... that powerful and noble thing."

"That", Mr. Eastman concludes, "is what a bullfight is, and that is all it is." (1) But that is not what a bullfight is to Hemingway, which should have been Eastman's first concern, but what he, Max Eastman, thinks a bullfight is; in effect, he has done nothing more than write his own highly emotional version of Death in the Afternoon. In doing so he has let his personal feelings obscure what is surely the most important point about the bullfight - why it interested Hemingway and to what artistic purposes he put it.

Essentially the critical rejection of Hemingway's fiction has centred around its limitations. The usual argument runs as follows: he is limited, first of all, in his range of situations: his fictional situations are almost always about the same thing: the protagonist faces the/

(1) "Bull in the Afternoon", Max Eastman
McCaffery, p. 73.

the knowledge of his own death, usually in the form of violence, alone and unaided - all considerations of his past, his occupation, his family, or his religion have been excluded. Along with his limited subject matter one can see a complementary limitation in the range of characters; in fact while the details change somewhat, his characters are all variations on the same theme of the "Hemingway hero" and the "code hero", to use Philip Young's phrase. The protagonist is almost always a wounded, scared, and sensitive young American whom we see either in the process of initiation into the world or recovering from the results of it; the "code hero", the man who administers this initiation, is frequently drawn from the lower strata of society - a boxer, a gambler, a smuggler. Correspondent with the limitation of character some critics have found a limitation of ethics and have felt that the Hemingway morality is too specialized to have any real significance, too shallow to be of any use, and thus has little relevance for anyone other than the sportsman or the hunter.

This concentration on a narrow range of subject matter and types of character has meant for Joseph Wood Krutch that the recipient of the Nobel Prize writes of "... sordid little/

little catastrophes in the lives of very vulgar people,"⁽¹⁾
and the limitations of his code of morality has made him
simply a "muscle without value"⁽²⁾ for R.P. Blackmur. Of
the critics D.S. Savage is probably the most hostile;
he considers Hemingway to be a writer of the pulp
magazine variety with a "... peculiarly negative view of
human life that... leads him to project his vision... into
characters drawn from the lowest strata of human existence
where life is lived as near as possible on an animal,
mechanical level." This "contempt of human values and
of human life" has led him to "... an outlook on life
which is negative to the point of nihilism."⁽³⁾

What is there to be said in answer to a critic like
Mr. Savage? As R.P. Weeks has pointed out, the usual
method is to demonstrate that Hemingway's limitations are
in actual fact the source of his strength as an artist,
that his restrictions are an excellent demonstration of
Mies van der Rohe's architectural maxim "less is more".⁽⁴⁾
Certainly/

- (1) "The Sportsman's Tragedy", Edmund Wilson
The New Republic LXIII (Dec. 14, 1927). p. 102.
- (2) "Ernest Hemingway's Morality in Action", James Colvert
American Literature 27 (March '55 - Jan. '56). p. 372.
- (3) "Ernest Hemingway", D.S. Savage
Hudson Review I (Autumn, 1948). p. 382.
- (4) Hemingway: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed.
Robert Weeks Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs,
1962, p. 1.

Certainly this line of argument is true, for the narrowness of the scope of Hemingway's work facilitates its wider application through its precision of statement, and he has indeed succeeded in making his fiction into "a moral equivalent of life"⁽¹⁾. All art in dealing with the specific is in this sense limited, but as Edmund Wilson has pointed out "... in art... a sort of law of moral interchangeability prevails... what is written about an old bullfighter is written, also, about other kinds of men. Is not the real genius of moral insight a motor that will start any engine?"⁽²⁾

Commenting on the appeal of Hemingway's fiction, John Peale Bishop once said, "It is the mark of a true novelist that in searching the meaning of his own unsought experience he comes upon the moral history of his time."⁽³⁾ For Hemingway was a true product of the age in which he lived, and he wrote of that world with "barometric accuracy"⁽⁴⁾, a world that had become, like Fredrick Henry "... embarrassed by/

- (1) Hemingway: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Robert Weeks Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, 1962. p. 5.
- (2) "Marxism and Literature", Edmund Wilson
The Triple Thinkers, Edmund Wilson
Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1962. p. 231.
- (3) "Homage to Hemingway", John Peale Bishop
Collected Essays of John Peale Bishop,
Charles Scribners Sons, New York, 1948. p. 75.
- (4) "Ernest Hemingway: Gauge of Morale", Edmund Wilson
The Wound and the Bow, Edmund Wilson
University Paperbacks, London, 1961. p202.

by the words sacred, glorious, and sacrifice..."⁽¹⁾
a world of violence where traditional values seem out of place and man is very much alone. Indeed, one of the most powerful sources of appeal in Hemingway's fiction is this sense of separation, of the alienation of a whole generation from the world in which they found themselves. Hemingway caught this feeling in crude form in one of his earliest piece of work, a poem entitled The Age Demanded which appeared in 1925:

"The age demanded that we sing
And cut away our tongue.
The age demanded that we flow
and hammered in the bung.
The age demanded that we dance
and jammed us into iron pants.
And in the end the age was handed
The sort of s--- that it demanded." (2)

Willa Cather once remarked wistfully that "Somewhere around
1922 the world broke in two",⁽³⁾ and for some people that gulf between the world as it existed before World War I and as it existed afterwards was never quite bridged. The world of which Hemingway writes "... has experienced a/
a/

- (1) A Farewell to Arms, Ernest Hemingway
Charles Scribners Sons, New York, 1959. p.191
(hereafter identified as AFTA)
Modern Standard authors edition.
- (2) The Poems of Ernest Hemingway
New York, 1929 (pirated edition). p. 3.
- (3) "No Beginning and No End", F.J. Hoffman
Essays in Criticism III (Jan., 1953). p. 75.

a final disillusionment with the premises of Renaissance humanism",⁽¹⁾ and thus "If Hemingway's moral vision of life is minor, it is so because it encompasses no truly important moral reality of our time, not because it is negative or pessimistic. It is wrong to charge the writer with a minor vision of life because he has chosen to develop his theme in those areas of modern experience which best suggest the character of its moral situation."⁽²⁾ One senses in the sometimes frenzied rejection of Hemingway's fiction the reflection of a deeper malaise, a rejection not just of Hemingway, but of the world which his fiction so accurately depicts.

In considering how Hemingway's subject matter has posed problems for the critics one must also keep in mind that the method which is used to develop its meanings is always implicit, never explicit - the "point" of a Hemingway story is never openly stated; it exists at not one particular moment in the action but emerges from a consideration of the whole. Hemingway explained the principle behind this method in Death in the Afternoon: "If a writer of prose knows enough about what he is writing about/

(1) Moloney, p. 182.

(2) Colvert, p. 373.

about he may omit things that he knows, and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of the movements of the ice-berg is due to (the fact that only one-eighth of it being above water.)⁽¹⁾ Such a use of material requires an awareness on the reader's part of what is going on beneath the surface, an ability to distinguish between the terse statement of fact and the emotion which has inspired it, for "... Hemingway's heart was worn up his sleeve and not on it. It was always there and his best tricks were won with it."⁽²⁾

A concept which is thus particularly helpful in understanding Hemingway's fiction is that of "levels of meaning"; this is to say that the complete meaning of a Hemingway story resides on at least three different levels and in the inter-relation between them. The first, and most obvious level, is the bare statement of fact, "the way it was" to use Hemingway's phrase "what really happened in action,... the actual things... which produced the emotion that you experienced"⁽³⁾ beneath this surface level, the/

(1) DIA, p. 183.

(2) Bishop, p. 39.

(3) DIA, p. 10.

the one-eighth of the ice-berg which shows, so to speak, is a counter level where the emotion that has been produced by the "actual thing" is revealed, usually through the use of irony and understatement. These two levels of meaning are specifically related to each story and change in detail from one to the other, but the third level is a constant factor; perhaps the best way to describe it is to say that it represents Hemingway's philosophy of life, his way of looking at the world and making sense of it, and thus his system of values as well. Like his fisherman Santiago in The Old Man and the Sea who sets his fishing lines at different levels in the sea, Hemingway creates his fiction on different levels. And the most profound meaning, like the biggest fish, is often to be found at the deepest level.

During the period 1926-1929 Hemingway published three important works: The Sun Also Rises, Men Without Women, and A Farewell to Arms. The result of these publications was one of the high points in his critical reputation, for there was a "... willingness to accept Hemingway's art on its own grounds..."⁽¹⁾ that would be lacking in later years. By and large Hemingway was praised as a realist, as an accurate depicter of life as it "really was"; the/

(1) Baker, p. 34.

the deeper levels of meaning in his work, his use of irony, understatement, and symbols were largely ignored. Thus the response by both critics and reading public alike to Hemingway at this time was favourable because to a large extent they identified their own situations with those that Hemingway depicted in his fiction. The very topicality of his work of this period, its concern with topics of general concern, permitted a large degree of vicarious participation in it. The Sun Also Rises, with its brilliant evocation of the mood of the "lost generation's" search for pleasure in the capitals of Europe, became an emblem of the social history of the 1920's. It both created and embodied a myth which summed up for many the meaning of the decade after World War I. In expressing the romantic sense of loss that pervaded the spirit of this time Hemingway "... set the favourite pose for the period..."⁽¹⁾ In similar fashion A Farewell to Arms achieved popularity primarily as an accurate reflection of the essential disillusionment many Americans experienced as a result of their participation in that war which was "to make the world safe for democracy". In its bringing into focus the source of so many people's disillusionment the book became/

(1) "Hemingway: Gauge of Morale", Edmund Wilson. p. 197.

became "... the great romantic alibi of a generation and for those who aped and emulated that generation." (1)

But then, after 1929, a curious decline began to occur in Hemingway's reputation with the critics, a decline due in large part to a change in the critics' conception of the relation art had to society and politics. The background of this change is to be found in the very period that Hemingway so accurately depicted, that period which saw the Sacco-Vanzetti trial and the severe persecution of labour unions as well as the emergence of the Lost Generation. During the 1920's there was a "... kind of nervous dissatisfaction and apprehension... manifest... in American intellectual life." (2) The climax of the decade was the collapse of the stock market in October, 1929, which in its appropriateness seemed to sum up the most salient features of the decades's experiences and to point the way towards a new conception of reality and art's obligations to it. To the uneasy intellectual of 1929 the stock market crash "... was to count/

(1) Introduction to A Farewell to Arms, Robert Penn Warren Charles Scribner Sons, New York, 1954. p. viii.

(2) "The Literary Consequences of the Crash", Edmund Wilson The Shores of Light, Edmund Wilson Farrar, Strauss, and Young, New York, 1952. p. 492.

count for them like a rending of the earth in preparation for the Day of Judgement."⁽¹⁾ Concurrent with this crisis in the American economy came a rediscovery of Marxist philosophy which afflicted some critics like "... a capricious contagion or hurricane which shakes one and leaves his neighbour standing, then returns to lay hold on the second after the first has become quiet again. In the moment of seizure each of them saw a scroll unrolled from the heavens on which Marx and Lenin and Stalin... and the GPU... were all a part of the same great purpose... the key to all the mysteries of human history seemed suddenly to have been placed in their hands..."⁽²⁾ In a time of violent social and economic upheaval Marxism offered not only an explanation for what had happened; it also gave a sense of order in a time of chaos, a feeling of significance to one's thoughts by relating them to an over-all scheme of things. Strictly speaking there were few Marxist critics in the United States outside of the polemics of the New Masses; rather than convert critics to the party line, the influence of Marxism was to redefine the relation of literature to society. The prime demand made/

- (1) "The Literary Consequences of the Crash", Edmund Wilson The Shores of Light, Edmund Wilson Farrar, Strauss, and Young, New York, 1952. p. 496.
- (2) Ernest Hemingway: Gauge of Morale", Edmund Wilson. p. 206-207.

made on literature in the 1930's was that it be socially engage, that it reflect the current ills of society and thus work indirectly for a new social order.

Edmund Wilson may be taken to represent the more moderate branch of this sort of criticism in his belief that the task of the writer is "... not merely to study common life but to make his thoughts and symbols seem relative to it - that is to express them in terms of the actual American world."⁽¹⁾ Although he felt that the character of the literature of a particular period was determined by the class for whom it was written, he also stressed the need to consider it as a craft, a form of art, and to be evaluated as such. The most extreme kind of Marxist criticism of this period can be seen in Louis Kronenberger's statement that "It is more necessary for us to interest ourselves in an important subject treated without much merit than with an unimportant subject treated with considerable merit. Culture herself demands that we put the right social values ahead of the right literary values. It is less important that the search for truth should survive than that the cancers of society should be cut/

(1) "The Literary Consequences of the Crash", Edmund Wilson. p. 498.

out out." (1) What was disguised as literary criticism in the 1930's was often no more a sociological application of the litmus paper test to art - the redder it came out the better.

As a writer Hemingway's position was difficult during this period of time not only because of his ideas about what literature should do but also because of his belief that politics was not a suitable subject matter for literature. His conception of fiction as a kind of machine for arousing emotion from which everything had been stripped except those things which had actually produced that emotion and his implicit method which placed a large premium on the identification of the reader with the realized situation precluded Hemingway's art from easily becoming propaganda or "message" literature. Hemingway's vision of life was too complex to be reduced to the espousal of any one particular political cause - even his most "political" works of the late 1930's include what is in fact a balanced point of view in that the weaknesses of both sides of the particular issue are revealed. Rather Hemingway conceived of his art as a/

(1) "American Critics, Left and Right", Edmund Wilson
The Shores of Light, Edmund Wilson
Farrar, Strauss, and Young, New York, 1952. p. 648.

a means of presenting his view of life, which he saw as truth, to the world: "All good books are alike in that they are truer than if they really happened and after you have finished reading one you will feel that all that happened to you and afterwards it all belongs to you... If you can get so that you can give that to people then you are a writer."⁽¹⁾ The purpose of literature for him was to make his idea of what was true in human life available to others.

Moreover, Hemingway was out of favour with the prevailing critical spirit of the early 1930's because of his dislike of politics and his feeling that its inclusion in literature could only weaken it. In Green Hills of Africa Hemingway explained his devotion to the writing of a prose "... with nothing that will go bad afterwards..."⁽²⁾ to create something that would be "... valid in a year, or in ten years or with luck... always."⁽³⁾ To do this Hemingway knew he must eliminate any topicality that was there simply as a trick to catch the reader's attention, all reliance on timeliness to produce the desired effect; the/

(1) "Old Newsmen Writes", Ernest Hemingway Esquire II (Dec., 1934). p. 25.

(2) GHOA, p. 33.

(3) DIA p. 10.

the meaning of a piece of fiction, although embodied in the specific, the here and now, must itself be universal and eternal if it is to last. One thing a writer can be sure of, and that is that the parts of his work which rely on their timeliness for their effect will be the first to "go bad". And of all subjects which "go bad" politics does it the quickest: "all you can be sure of in a political-minded writer is that if his work should last you will have to skip the politics when you read it." ⁽¹⁾ The writer's job is a difficult enough one without adding this sort of complication, for "The hardest thing in the world to do is to write straight honest prose on human beings. First you have to know the subject; then you have to know how to write... anybody is cheating who takes politics as the way out... If you write about (people you know) truly they will have all the economic implications a book can hold." ⁽²⁾

Hemingway's work of the 1930's can be arranged in two chronological groups: from 1932 to 1935 and from 1937 to 1939 with 1936 as the year of transition. The first group, consisting of Death in the Afternoon, Green Hills of Africa, and/

(1) Plimpton, p. 36.

(2) "Old Newsmen Writes", Ernest Hemingway. p. 26.

and his articles for Esquire magazine, was mainly concerned with the theme of withdrawal from society into the world of art and sport, and the second group, consisting of To Have and Have Not, The Fifth Column, and For Whom the Bell Tolls, can be seen as organized around the idea of involvement once again with society. The "separate peace" of Fredrick Henry in A Farewell to Arms had developed by 1932 into a complete escape from the society which his hero was in revolt from in 1929. A feeling of pessimism and disillusionment about American society became noticeable in Hemingway's thinking: "It had been a good country and we had made a mess of it, and I would go, now, somewhere else... Let the others come to America who did not know that they had come too late." (1) The suicide of his father in 1929 which was partly due to the failure of the Florida real estate "boom" and the rise of facism abroad made Hemingway turn in disgust from organized society.

This movement away from society was accompanied by a counter-movement of withdrawal into the world of art. Hemingway had always had a deep interest in his writing as a craft and as a worthwhile occupation; in Death in the Afternoon his interest in the art of fiction, of how

a/

(1) GHOA, p. 274.

a story is made, is noticeable. Relating Death in the Afternoon to the trend of criticism at the time of its publication, it is possible to see the reason for its poor reception. At a time of social crises at home, what, the critics asked, was Hemingway doing in Spain writing about the bullfight? The book was judged irresponsible because it did not deal with the current crisis in society; in writing of the bullfight Hemingway was cultivating "... his own little corner and not confronting the situation as a whole."⁽¹⁾ Death in the Afternoon was not received as a book about bullfighting, nor did critics of that period care to examine the reasons behind Hemingway's interest in it as an embodiment of a meaningful code of conduct and as a revelation about the nature of tragedy. Instead it was examined for social content, found lacking, and dismissed. In the last paragraph of Death in the Afternoon Hemingway sounded the note of withdrawal which was to typify his career for the next three years:

"The great thing is to last and get your work done and see and hear and learn and understand; and write when there is something you know; and not before; and not too damned much after. Let those who want to save/

(1) "Dos Passos and the Social Revolution", Edmund Wilson The Shores of Light, Edmund Wilson Farrar, Strauss, and Young, New York, 1952. p. 433.

save the world, if you can get to see it clear and as a whole. Then any part you make will represent the whole if it's made truly. The thing to do is work and learn to make it." (1)

In the period between Death in the Afternoon and Green Hills of Africa Hemingway's only literary productions appeared in Esquire magazine, a glossy-paged monthly publication which devoted itself mainly to short pieces of fiction, men's fashions, and articles on hunting and fishing. It was primarily in his capacity as a sportsman that Hemingway appeared in Esquire, although on occasion he used his column, or "letter" as it was called, to sound off on anything that struck his fancy or irritated him. Hemingway's very presence in a pseudo-snobish magazine such as Esquire, with its emphasis on sport and leisure, was bound to infuriate the social critics. Arthur Mizner's comment on F. Scott Fitzgerald, who also contributed to Esquire, is applicable to Hemingway as well: "In the thirties... it was smart to be Marxist, to be neither Marxist nor avant-garde was bad; but to be in addition a commercial success in a slick magazine/

(1) DIA, p. 261.

magazine was worse." (1) The actual content of his articles, which were given top position in every issue, reveals how far Hemingway had withdrawn from any interest in the depiction of society. At the time that most of the articles were written he was living in Key West, Florida, fishing in the Gulf Stream from his cabin cruiser Pilar, and his articles were mainly about those fishing trips or reminiscences of past hunting experiences. The sociological critic would look in vain for any mention of the latest textile strike here. When the occasion arose, Hemingway was not above airing his own views on world events; his feelings of withdrawal can be seen in the extreme isolationism of an article written in 1934: "No European country is our friend nor has been since the last war, and no country but one's own is worth fighting for... We were fools to be sucked in once on a European war, and we should never be sucked in again." Nor, he went on to add, is it "... sweet and fitting to die for one's own country... in modern war there is nothing sweet nor fitting in your dying. You will die like a dog for no good/

(1) The Far Side of Paradise, Arthur Mizner
Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, 1951. p. xix.

good reason."⁽¹⁾ Hemingway almost seemed to be saying not to do anything, because any action that has as its end something outside of your needs is bound to get you involved.

Writing in Esquire in 1934 on the critical reaction to Death in the Afternoon, Hemingway said, "Not a critic will wish you luck or hope that you will keep on writing unless you have political affiliations in which case they will rally around..."⁽²⁾ His major work of a year later, Green Hills of Africa, reflects further this bitterness at the unfair treatment he felt he had received from the social critics, as well as his determinism to lead his life exactly as he chose and his now complete withdrawal into the world of sport. The book was, as Hemingway explained in the preface, an attempt "... to write an absolutely true book to see whether the shape of a country and the pattern of a month's action, can, if truly presented, compete with the work of the imagination."⁽³⁾

Within/

(1) "Notes on the Next War", Ernest Hemingway Esquire 4 (Sept., 1935). p. 19, 156.

(2) "Old Newsman Writes", Ernest Hemingway. p. 26.

(3) Baker, p. 165.

Within these limitations, the book is a successful recreation of a safari Hemingway and his wife made in Africa in 1933. Here we see hunting presented as a meaningful experience, one which reveals the presence or the lack of certain important qualities in a man, just as with the bullfight in Death in the Afternoon. There is the same insistence on the importance of his work - "a damned serious subject".⁽¹⁾ As far as social obligations go, he admits he does nothing or "maybe a little" for other people, and he has little use for the critics who pan his work because of this - "the lice who crawl on literature",⁽²⁾ as he calls them. What sets the book off from the other of this period is the bitterness of its rejections and the extremity of its withdrawal. It is worth quoting one passage at length to illustrate this:

"If you serve time for society, democracy, and the other things quite young, and declining any further enlistment make yourself responsible only to yourself, you exchange the pleasant, comforting stench of comrades for something you can never feel in any other way than by yourself. That something I cannot yet define completely but the feeling comes when you write well and truly of something and know impersonally you have written in that way and those who are paid to/

(1) GHOA, p. 32.

(2) Ibid. p. 110.

to read it and report on it do not like the subject so they say it is all a fake, yet you know its value absolutely; 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 about, and loving, has moved, as it moves, since before man, and that it has gone by the shoreline of that long, beautiful, unhappy island since before Columbus sighted it and that the things you find out about it, and those that have always lived in it are permanent and of value because that stream will flow, as it has flowed, after the Indians, after the Spaniards, after the British, after the Americans, and after all the Cubans and all the systems of governments, the richness, the poverty, the martyrdom, the sacrifice and the venality and the cruelty are all gone..." (1)

The passage can be taken as the summation of Hemingway's position as of 1935; in it one can see the renunciation of organized society for his own private world, his belief that writing is an important, creative art, his dislike of the critics and of people who criticize what he does, and his belief in the permanence and purity of nature.

Beyond this point of rejection and withdrawal it was impossible to go; 1935 thus marks not only the ultimate point of withdrawal but also the lowest ebb in his critical reputation. His choice of subject matter, his refusal/

(1) GHOA, p. 32.

refusal to depict the social problems of the day, his creation of a private morality based on the code of the bullfighter and the sportsman - all these conspired against a reception of his art on its own grounds; always it was judged by external criteria not relative to its aims. At the heart of this rejection was a basic confusion between art and life, for the social critic supposed him to be saying not " 'Come let us look at the world together' but 'Come, it is your moral duty to be as my characters are.' " (1) In doing this they "... quite overlooked style and tone... the obliqueness and complication with which an artist may criticize life, and assumed that what Hemingway saw or what he put into his stories he wanted to have exist in the actual world." (2) Summing up the attitude of the "liberal-radical" critic towards Hemingway, Lionel Trilling said "... upon Hemingway were turned all the fine social feelings of the... decade, all the noble sentiments, all the desperate optimism... there was demanded of him earnestness and pity, social consciousness... something 'positive' and/

(1) "Hemingway and his Critics", Lionel Trilling Hemingway and his Critics, ed. Carlos Baker Hill and Wang, New York, 1961. p. 67.

(2) Ibid., p. 67.

and 'constructive' and literal." (1)

The fact that Hemingway had begun to respond to these pressures by 1935 can be seen by the atmosphere of self-justification that permeates Green Hills of Africa but which was lacking in Death in the Afternoon; he tells us too many times that "... it was my own damned life and I would lead it where and how I pleased," (2) for us not to suspect that Hemingway was beginning to wonder if the critics could not be right. As an artist Hemingway had always needed commitments to do his best work, especially he needed to be committed to his idea of himself, and by 1935 Hemingway had begun to doubt if the values he so loudly proclaimed in Green Hills of Africa were really of any use. Besides, no matter how far away you got from Oak Park, Illinois, or Key West, Florida, "you could always come back." (3)

The year 1936 was a crucial one for Hemingway, crucial because it saw the initiation of a process of involvement, of interest in social conflicts; at last it seemed that Hemingway/

(1) "Hemingway and his Critics", Lionel Trilling
Hemingway and his Critics, ed. Carlos Baker
Hill and Wang, New York, 1961. p. 62.

(2) GHOA, p. 76.

(3) Ibid. p. 274.

Hemingway had not only heard the critics - he had also received the message and understood it. There had been a hint of this new attitude in an article Hemingway wrote in September, 1935 for the New Masses in which he savagely attacked the Roosevelt administration for allowing war veterans engaged in WPA projects to remain in Key West during a hurricane which drowned most of them. However, the principal event which changed Hemingway from the withdrawn isolationist of the early 1930's was the outbreak of civil war in Spain on July 17, 1936. In a way "the Spanish Civil War was the deus ex machina of Hemingway. It gave him a chance to look at the vivid life again and see it not only as interesting... because of its vividness but as bound up - part cause, part effect - with a profound human situation."⁽¹⁾ His participation in the Spanish Civil War on the side of the Republicans meant a great deal to Hemingway; recalling that experience in 1940 he said, "We were truly happy then, for when people died it seemed as though their death was justified and unimportant. For they died for something/

(1) "Ernest Hemingway", David Daiches
College English II (May, 1941). p. 734.

something they believed in..."⁽¹⁾ One has only to contrast this remark with the one he made in 1934 already quoted that it was never fitting or sweet to die for one's country to realize the distance Hemingway had travelled by 1937; death, usually the great nada, has become unimportant when done for a cause.

The effect of this new feeling of involvement, of the need to take sides in a country he had long loved, plus his awareness of what criticism was demanding of literature was soon reflected in his fiction, especially his new novel To Have and Have Not. The original form of the novel was that of a short story entitled "One Trip Across" published in 1933; to this was added in 1936 another short story "The Tradesman's Return". Then in the middle of 1936 Hemingway decided to add to the manuscript and make it into a full length novel. The additions which Hemingway made revealed a new interest in reflecting the current problems of American society, especially the plight of the individual in an age of collectivism. The meaning of the story was to reside in the contrast between Harry Morgan, his individualistic protagonist, the rich and/

(1) The Great Crusade, Gustav Regler
Longmans, Green and Co., New York, 1940. p. viii
Introduction by Ernest Hemingway.

and corrupt society of Key West, and Richard Gordan, the proletarian novelist who writes of the lower classes simply because it is the fashion. The result was a poor book, certainly one of Hemingway's worst, and one which continually threatened to break in two, for the intended contrast between Harry Morgan and Richard Gordan who were meant to represent two opposing sets of values did not cohere into a unitary meaning. The book is an ironic illustration of Hemingway's claim that in reading a novel written by a political-minded writer one has to throw out the politics. The parts that have "gone bad" in To Have and Have Not are mainly those with an obvious "message" - for example, that the capitalists asleep in their yachts are decadent and corrupt and that the novelist Gordan has betrayed his artistic integrity by writing about textile strikes because such subjects are now in fashion. What rings especially false are Harry Morgan's dying words "A man alone ain't got no chance"⁽¹⁾ which seem to contradict the feeling one gets from his life that the condition of man is to be alone, that society is an avaricious, indifferent organism that preys upon individuals, and that only alone does man have a chance to/

(1) To Have and Have Not, Ernest Hemingway
Jonathan Cape, London, 1955. p. 206
(identified hereafter as THHN)

to survive with dignity. Those parts of the book that retain their freshness are the incidents Hemingway wrote first in which the "message" is firmly imbedded in the inter-relationship of its parts and thus cannot be easily abstracted, and they prove conclusively that the meaning of a story must arise naturally from the situation, not formulated explicitly as something existing apart from its dramatic context.

In spite of its obvious weaknesses the book was widely hailed by the social critics who fell all over themselves in their haste to welcome Hemingway into the fold of the socially aware. Nowhere did they better demonstrate the inherent flaws in their critical criteria than in their desire to praise what was a poor novel. Faced with such a book in which the social "message" seemed to contradict the real meaning of the protagonist's experience and in which the intended contrast between the "haves" and the "have nots" was unsuccessful, critics fell back on praising the man for his supposed political conversion and ignoring the artist; they were forced by their criteria to claim that "... failure was triumph because artistic fumbling was the mark of Hemingway's attempt to come to grips with the problems of modern life which were as yet too great for his/

his art to encompass." It is not fair, I think, to claim as Lionel Trilling does, ⁽¹⁾ that the change in Hemingway in To Have and Have Not is simply a result of the "artist" trying to vindicate the "man" by showing he too could muster the required social feelings. Certainly the critical pressure was there and Hemingway responded to it, but the obvious sincerity with which To Have and Have Not is written indicates a degree of deep, personal commitment that goes beyond a simple reaction to the critics. Moreover, one must use such words as change or conversion with care in dealing with Hemingway's works of this period. If examined closely, the books reveal that the change is mainly on the surface, in Hemingway's choice of subject matter, and that beneath it his interest remains the same - the examination of man in a situation where death threatens and he is quite alone. Writing in 1935, Edmund Wilson prophetically remarked "... if Hemingway were to address himself to writing about the social conflict, there is no reason to believe that his stories would not continue to illustrate the same personal tragic sense of the way in which things happen."⁽²⁾

In/

(1) Trilling, p. 63.

(2) "Letter to the Russians on Hemingway", Edmund Wilson The Shores of Light, Edmund Wilson Ferrar, Strauss, and Young, New York, 1952. p. 622.

In June of 1937 Hemingway made a speech to the American Writers' Congress, an act which seemed to indicate conclusively the extent of his conversion. It is ironic that Hemingway's first public speech and "his first expression of a political opinion", ⁽¹⁾ should be made before such an organization. Founded in 1935, the American Writers' Congress was an association of left-wing radicals openly backed by the Stalinist regime in Russia. It was dedicated to the creation of a literature that would have as its goal the furthering of social change - art was above all to be a weapon. To do this writers were to work not as individuals but as members of the working class. All of Hemingway's artistic credo - his belief that the artist should be free to choose his own subject and particularly his feeling that the artist must work alone - would seem to render this sort of organization alien to him. It is worth examining exactly what Hemingway said in his speech to this body in order to determine how great Hemingway's supposed conversion actually was. His introductory remark shows how little he had changed in his basic beliefs, regardless of the political composition of the audience he faced:

"A/

(1) The Writer in a Changing World, ed. Henry Hart Lawrence and Wishart, Ltd., London, 1937. p. 208.

"A writer's problem does not change. He himself changes but his problem remains the same. It is always to write truly and having found what is true to project it in such a way that it becomes a part of the experience of the person who reads it." (1)

This sort of sentiment is no different from those stated in Death in the Afternoon; the same emphasis on the importance of the writer's art, on the discovery of "truth" and the accurate rendering of it. He explains his participation in the Spanish Civil War as being in part due to an interest in "... the problem of human conduct under danger..."⁽²⁾; it was precisely the same sort of interest that led Hemingway to examine the bullfight and hunting. As to his political beliefs, one thing he made clear was that he was not a Communist but an anti-fascist, fascism being a "big lie told by bullies" and "a writer who will not lie cannot live or work under fascism."⁽³⁾ However, no one really took the time to listen carefully to what Hemingway had to say - his presence at such a gathering was enough to assure people that Hemingway had at long last been converted, had at last been transformed into a/

(1) The Writer in a Changing World, ed. Henry Hart Lawrence and Wishart, Ltd., London, 1937. p. 69.

(2) Ibid., p. 70.

(3) Ibid., p. 69.

a writer with a social conscience. His participation in the Congress was carefully noted by critics both left and right and used in their criticism of his work.

Hemingway's next literary production was his play The Fifth Column, written in Madrid in 1937. Although it contains many of the familiar themes - the man alone facing death, the dangers of attachment to women - the play is probably the worst thing that Hemingway ever wrote. The poorness of the play is due, I think, to the extreme sense of involvement with the Republican cause Hemingway felt at the time. It seems that Hemingway was unable to detach himself from his personal sense of commitment so as to have the necessary artistic perspective on the events on which he was writing. He admitted that something like this might be the case in his preface to the play:

"While I was writing the play, the Hotel Florida ... was struck by more than thirty high explosive shells... It has the defects of being written in war time... But if being written under fire makes for defects, it may also give a certain vitality. You who read it will have a better perspective on this than I have." (1)

The hero, Philip Rawlings, ostensibly an inter-national playboy,/

(1) First Forty-Nine, p. v-vi.

playboy, is in reality a counter-espionage agent for the GPU in Madrid. In his desire to make clear his message of the need to take sides in the struggle against fascism Hemingway resorted to the worst sort of melodrama: "The best people I ever knew died for that song," Rawlings said maudlinly upon hearing some soldiers sing "Bandera Rossa"⁽¹⁾. His renunciation of Dorothy Bridges, the rich woman journalist whom he loves but who is unaware of the meaning of the struggle she is witnessing, is meant to be the dramatic climax of the book, the final demonstration of Rawling's dedication to the cause, to the "fifty years of undeclared wars"⁽¹⁾ for which he has signed up. However, Dorothy is made to seem such a stupid and worthless person in the early part of the play that one feels there is really little conflict between Rawlings' public dedication to the cause and his private devotion to her; instead one feels that regardless of his motives he is well rid of her.

Granted that the play was such a terrible one, the leftist critics were faced with the problem of how to make what was clearly a bad piece of literature into a praise-worthy effort. To do this they praised the "message" and/

(1) First Forty-Nine, p. 63.

(2) Ibid., p. 95.

and ignored the faults of the dramatic structure in which it was embodied. Criticism of this sort is inevitable when art substitutes politics for its own vision of life, for, as Arthur Miller has pointed out, "A play cannot be equated with a political philosophy... any work of art cannot help but be diminished by its adherence at any cost to a political programme, including its author's, and not for any other reason than that there is no political programme... which can encompass the complexities of real

life." (1) The essential weakness of The Fifth Column lies in just this confusion in Hemingway's mind between his own personal complex vision of life and the temptation to reduce that complexity to simplicity via Marxism. In order to make sense of it the play had to be seen as a "sign of the times", an "unintellectual partisanship of the Spanish cause". (2) Literary considerations gave way to purely political ones, and for the moment Hemingway became the hero of the same critics that had condemned him in the early 1930's.

For Whom the Bell Tolls, Hemingway's last and greatest production/

(1) Collected Plays of Arthur Miller
Cresset Press, London, 1958. p. 36.

(2) Trilling, p. 69.

production of this decade, reveals the way out that Hemingway discovered from the impass of his complete involvement in the Spanish Civil War. For if nothing else the book represents a balanced point of view of that struggle. Pilar's account of the massacre of the fascists in her town would alone be enough to show the book is non-partisan. Not just an involvement in a political group, nor in a society, nor even in a country, but in mankind as a whole, this is what these three days in the life of Robert Jordan are meant to reveal. More than this, the book also shows clearly how little Hemingway had deviated from the interests of his earlier fiction, for the situation of his hero is the same here as it was for Nick Adams, Jake Barnes, Fredrick Henry, and all the rest - a man alone facing death, his only resource the code of conduct he has managed to hammer out of past experience; when the bell tolls, it may well be that the death it announces is yours. Jordan's heroism in facing his death alone and thus saving his comrades from capture is a solitary drama, symbolic of all individual dramas played out in spite of the knowledge of defeat.

Because of the balanced point of view in the book, critical reaction to it was confused; on the one hand the book seemed to represent the defeat of the individual against a background of the inevitable failure of the general/

general cause, but the dominant note of the story is one of victory. Jordan is not a Communist, but he has "... a feeling of consecration to a duty toward all of the oppressed of the world... You felt an absolute brotherhood with the others who were engaged in it." (1)

The result was critical confusion in the leftist camp; although panned in the New Masses, it was displayed prominently in Communist bookshops. (2) In general the book was condemned by the left for political not literary reasons, because it had not represented the cause of the Republicans as it should be. Surprisingly enough, it was a Marxist critic who put her finger on the essential meaning of the novel: "Hemingway has treated that war.... exactly as he treated the First World War in A Farewell to Arms. There is a morbid concentration upon the meaning of individual death, personal happiness, personal misery..." (3)

The novel was a crucial one for Hemingway's critical reputation because it indicated that through-out the 1930's, despite surface appearances to the contrary, he had remained true to his own personal vision of life; in For Whom the Bell Tolls Hemingway showed he had escaped from the twin dangers of total withdrawal and total involvement./

(1) For Whom the Bell Tolls, Ernest Hemingway Charles Scribners Sons, New York, 1960, p. 235.
(Scribner's Library edition hereafter identified as FWBT)

(2) Young, p. 76.

(3) Weeks, p. 11.

involvement.

One can date the start of the rise in his reputation from the publication of For Whom the Bell Tolls, for it revealed to the serious, responsible critic the integrity of Hemingway's artistic vision. Moreover, after 1940 the inherent fallacies of the Marxist approach were completely uncovered: the conditions in Russia under Stalin and the signing of the non-aggression pact with Germany removed the blindness from most critic's eyes. Their flirtation with Marxism had revealed to them the impossibility of judging a work of art by a rigid set of rules, while at the same time it taught them some valuable lessons about the relation of literature to society. What they had learned above all from Hemingway's case was that the relation of an artist to his society is a curiously complex one - he is both a member of that society and a critic of it, both a withdrawn spectator and an involved participant, and he must be free to choose that position for himself. The charge most frequently made against Hemingway in the 1930's was that he was irresponsible, irresponsible because he withdrew from society and irresponsible because he allowed himself to be identified with one particular cause or party.

By/

By the early 1940's criticism had come to realize that Hemingway had always been responsible, responsible to his own vision of the "truth". Two articles appeared in the early 1940's which demonstrated the integrity of Hemingway's vision and re-established his reputation with the critics: "The Discovery of Evil: An Analysis of 'The Killers'" by R.P. Warren and Cleanth Brooks in 1942 and "Nightmare and Ritual in Hemingway" in 1944 by Malcolm Cowley. The first article, by two of the most eminent of the "new critics", showed the deep levels of meaning that could be discovered in Hemingway's fiction simply by asking the question 'What is it about?'; their article demonstrated convincingly the rewards which a close and detailed analysis of the text of a Hemingway story could yield and pointed the way for future critics of their persuasion. Similarly, Malcolm Cowley's article shattered the belief that Hemingway was simply a naturalist, a mere accurate depicter of realistic scenes, by pointing out "... his kinship with... Poe, and Hawthorne, and Melville, the haunted and nocturnal writers who dealt in images that were symbols of an inner world."⁽¹⁾ With the publication of these two articles Hemingway's critical reputation/

(1) "Nightmare and Ritual in Hemingway", Malcolm Cowley Hemingway: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Robert Weeks Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1962. p. 40.

reputation as a serious and important writer of lasting value was assured.

The purpose of this survey of Hemingway criticism has been to put his art into proper historical perspective, and, by the process of elimination, suggest what may be the most profitable approach to his work. What should be clear by now is that Hemingway's fiction must be approached on its own terms and judged by its own rules; it is useless to object to his choice of subject matter or apply rules which have no relevance. For the criticism which has sought to change Hemingway has not been productive of real insights. "It is true", as Malcolm Cowley once said, "that Hemingway has seldom been an affirmative writer; it is true that most of his work is narrow and violent and generally preoccupied with death. But the critics, although they might conceivably change him for the worse, are quite unable to change him for the better. He is one of the novelists who write not as they should or would, but as they must... he listens to his personal demon, which might be called his intuition or sense of life."⁽¹⁾ it is not fair to the artist, as Henry James put it, to tamper with the flute and then criticize its music. Surely the most important/

(1) "Nightmare and Ritual in Hemingway", Malcolm Cowley Hemingway: A Collection of Critical Essays; ed. Robert Weeks Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, p. 51.

important and revealing question that a critic can ask of Hemingway's work is "why" - why did he choose to write about the things that he did?

To ask such a question is, I think, to place the correct emphasis on Hemingway's fiction - that it is a form of art and as such represents his own particular and personal vision of life. Such a question also forces the critic to recognize that "It is the province of literature to propose its own formal solutions for problems which in life have none."⁽¹⁾ Art is instructive only in so far as it gives an image of the human situation from its own point of view, its own version of what is significant in man's life. As the particular vehicle of one man's vision, art by its very nature must be selective, and what Hemingway has done in his fiction is to select those aspects of human experience which have meaning for him. Out of these disparate parts Hemingway has created a world of his own, one that within its own acknowledged limitations is pregnant with meaning. To that world, to break it down into its component parts - that shall be my task. And finally to prove that Hemingway created/

(1) Bishop, p. 44.

created his own particular world because it dramatized for him the important issues he saw to exist in man's life, to show that it is possible to distill out of that world Hemingway's philosophy, or, of one balks at the use of such a word, his essential and consistent way of looking at life, and, lastly, to use that knowledge to return to his work with greater pleasure and profit.

CHAPTER TWO

THE NICK ADAMS STORIES

INNOCENCE AND INITIATION

"What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now forever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind."

William Wordsworth
The Immortality Ode

Perhaps the best introduction to a study of the works of Ernest Hemingway is to begin where he did - at the beginning. The beginning for Hemingway was his childhood, and it furnished him with the material for his stories about Nick Adams, an American boy who first appears in Hemingway's initial publication in the United States, a collection of short stories entitled In Our Time (1925) and who subsequently reappeared in two later collections Men Without Women (1927) and Winner Take Nothing (1933). Taken together, the Nick Adams stories are as a germinal a body of work as any author could write, embodying as they do the basic characters, situations, and experiences that Hemingway was to later develop more fully. Hemingway was always aware of his childhood as a source for his fiction; in 1952 he was to remark about the town where he grew up, "I had a wonderful novel to write about Oak Park and would never do it because I did not want to hurt living people."⁽¹⁾ His account of the boyhood, adolescence, and early manhood of Nick Adams perceptively capture the meaning of the paradox of growing up - the story of innocence, its loss, and what we gain by that loss. As Leslie Fiedler once said of Hemingway, "All his/

(1) The Apprenticeship of Ernest Hemingway, Charles Fenton The Viking Press, New York, 1958. p. 1.

his life he had been haunted by a sense of how simple
it all was once"; ⁽¹⁾ this sense of "how simple it all
was once" continually drove Hemingway to re-evaluate the
experiences of childhood in order to understand better
what it meant to be an adult. The stories of Nick Adams
are a microcosm of Hemingway's fictional world; to
understand them is in many ways to understand the basis
of all his work.

Not only are the Nick Adams stories an excellent
introduction to the bulk of Hemingway's work, they also
illustrate the essential coherency and unity of all he
has written. It is a coherency and unity that goes far
beyond the mere re-occurrence of certain characters,
situations, and experiences. Hemingway was well aware
of this particular repetitive element in his work, and
in Death in the Afternoon he made fun of his tendency to
repeat certain experiences more than is necessary: after
hearing for a second time the description of the scene
at Smyrna when the Greeks broke the fore-legs of their
pack animals and pushed them in the shallow water of the
harbour to drown, the old lady who is his companion remarks
"You/

(1) Love and Death in the American Novel, Leslie Fiedler
Criterion Books, New York, 1960. p. 87.

"You wrote about those mules before" to which Hemingway replies, "I know it and I'm sorry. Stop interrupting. I won't write about them again, I promise." (1) The essential oneness of his material is rather a coherency of attitude, one is almost tempted to call it a philosophy of life (a phrase Hemingway would have instinctively mistrusted). As Robert Penn Warren put it in his excellent introduction to A Farewell to Arms, "... his work forms a whole to an uncommon degree. One part explains and interprets another... the best way to understand one of his books is... to compare it with both earlier and later pieces and seek to discern motives and methods that underlie all of his work." (2) The relationship between the parts and the whole of Hemingway's work do much to explain its total meaning, and seen in this light the stories of Nick Adams provide us with a passport into the total world of Hemingway. The need to deal with Hemingway's work as an inter-related whole can be seen on a more prosaic level as well, as demonstrated by/

(1) Death in the Afternoon, Ernest Hemingway
Jonathan Cape, London, 1962. p. 131.

(2) Introduction to A Farewell to Arms, Robert Penn Warren
Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1959. p. xi.

by the results of a poll taken in The Saturday Review of Literature in the issue of August 5, 1944; a panel of critics was asked to name the most important living American author and also to list the ten best works in American fiction. Significantly, the panel unanimously named Hemingway to be the most important living American author, but not one of his books was included in the list of the ten best works of American fiction. This fact would seem to indicate that the critics felt that the worth of Hemingway's accomplishment lay in its totality rather than in any one of its parts.

In its largest sense the theme of the Nick Adams stories might be called that of growing up, the story of the boyhood, adolescence, and young manhood of an American man in the early years of the twentieth century. The stories, when rearranged so that they follow in the sequence in which they happened rather than that in which they were written, can be taken to comprise a loosely organized but highly perceptive biography. The stories can be arranged into three distinct categories: one dealing with Nick's early boyhood in upper Michigan from about the age of seven to seventeen; the second period recounts Nick's experiences during World War I in Italy when he was/

was about nineteen; and the third division shows us Nick after the war, now a young man of about twenty-two. It was an admirable plan, for it allowed Hemingway to combine both theme and plot; that is to say that the plot of the Nick Adams stories, his growth from boy to man, is also its theme.

The first story in In Our Time is entitled Indian Camp; in it we see the young boy Nick lying secure in his father's arm as they are rowed across the lake to where there is "an Indian lady very sick." (1) Upon examining the pregnant squaw, Nick's father the doctor performs a Caesarian on the woman without any anaesthetic; Nick acts as his assistant. In the upper bunk her invalid husband, who has listened to her screams for three days, stoically smokes his pipe. The operation over, the doctor mounts the upper bunk to see how the husband took it:

"He pulled the blanket from the Indian's head. His hand came away we... the Indian lay with his face toward the wall. His throat had been cut from ear to ear. The blood had flowed down into a pool where his body sagged the bed." (2)

Before Nick's father can get Nick out of the shanty, the boy has had a "... good view of the upper bunk when his father, /

(1) The Fifth Column and First forty-nine Stories, Ernest Hemingway Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1938. p. 189. (identified hereafter as First 49).

(2) Ibid., p. 192.

father, the lamp in one hand, tipped the Indian's head
back."⁽¹⁾

Up to this point the story seems to be either about the professional skill of the doctor or the suicide of the Indian; Nick is merely there. However, as Nick and his father row back across the lake, Nick comes to the fore of the story and exchanges his role of spectator for that of questioner; the "point" of the story emerges in the questions he asks his father and establish that the story is about him. Essentially Nick wants to know "why": why did the woman have such a hard time having her baby; why did the husband kill himself; in fact, why do people have to die? Like a catechism, the answers Nick's father give can at this point be accepted only on faith; later he will come to realize that like the Indian husband some people "can't stand things" and must escape from them in some way, that there is suffering and pain in the world. For the moment Nick's reaction to the horrible scene he has just witnessed is that of a child - a retreat into the secure world of illusions; in fact to/

(1) The Fifth Column and First Forty-nine Stories, Ernest Hemingway Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1938. p. 192. (identified hereafter as First 49).

to the supreme illusion of all, that he himself will never die. The closing scene catches this mood perfectly:

"They were seated in the boat, Nick in the stern, his father rowing. The sun was coming up over the hills. A bass jumped making a circle in the water. Nick trailed his hand in the water. It felt warm in the sharp chill of the morning.

In the early morning on the lake sitting in the stern of the boat with his father rowing, he felt quite sure that he would never die." (1)

Nick has seen what Norman Brown has called the "dialectic of life and death - the contradiction between the subjective dream of loving union with the world and the objective fact...." (2) but at this point in his development Nick is able to ignore the lesson. Nevertheless, it is an experience which he will not forget.

The emphasis of the story is not on the sensational aspects of the incident, violently arresting as it is, nor about the doctor or the Indian, but about the effect the whole thing has on Nick. Philip Young quite correctly points out that this is an initiation for Nick, an "... initiation to pain and to the violence of birth and death." (3) Nick has had "life" in all its pain and/

(1) The Fifth Column and First Forty-nine Stories, Ernest Hemingway Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1938. p. 193 (identified hereafter as First 49)

(2) Life Against Death, Norman O. Brown Random House, New York, 1960. p. 113.

(3) Ernest Hemingway, Philip Young G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., London, 1952, p. 4.

and violence suddenly thrust upon him; he has discovered evil, and has seen pain in human beings operate on two levels: the physical pain of the squaw whose screams have driven the Indian men to the woods where they cannot hear her, and the mental pain of the husband, who, because he "could not stand things", has cut his throat.

Yet the story is more than simply an initiation, a discovery of evil; this element has been pointed out by many commentators. In a curious way it is also a celebration of the innocence of the child who can see death and still believe in his own immortality. A suggestion of this other level to the story can be seen in Harry Levin's remark, "This, for Nick, is an initiation to suffering and death, but with the sunrise shortly afterward, youth and well-being reassert themselves; and the end of the story reaffirms the generalization Hazlitt once drew: 'No young man ever thinks he shall die.'⁽¹⁾"

The story thus works at two levels, with Nick as the focal point of both: on the one hand he is exposed to the paradoxical inter-twining of life and death and the pain and suffering they can cause; on the other hand, he is young/

(1) "Observations on the Style of Ernest Hemingway", Harry Levin Hemingway: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. R.P. Weeks Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1962. p. 83-84.

young enough and innocent enough to reject the inevitable lesson that should be drawn from what he has seen - that he too will someday die - and can continue to believe in his personal immortality. Nick is essentially innocent in this story, an "... innocence of a self that refuses to accept the immitigable rule of reality, including death."⁽¹⁾ That innocence has not been destroyed by what he has seen, and thus the story is as much a celebration of innocence as it is a discovery of evil. The story, then, introduces a number of important themes: the discovery of evil, particularly in the form of death; the initiation into the world that is a result of this; the innocence, the sense of "how simple it all was once", that is retained in spite of this; and finally the opposition by Hemingway of two basic principles in man - his belief in his own immortality in spite of the mortality he sees in the world around him. These last two themes, that of mortality and immortality, are the most basic ones of the Nick Adams stories, forming the framework within which the action takes place.

The next two stories in the biography of Nick Adams are The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife and Ten Indians; both/

(1) Radical Innocence: Studies in the Contemporary American Novel, Ihab Hassan
Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1961. p. 6.

both continue to develop the central theme of growing up, but in its less sensational aspects. In Ten Indians Hemingway evokes the simple joys of childhood at the same time that he records the process by which they are lost. "Nickie" rides home from the Fourth of July picnic with his neighbours the Garner's and is kidded about his Indian girlfriend, Prudence Mitchell: Nick felt "... hollow and happy inside himself to be teased about Prudence Mitchell,"⁽¹⁾ But when Nick arrives home, his father, who again plays the role of the teacher, tells Nick that he had come upon Prudence and another boy "having quite a time" in the woods. Nick's reaction is to feel with all the intensity of puppy love that his heart must be broken, but he retains his ability to forget for when he wakes up the next morning, "... he was awake a long time before he remembered that his heart was broken."⁽²⁾ Nick has learned another lesson - that nothing can last forever, but also that the romantic cliché he has picked up from the adult world that one's heart breaks when one loses one's love is not true. The story skillfully evokes the joys and sorrows of childhood, of its intensity of feeling and its quickness to forget.

In/

(1) First 49, p. 430.

(2) Ibid., p. 434.

In The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife Nick's father is seen in a rather unfavourable light for the first time: when he is challenged by a half-breed Indian that he has hired to cut up drift logs as to their being stolen property or not, he backs down from the fight he provokes; we also suspect that Dr. Adams was wrong to begin with. If his conduct is seen as slightly lacking, the reaction of Mrs. Adams, the scripture-quoting Christian Scientist, when she is told of the incident, is of no use at all. The doctor explains that the Indian tried to pick a fight in order not to have to pay his medical bill, but Mrs. Adams refuses to believe this sort of man could exist: "No, I can't believe anyone would do a thing of that sort intentionally."⁽¹⁾ Nick himself does not appear until the very end of the story, but when he does, it is in a significant context: his father tells him that his mother wants to see him, but Nick wants to go with his father, and the story closes with Nick and his father going off together into the woods to hunt squirrels. The meaning of the story is that Nick has rejected the mother's religious world, with its refusal to admit that evil exists, for the masculine world of his father which, even if it deals unsatisfactorily with the problem, at least admits of its existence./

(1) First 49, p. 200.

existence. Nick is faced with the common adolescent problem of conflicting loyalty between his parents, that they may compete with each other for a child. Rather than providing him with a sense of stability, the parents only create a deeper conflict within him.

In the next two stories, The End of Something and The Three Day Blow, Nick is somewhat older, about sixteen or seventeen, and the stories must be taken together in order to make sense; in this they are like chapters of a novel. In the first story Nick and his girl Marjorie go trolling for lake trout, have a picnic on a beach, and then, as the moon begins to rise, Nick tells her that "It isn't fun anymore",⁽¹⁾ none of it, not even love. After Marjorie leaves, his friend Bill appears as Nick lies face down on the blanket and wants to know if there was a scene, but Nick tells him to leave him alone; clearly the two have talked this all over before Nick actually took the step. The story confirms the lesson that Nick learned in Ten Indians - that being in love can be a painful process, but we are left at the end of the story with a sense of incompleteness: why did the affair necessarily have to end, as both Nick and Bill seemed to feel it must, in spite of the fact that Nick is still obviously fond of Marjorie?

The/

(1) First 49, p. 208.

The answer to this question appears in The Three-Day Blow. Nick and his friend Bill sit around the fireplace during the first fall storm and get slightly drunk in the whimsically profound manner of teenagers who are still very conscious that they are old enough to drink. In the course of their conversation, which ranges from books to baseball, the subject of Marjorie comes up. The reason Nick broke it off was because she wasn't of the right class for him to marry. "You can't mix oil and water and you can't mix that sort of thing any more than if I'd marry Ida that works for the Strattons,"⁽¹⁾ Bill explains. But the fact that he has done the correct thing is of little comfort to Nick, and he is despondent until Bill warns him about the danger of getting "back into it again"; the thought cheers him up: "He felt happy. Nothing was ever finished. Nothing was ever lost."⁽²⁾ The inevitable optimism of youth reasserts itself, and Nick can still have the innocent belief that nothing is ever completely over, which is to say he thinks some things to be immortal. Taken together the two stories document a disturbing incident in the process of Nick's growing up: he has felt compelled to give up a girl whom/

(1) First 49, p. 221.

(2) Ibid., p. 222.

whom he is fond of because she is of the "wrong class"; he has begun to lose some of his innocence and assimilate the "values" of the adult world that divides people into classes. To some extent he can forget this lesson: "Outside now the Marge business was no longer so tragic. The wind blew everything like that away."⁽¹⁾ Certainly The Three-Day Blow also illustrates the other aspects of adolescence: the pleasures of friendship, particularly that of men without women.

The Killers, The Battler, and The Light of the World, the next three stories about Nick, show us a boy about eighteen or nineteen, away from home and on his own, and as such form an interesting trilogy about the discovery of the seamier side of human nature. In each of the stories Nick is placed in a situation in which violence is directly experienced or in which something unpleasant is deeply felt. The Killers, one of Hemingway's most popular works and the fore-runner of all gangster stories, has caused some trouble for the critics because they have not been exactly sure who the story is about. Two gangsters come into a lunch-room where Nick works, tie him and the cook up, and instruct George the counter-man to get rid of anyone who comes/

(1) First 49, p. 223.

comes in. They are here, they tell the boys, to kill Ole Anderson, a former boxer who often comes into the diner to eat. Their reason is almost as frightening as their intention: "He never had a chance to do anything to us. He never even seen us. We're killing him for a friend. Just to oblige a friend, bright boy." ⁽¹⁾ When Ole Anderson doesn't show up, the two thugs leave, and Nick goes to Anderson's room to warn him; his reply to Nick's tale is disconcerting, for Anderson refuses to do anything, to either call the police or get out of town. With hopeless resignation to his fate, he tells Nick he is "... through with all that running around." ⁽²⁾ He knows he is going to be killed and accepts it.

Some critics have felt that the story is about the two gangsters or perhaps Ole Anderson, but the ending proves clearly that it is about Nick and his reaction to what he has seen. The cook's reaction to the whole affair is to not even listen to it; as a "nigger" he has enough problems. George his friend admits that "It's a hell of a thing", ⁽³⁾ but feels there's nothing to be done about it. Nick's reaction is sharply differentiated from that of the cook and George: to him it is an "awful thing"; "I'm going to get/

(1) First 49, p. 381.

(2) Ibid., p. 385.

(3) Ibid., p. 387.

get out of this town", he says a little desperately, "I can't stand to think about him waiting in the room and knowing he's going to get it. It's too damned awful."⁽¹⁾ George's advice is "Well, you'd better not think about it", advice Nick will soon come to value and use. When people "can't stand things", we know, they must do either one of two things: commit suicide as the husband did in Indian Camp and as, in effect, Ole Anderson is doing in not trying to live, or simply not think about them.

The theme of the story is the discovery of evil in human beings; in many ways it is a discovery similar to the one that Hamlet makes: that evil is woven into the very fabric of society and as such it cannot be destroyed.⁽²⁾ Some people are simply going to be unaware that evil exists, as Mrs. Bell who keeps the rooming house where Anderson lives; she thinks he is just "... an awfully nice man."⁽³⁾ Or some people will close their eyes to evil as the cook does when he says "I don't even listen to it."⁽⁴⁾ Or some people are aware of evil, but shrug their shoulders at it because it is part of the world, as does George. And some people,/

(1) First 49, p. 387.

(2) Understanding Fiction, Cleanth Brooks and R.P. Warren F.S. Crofts and Co., New York, 1943. p. 317.

(3) First 49, p. 386.

(4) Ibid., p. 386.

people, like Nick, discover evil in all its unescapable horror for the first time and are as shocked by the fact that they cannot do anything about it as they are by its existence.

The Battler and The Light of the World depict Nick "on the bum", away from his family and seeing life as it exists on the open road. The first story is remarkable for the subtlety with which it develops its effects. Having been knocked off a freight train by the brakeman, Nick comes upon a camp fire where he discovers a man with a face "... queerly formed and mutilated... like putty in colour. Dead looking in the firelight."⁽¹⁾ The sight of it makes Nick feel a little sick. The man identifies himself as Ad Francis, a former boxing champion, and with the arrival of his companion, a Negro named Bugs, the story becomes more sinister in tone. Nick is invited to supper, and while the three are eating, Ad Francis tries to pick a fight with Nick, only to be tenderly knocked out by Bugs with a black-jack. Bugs explains to the frightened Nick what made Francis act as he did - it seems he was accused of living with his sister and is also punch-drunk - all in his strangely disconcerting, soft-voiced way; "I like/

(1) First, 49, p. 229.

like to be with him," he adds. (1) Nick takes all this in and is asked to leave when Francis begins to regain consciousness. The end of the story again shows that its importance is the effect all this has had on Nick: "He has been so stunned by the twosome that he walked quite a distance before he 'found a ham sandwich in his hand and put it in his pocket.' " (2) The relationship between the two men is something new to Nick and it puzzles him; he is aware that something is very wrong here. Hemingway is not explicit that this is a homosexual relationship between Bugs and Francis, but the self-sufficiency of the couple, the "queerness" of Francis, and the attitude of Bugs toward him all suggest it. For Hemingway homosexuality was a "... kind of ultimate in evil", (3) and he must have felt that its discovery was an important part of a boy's education. And the story not only exposes Nick to another aspect of the evil in human nature but also shows that he is learning to take care of himself. When he is pushed off the train, Nick has already learned his lesson: "They would never suck him in that way again"; (4) as Nick explains/

(1) First 49, p. 235.

(2) Young, p. 11.

(3) Ibid., p. 11.

(4) First 49, p. 227.

explains to Francis, in this sort of world "You've got to be tough."⁽¹⁾ It would seem that by this point Nick has almost completely broken away from the influence of his parents.

The Light of the World shows us an older and more worldly-wise Nick. He and his friend Tom arrive in town, go to a bar where they drink beer and have an argument with the bartender, and go to the railroad station where they find, Nick tells us in matter of fact way, there are five whores, four Indians, and six white men, one of whom is plainly a homosexual. The story differs in style from the others in that it is told by Nick in the first person, a narrative form that allows Hemingway to demonstrate the ability Nick has acquired to handle himself. It is Nick who exercises prudence in the bar and keeps Tom from getting into a fight, and it is Nick who tells Tom it is "all right" to give their correct ages. There is little action to the story, but in the conversation that occurs in the waiting room any gaps in Nick's knowledge of the perversions of human nature are filled in: he resists the tentative advances of the homosexual, listens to a quarrel between two whores as to which of them "laid" a boxer named Steve Ketchel, and as the story closes we see him beginning to get ideas about Alice, /

(1) First 49, p. 229.

Alice, "... the biggest whore I ever saw in my life and the biggest woman":⁽¹⁾ "Tom saw me looking at her and he said, 'Come on. Let's go.'"⁽²⁾ Life on the open road, it appears, contains many lessons not easily obtained at home. Hemingway once called The Light of the World the story "... which nobody else ever liked",⁽³⁾ although it was always one of his favourites. It is easy to see that if one regards the story as a mere depiction of various forms of human depravity, it would easily shock the conventional reader. However, placed in the context of the whole framework of Nick's growth from boy to man, the story is not a pointless study of "sin", but one of the necessary lessons a boy must learn.

This story marks the end of those dealing with Nick's early boyhood. What has that boyhood consisted of? It has above all been one that has been defined by its polarities: on the one hand, the innocence of Nick, epitomized by his belief in his personal immortality; on the other hand, the harsh realities of the world, dominated/

(1) First 49, p. 484.

(2) Ibid., p. 489.

(3) Introduction to First 49, p. vii.

dominated by a sense of mortality. In the beginning these polarities did not exist for Nick - the world was in harmony with him, and surely he would never die. But as he grows older these two poles of his situation begin to coincide, and he begins to realize that his innocence, his sense of immortality, has little relationship with the world as it actually exists.

The next story in the development of Nick Adams from boy to man takes place far from the woods of Michigan in the streets of an Italian town where Nick sits against the wall of a church, wounded in his spine, and waits for the stretcher bearers. The only action, if it can be called that, in the vignette is Nick's remark to his dying friend Rinaldi who lies face down beside him: "You and me we've made a separate peace."⁽¹⁾ All this takes place in "Chapter VI" of In Our Time, one of the sixteen vignettes or inter-chapters whose relationship to the longer stories has often puzzled readers. "Chapter VI" is the one vignette where a concrete connection between the world of the short stories and that of the vignettes can be seen: Nick, the boy and adolescent of the Michigan woods, is also involved in the war in Italy. In the
bisection/

(1) First 49, p. 237.

bisection of the two worlds in the form of a character common to both of them we can see what the relationship between these two seemingly unrelated aspects of In Our Time is.

Writing to Edmund Wilson, shortly before the publication of In Our Time, Hemingway explained that there was a definite reason for the composition of the book, consisting as it did of a series of stories in between which appeared short vignettes that seemed to bear no relation to the longer stories: "Finished the book of fourteen stories with a chapter on In Our Time between each story - that is the way they were meant to go - to give the picture of the whole between examining it in detail. Like looking with your eyes at something, say a passing coastline, and then looking at it with 15X binoculars."⁽¹⁾ For the author there was a definite relationship between the short vignettes and the longer stories, a relationship based not just on mere juxtaposition but on the illumination of the same subject matter, seen from several different angles. Wilson agreed with Hemingway: "It had the appearance of a miscellany of stories and fragments; but actually the parts hung together and produced a definite effect."⁽²⁾

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- (1) The Shores of Light, Edmund Wilson Farrar, Straus, and Young, New York, 1952. p. 122.
- (2) "Hemingway: Gauge of Morale", Edmund Wilson The Wound and the Boy. Edmund Wilson University Paperbacks. Methuen.

Of the inter-chapters six deal with the war, six with the bullfight, and six with various aspects of violence - a hanging, an execution, a shooting. The appearance of Nick in "Chapter VI" in this other context confirms something we have been suspicious of as we have read the stories about Nick in In Our Time: in spite of their superficial differences the world of the war, the bull-fight, and the execution is much the same as that of life in Michigan, for both of them contain evil, often in the form of violence and death; the butchery Nick has seen in the war he had already been seen by him back home in Michigan. The principle of life, we see, is essentially the same wherever you are, and there is little difference, say, between the threatened execution of Ole Anderson in The Killers and the actual execution of the six cabinet ministers in "Chapter V"; both stem from the same impulse in human nature.

Hemingway's juxtaposition of the two kinds of stories, the one a lyric rendering of a boy's experiences in Michigan, the other a realistic description of war, bull-fights, and civil violence give a universality to his theme of the discovery of evil and the shock that accompanies it; this, Hemingway, is saying, is nothing out/

out of the ordinary that Nick is experiencing, it is the way life is wherever one goes. The violence that Nick has been witness to at home finally catches up with him physically in the form of the wound that he receives; that is his final initiation in a long series, his personal baptism into pain, and from being a spectator he has turned into a participant. And there are connections between the two sets of stories beside their participation in a common theme; several of the vignettes repeat certain incidents we have already seen up in Michigan. For example, immediately following Indian Camp there is a description of a civilian evacuation of Adrianople: there in the midst of the rain and the carts a woman is "... having a kid with a young girl holding a blanket over her and crying. Scared sick looking at it."⁽¹⁾ No doubt young Nick looked much the same way when he held the basin for his father during the operation on the Indian squaw. And religion apparently has as little meaning to Sam Cardinella who, when about to be hung, loses complete control of himself in spite of the two priests who tell him "Be a man, my son"⁽²⁾ as it did when Nick saw it in the form of the pious sayings of his mother. The bull-fighters in their cowardice and bravery demonstrate/

(1) First 49, p. 195.

(2) Ibid., p. 317.

demonstrate the same concern with correct behaviour in the face of danger as Nick has shown in such stories as The Killers and The Battler. In short, the two apparently different worlds are really all of the same piece: life in the woods and war in Italy present the same problem of how to adjust in order to survive. The wound Nick receives in the spine not only climaxes all the other smaller mental wounds he has been receiving as a boy, it also completes his process of initiation. Nick's boyhood and adolescence, as we have seen, have been composed of two elements: first, an evocation of the simplicity and innocence of childhood while at the same time a realization that the experiences which reveal that innocence to him also make it impossible for him to ever return to it; second, his boyhood has also been one of initiation; until the wound Nick always felt that there was some way back to the lost Eden of his childhood, that it has never really been lost, but the wound irrevocably enforces on him the knowledge that he can never go back and is hence forth to be separated from his youth. The wound, as Nick himself suggests in his phrase "Separate peace", dramatizes this fact of separation that is at the core of his initiation.

What exactly has been the nature of the initiation that/

that Nick has under-gone? Essentially it has been a three stage operation: the exposure to the "facts of life", adjustment to these facts, leading to a new type of knowledge about the world. Initiation away from the secure world of the child into the precarious world of the adult is not a static process; it demands active participation on the part of the initiate. Nick progresses from refusing to admit evil can exist (Indian Camp), to a protest against its existence (The Killers), to an ironic acceptance of it (The Light of the World). In "Chapter VI" he makes the final step in his initiation - he separates himself from the conventional world; he is "not a patriot" any longer. From now on he will go it on his own and solve the problem of survival on his own terms, not on those of religion or patriotism. The characteristic mode of initiation is "... estrangement from the world leading to a visible mode of life. The end of initiation is always operational knowledge, the power to convert tragic awareness of life into a highly skilled and ritualized mode of action."⁽¹⁾ Nick sitting up against the/

(1) Hassan, p. 35.

the church wall in the Italian sun, has still many adjustments to make in order to achieve this kind of knowledge, but he has taken the vital step necessary to it, for he has made his own personal peace with society and is now on his own.

The wound Nick receives, then, dramatizes the problem of adjustment he has been experiencing all during his childhood. The wound makes it impossible for Nick to keep on in the old pattern, and the remainder of the stories about Nick show him either in the process of adjusting to the wound or after the adjustment has taken place. The most immediate effect of the wound is to shatter Nick emotionally as well as physically; in particular it destroys his youthful belief in his personal immortality that we have noticed all along. In his introduction to a collection of war stories entitled Men at War which he edited, Hemingway explained what happened to a young man when he went to war and was wounded: "When you go to war as a boy, you have a great illusion of immortality. Other people get killed; not you. When when you are badly wounded the first time, you lose that illusion and you know it can happen to you."⁽¹⁾ And Hemingway described his/

(1) Men at War, ed. Ernest Hemingway
Crown Books, New York, 1942. p. xiii.

his own wounding in the first World War to his friend Guy Hickok in the same terms of the loss of immortality: "I died then. I felt my soul or something coming right out of my body, like you'd pull a silk handkerchief out of a pocket by one corner. It flew around and then came back and went in again and I wasn't dead any more."⁽¹⁾ The idea that a wound brought a knowledge of one's personal mortality and a consequent fear of dying remained a constant theme with Hemingway; some thirty years after In Our Time Colonel Cantwell in Across the River and into the Trees muses on his own first wound: "No one of his other wounds had ever done to him what the first big one did. I suppose it is just the loss of the immortality, he thought. Well, in a way that is quite a lot to lose."⁽²⁾ The pre-occupation with this loss and the problem of reconciliation to it can seem as beginning with Nick's wound in In Our Time.

In Now I Lay Me we see an entirely different Nick from the self-confident adolescent of Michigan; here he emerges as a badly damaged man only beginning to recover from his wound and who does not dare let himself sleep "... because

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- (1) "Portrait of Papa", Malcolm Cowley
Ernest Hemingway: The Man and the Work, ed. John McCaffery,
The World Publishing Co., Cleveland, 1952. p. 47.
- (2) Across The River and into the Trees, Ernest Hemingway
Jonathan Cape, London, 1950. p. 30-31.
(identified hereafter as ARIT)

I had been living for a long time with the knowledge that if I ever shut my eyes in the dark and let myself go, my soul would go out of my body. I had been that way a long time, ever since I had been blown up at night and felt it go out of me and go off and then come back."⁽¹⁾ Again the wound is seen as a loss of immortality and carries with it the problem of adjustment to that loss. And so Nick lies on the floor of the room he shares with his Italian orderly, listens to the silk worms eating leaves, and keeps himself from sleeping by thinking of the fishing trips, real and imaginary, he made as a boy. In the conversation he has with the orderly Nick answers his question as to why he cannot sleep: he "... got in pretty bad shape along early last spring and at night it bothers me"; nor, he explains, carrying out the phrase "Not patriots", he made to Rinaldi, does he know why he is in the war: "I don't know, John. I wanted to, then."⁽²⁾ The story ends on an ironic note: John wants Nick to get married because "... he was very certain about marriage and knew it would fix up everything."⁽³⁾ Nick knows/

(1) First 49, p. 461.

(2) Ibid., p. 467.

(3) Ibid., p. 469.

knows better than this now - nothing fixes up everything. The story perceptively presents us with a picture of the state of mind of Nick after he has been wounded: the fear of losing control of himself in the dark and "dying" again as he did when he was wounded and the ceaseless mental activity to keep from thinking about the one thing he knows he must not think about, the actual wounding itself. Not only does the story reveal the psychology of a wounded man, it also confirms some of the early impressions we have had of Nick's boyhood in Michigan. His memories of fishing trips show the same love of the out-of-doors and his recognition that enjoyable experiences are often inter-twined with painful ones: fishing is fun, but baiting the hook, particularly if it is a salamander or a cricket, too often reminds one of the pain of human life. Other of his memories include an incident which confirms the picture of the relationship between Dr. Adams and his wife seen in The Doctor and his Wife: Nick remembers when his mother cleaned out the basement while the doctor was away and burned Dr. Adams' prized collection of Indian arrowheads and pottery in her zeal; then with total lack of understanding stood "smiling to meet him" when he returned. Nick makes no comment on the scene, but the point is clear: there is an irreconcilable opposition between the world of his father and that of his mother, and/

and he is definitely in sympathy with the former.

In Another Country continues the theme of adjustment. It is later in the year now, and Nick is in a hospital in Milan taking therapy for his wounded leg. With him are five other soldiers, also wounded, and all of them feel bound together by their having been wounded: "We felt held together by there being something that had happened that they, the people who disliked us, did not understand. (1) Nick himself has gained some perspective on his wound; he knows that all wounds are really just accidents and that he does not deserve the medal he has received. All of them have lived "... a very long time with death and... were all a little detached"; (2) there is again this emphasis on the wound as having separated those who receive it from the rest of the world. At the same time Nick continues to have the fear of dying and the inability to sleep that the wound created initially: "... I was very much afraid to die, and often lay in bed night by myself, afraid to die, and wondering how I would be when I went back to the front again." (3) When we remember that this is the same person who/

(1) First 49, p. 367.

(2) Ibid., p. 368.

(3) Ibid., p. 368.

who was once "quite sure he would never die", we realize what an enormous change the wound has made in him. And the instinctive distrust Nick had in Now I Lay Me that marriage would not solve anything is confirmed by his friendship with an Italian major who has also been wounded and is taking therapy as well. His wife has just died, and he bitterly warns Nick that a man "... should not place himself in a position to lose. He should find things he cannot lose", but he confesses that he is "... utterly unable to resign (himself)."⁽¹⁾ Life, Nick knows, is like that, and the thing one has to do is to resign oneself to its pains and learn to survive.

Nick's fears about "how he would be when he went back to the front again" are realized in A Way You'll Never Be, a story which shows Nick fighting for control of himself. In it we see Nick, dressed now in an American uniform, cross over a recent battle field covered with corpses, and present himself to Captain Paravinci, former commander of Nick's company. Nick explains that his job is to show himself to the troops as proof that the Americans are on their way, a mission which sets the peculiarly disturbing unreal tone to the story. Nick, it develops, is still in/

(1) First 49, p. 370.

in very bad shape from his wound: not only is he unable to sleep at night without a light, until recently he was "certified as nutty".⁽¹⁾ Nick lies down for a nap before touring the battalion, starts to think back, and for a moment loses complete mental control: "And there was Baby Delys, oddly enough, with feathers on; you called me baby doll a year ago, tadada..."⁽²⁾ but one memory in particular forces itself upon him, a place that he associates with his wound: "... the river ran so much wider and stiller than it should and outside Fossalta there was a low house painted yellow with willows all around it... and he had been there a thousand times, and never seen it, but there it was every night as plain as the hill, only it frightened him. That house meant more than anything and every night he had it. That was what he needed but it frightened him."⁽³⁾ What really frightened him so that now he can't get rid of it, Nick decides as he lies in the bunk "... was the long yellow house and the different width of the river."⁽⁴⁾ And what was even more/

(1) First 49, p. 505.

(2) Ibid., p. 506.

(3) Ibid., p. 506.

(4) Ibid., p. 507.

more disturbing was the fact that now, having seen again the place where he was actually wounded, he knows there is no house or different width in the river: "Then where did he go each night and what was the peril, and why would he wake, soaking wet, more frightened than he had ever been in a bombardment, because of a house and a long stable and a canal?"⁽¹⁾

In all the stories that deal with Nick after he has been wounded, we sense this barely controlled fear, this strange fascination which draws him back, waking or sleeping, to that which he would most like to forget. Without going too deeply into his theories, Freud's essay Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1922) provides a possible explanation to this puzzling aspect of Nick's behaviour. In his observations of children at play and of the dreams of wounded war veterans Freud noticed a principle in operation which seemed to contradict his thesis of the pleasure principle which stated that all our actions serve to lower unpleasurable tensions. Instead of forgetting about unpleasant incidents, such as the loss of a parent or the actual process of wounding, the children in their play and the veterans in their dreams constantly recreated them; indeed/

(1) First 49, p. 507.

indeed there was a "compulsion to repeat" present which "... recalls from the past experiences which include no possibility of pleasure."⁽¹⁾ To explain this tendency to repeat unpleasant experiences Freud developed the concept of the "traumatic neurosis": in an experience such as a wound excitations break through the protective barrier of the mind and shock results. The wound is completely unexpected and thus upsets the mental balance of the person; before the wound some kind of security surrounded the man, but the wound, for which no reason can be found, destroys all these illusions of security. More than anything the wounded man wants to know why it happened to him, as Nick puts it, "... where did he go each night and what was the peril?" It is this desire to understand and control that leads the wounded man to recreate in his dreams the circumstances in which he was wounded; these dreams, Freud went on to explain, are the efforts to master the wound retrospectively, to develop the anxiety whose omission caused the traumatic neurosis,⁽²⁾ and thus to gain control over what F.J. Hoffman has aptly called/

(1) Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Sigmund Freud
Hogarth Press, London, 1961. p. 14.

(2) Ibid., p. 6.

called the "unreasonable wound".⁽¹⁾ Perhaps in re-experiencing the wound the key to understanding it will be found, and the fear of it will be controlled. It may well be that this is the reason that Nick continually undergoes the torture of his dreams. Freud differentiated between three different states of mind in relation to the presence of danger: fright, which is the condition of a person who runs into danger without being prepared for it; fear, implying a definite object; and anxiety which is a state of preparedness for danger.⁽²⁾ In his dreams it may be Nick is trying to change his fright for anxiety, but all the dream does is frighten him even more than when he was in a bombardment.

Among literary critics, notably Edmund Wilson in his book The Wound and the Bow, the wound of the hero is seen as a sort of "symbolic injury" which is both the source of the hero's weakness and his strength. F.J. Hoffman explains the phenomena of the wounded man's actions in modern literature in much the same terms that Freud used to explain his theory of the traumatic neurosis: after such a shock as the wound the experience must be recalled again/

(1) "No Beginning and No End: Hemingway and Death",
F.J. Hoffman Essays in Criticism III (January, 1953),
p. 84.

(2) Freud, p. 6.

again and again not because it is enjoyable, but because one is unable to adjust to it. "The injured man will not rest until he has found what is to him a meaningful and original pattern of adjustment. The experience is itself almost equivalent to a death; since this is true, what follows will amount to a new and different life. The man who survives violence is often quite remarkably different from the man who has never experienced it."⁽¹⁾

In A Way You'll Never Be Nick conforms to the pattern both Freud and Hoffman have described. In his dreams about his wound or the place where he was wounded he tries to adjust and control his fear of the wound he cannot understand. And in his conversation with the captain and the soldiers we see how different the experience of the wound has made him from those who have not had it, from all those who have not "... received the castigation that everyone receives who goes there long enough."⁽²⁾ And perhaps in time the wound may be a source of strength for Nick, giving him new knowledge about how to live in the world; at the moment this is his biggest problem - how to survive. Jake Barnes in The Sun Also Rises summed up the whole/

(1) Hoffman, p. 76.

(2) Across the River and into the Trees, p. 62.

whole problem of knowledge of the world: "Perhaps as you went along you did learn something. I did not care what it was all about. All I wanted to know was how to live in it. Maybe if you found out how to live in it you learned from that what it was all about." (1) The wounded man does not search for a system to explain the nature of the world but only for enough operational knowledge to allow him to survive. Certainly A Way You'll Never Be shows Nick in one of his worst moments, and one never is quite sure what is going on. The whole story has the quality about it, to use Keats' phrase, of a "waking dream", a kind of nightmare where everything is futile and nothing has any meaning. The action ends on this tone of unreality and confusion as Nick thinks to himself, "It was on that stretch that, marching, they had once passed the Terza Savoia cavalry regiment riding in the snow. The horse's breath made plumes in the cold air. No, that was somewhere else. Where was that?" (2)

Soldier's Home, although ostensibly about a returning soldier by the name of Krebs, might just as well be Nick returning home to Michigan, for it conforms to the pattern we have been following. Like Nick, Krebs was in World War I and/

(1) The Sun Also Rises, Ernest Hemingway
Charles Scribners' Sons, New York, 1960. p. 148.

(2) First 49, p. 512.

and saw a lot of action, and like Nick he has a mother with a highly developed religious sensibility which is unappealing to him. How much the experience and the shock of violence has separated the returning veteran from his previous patterns of behaviour and system of values is seen in Krebs' situation when he returns home from the war. In order to have people listen to him tell about the war in which he did some things of which he is proud, he finds he has to lie, and having to do so causes him to have "... a distaste for everything in the war"⁽¹⁾. The girls in the town are very attractive, "... but they lived in such a complicated world of already defined alliances and shifting feuds that Krebs did not feel the energy or the courage to break into it."⁽²⁾ The key to the story revolves around the words simple and complicated, and Krebs' actions flow directly from his efforts to keep his life simple and to avoid complications; as he puts it, "He did not want any consequences. He did not want any consequences ever again. He wanted to live along without consequences"⁽³⁾ and getting involved with people involves "consequences".
Like/

(1) First 49, p. 243.

(2) Ibid., p. 245.

(3) Ibid., p. 245.

Like the Italian major in In Another Country, Krebs is looking for "... things he cannot lose."⁽¹⁾ The war has changed Krebs; he has seen violence and now can no longer fit back into the old patterns that people who have not experienced violence still live by; he can no longer communicate with them.

But his desire to keep his life simple and uncomplicated is not permissible within his family; his mother and father want him to get "a definite aim in life" and to settle down and be a "credit to the community." All this, of course, would be to bring in all the complications that Krebs wants to avoid, and Krebs cannot explain this to his mother, nor why he doesn't love her or anybody, nor believe in God; how can he after what he has seen and done? The only way to avoid complications now is to leave home: "He had tried so hard to keep his life from being complicated. Still, none of it had touched him. He wanted his life to go smoothly."⁽²⁾ No other story about the first World War documents so well the unbridgable gulf that exists between a returning soldier and his family; having/

(1) First 49, p. 369.

(2) Ibid., p. 250-251.

having seen and experienced things beyond their imagination, he has changed and has nothing in common with them. There is nothing in the picture of Krebs that would contradict the assumption that the same kind of situation existed when Nick returned home to Dr. Adams and his Christian Scientist mother. Indeed, the position in In Our Time of Soldier's Home, coming as it does almost directly after "Chapter VI" in which Nick received his wound emphasizes the fact that we are to connect this story with the experiences of Nick. The situation that Krebs finds when he returns home illustrates the same sense of separation from the past that Nick has felt as the result of his wound. Krebs' decision to go to Kansas City and get a job is his own version of Nick's "separate peace".

Nick's actual return to the United States is celebrated in Big Two-Hearted River, a story which is more about the nature of Nick's adjustment to his wound than about the manner in which it has separated Nick from his past; in fact the story demonstrates in nearly final form to what extent Nick has come to dominate the terrible dreams and memories caused by the wound. Dean Gauss recalled a conversation Hemingway, he and F. Scott Fitzgerald had about this story shortly after it was published/

published in 1925: "Half in fun, half in seriousness, they now accused him of 'having written a story in which nothing happened", with the result that it was 'lacking in human interest.' Hemingway '... countered by insisting we were just ordinary book reviewers and hadn't taken the trouble to find out what he had been trying to do.'" (1)

Far too many people have not taken the trouble to find out what Hemingway was trying to do in this story, and, as a result, of all his stories this is the one most often accused of having no "point" to it. There are a number of reasons for this error: to begin with this is one of the most subtle of his stories, depending as it does on its delicate use of suggestion and implication to make its point; the ease with which Hemingway's style allows one to read the story has led many readers to assume that there was nothing more to the story than its surface brilliancy. Secondly, the story is an excellent illustration of the fact that Hemingway's work is all of one piece; for the story to make complete sense, a knowledge of Nick's past history is essential. Knowing that we are seeing a wounded war veteran returned home to the Michigan of his boyhood gives the story the added dimension that it needs.

There are several levels of meaning to the story.

The/

(1) Hemingway: The Writer as Artist, Carlos Baker
Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1952. p. 125.

The most obvious is that of an account of a fishing trip taken by Nick in the woods of northern Michigan, an account remarkable for its skilful use of detail and its depiction of the sensuous pleasures of camping and fishing in the woods - the smell of ferns, the taste of baked beans, the thrill of a strike - they are all here. Hemingway gives us, to use T.S. Eliot's celebrated term, an "objective correlative" for what it feels like to go fishing and camping. As far as the plot goes, it could not be simpler: Nick gets off the train at what used to be the town of Seney, but which has burned to the ground during the time he has been away. After watching the trout in the river bed, an experience which we are told he has not had for a long time but which still gives him "... all the old feeling",⁽¹⁾ Nick hikes off through the country, takes a nap in a grove of pine trees, and as night comes on, makes his camp by the river. The next morning he cooks his breakfast, catches grasshoppers for bait, goes fishing, and catches two trout. That is about all there is to the story on the surface, and as such it could not be simpler. To take the story at this level alone, however, would be to miss much, for the story is much like the stream that Nick/

(1) First 49, p. 308.

Nick looked at: very smooth and glossy, but showing its hidden power in the swirls of current around the logs which resist it.

From certain reactions and thoughts Nick has we begin to realize that the fishing trip has an importance to him much greater than simply that of an enjoyable experience, for the trip is a form of therapy for Nick, both as an escape from the memory of his wound and as a means of dealing with it. In this story we are dealing with an older Nick, probably about twenty-three or so, who has returned from the war in Europe to the woods of Michigan which he associates with the innocence of his childhood. At first glance we hardly recognize this calm person, so different is he from the semi-hysterical Nick of A Way You'll Never Be, but on closer examination we see it is the same man, but one who has at last found a partial means of adjusting to the pain of the wound and the knowledge of death and mortality that it has brought with it; the wound has become a scar.

The function that the fishing trip has for Nick emerges in his reactions to seemingly insignificant details in the landscape or to certain of his memories. The motif of the trip as an escape is established from the first
as/

as Nick sets off into the country: "He felt he had left everything behind, the need for thinking, the need to write, other needs. It was all back of him." ⁽¹⁾ The trip is making it possible for Nick to get a perspective on himself, to rid himself of some of the tensions caused by the war. The rhythmic tempo of all that Nick does, from setting up camp to baiting the hook, establish the other motif of the trip; Malcolm Cowley called it "... an incantation, a spell to banish evil spirits." ⁽²⁾ Nick is a man haunted by memories of painful experiences, and the fishing trip makes him forget them by keeping him busy and tired. The following passage shows the sense of peace and well-being Nick has obtained from the trip:

"Nick was happy as he crawled inside the tent. He had not been unhappy all day. This was different, though. Now things were done. There had been this to do. Now it was done. He had made his camp. Now it was done. He was very tired. He was settled. Nothing could touch him. It was a good place to camp. He was there, in the good place." ⁽³⁾

We can see that this concept of the "good place" is one that has long been in Hemingway's mind; the good place for Nick is the woods and fishing, both of which he associates with his childhood with its simple innocence, its lack of responsibility, and above all its unawareness of/

(1) First 49, p. 308.

(2) Introduction to The Portable Hemingway, Malcolm Cowley Viking Press, New York, 1945. p. xix.

(3) First 49, p. 313.

of mortality. The fishing trip is Nick's escape back into the simplicity of childhood, the good place where he feels secure and where nothing can touch him because it is a world that is completely self-sufficient and devoid of the complications of the adult world. One of the reasons we do not recognize Nick so readily in this story is that he has more in common with the Nick of Indian Camp than the Nick of A Way You'll Never Be, the three remarks that he makes out-loud are entirely in keeping with those an eight year old boy might make under similar circumstances, i.e. "Go on, grasshopper. Fly away somewhere."⁽¹⁾ Indeed, one of the most remarkable effects of the story is to make us aware of what is left out; the lack of the concerns that usually trouble Nick are conspicuous by their absence. There is a continual under-current of tightly controlled terror that threatens to break through the placid surface. Hemingway explained the principle behind the construction of this sort of story some seven years later:

"If a writer of prose knows enough about what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as/

(1) First 49, p. 310.

as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of movement of an iceberg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water. The writer who omits things because he does not know them only makes hollow places in his writing." (1)

And the things Nick would most like to forget keep impinging on his consciousness; the innocent simplicity of childhood, we recall, was continually being threatened by the impact of evil. As Nick is drinking his coffee before going to bed its bitterness makes a good ending to the incident he has been thinking about; he recognizes the symptoms: as he told Captain Paravicini in A Way You'll Never Be, "I can tell when I'm going to have one because I talk so much." (2) Here he knows he has been thinking too much but is not worried: "His mind was starting to work. He knew he could choke it because he was tired enough." (3) We remember that in the story Now I Lay Me Nick's mind would start to work, to recall things he wanted to forget, and that sometimes he could "choke" them by imagining he was on a fishing trip. If this is kept in mind, the function of this particular trip he is on becomes more clear: like the imaginings of Nick's mind, it is to keep/

(1) Death in the Afternoon, p. 183.

(2) First 49, p. 512.

(3) Ibid. p. 316.

keep him from thinking about the pain and shock of the wound and the loss of immortality. Sometimes, as in A Way You'll Never Be, Nick could not "choke" his memories, and then he would remember the place where he was wounded.

In the actual fishing the next day the memories Nick seeks to forget remain fairly well in the background, but sometimes threaten to break through, as when he hooks and loses a big trout: "He reeled in slowly. The thrill had been too much. He felt, vaguely, a little sick, as though it would be better to sit down." Nick has been living with his condition long enough to know, as a person with a heart condition does, the things to avoid, such as "... rushing his sensations". After sitting and smoking a cigarette Nick feels his equilibrium return and knows "... it was all right now",⁽¹⁾ and he can go on fishing. The other reminder of what Nick seeks to forget is not in any incident that occurs, but in the shape of the country, particularly the narrowness of the river as it enters the swamp. Perhaps, as Philip Young has suggested, the narrowness of the river recalls to Nick the "different width of the river" which terrified him in A Way You'll Never Be and which he always associated with his wound.⁽²⁾

In/

(1) First 49, p. 324-325.

(2) Young, p. 25.

In any case, it is clear that the swamp has reminded him of all he wants to forget: "In the swamp fishing was a tragic adventure. Nick did not want it. He did not want to go down the stream any further to-day." ⁽¹⁾ To go into the swamp would be to destroy the whole purpose of the fishing trip, which is not to have tragic adventures, but to forget that such a thing as tragedy exists.

As the title of the story suggests, the river, has two "hearts" to it - one joyful, one tragic. Nature, so much a part of "the good place", is more than just a means of forgetting, something we can lose consciousness in; it can also remind us of the very violence and pain we would like to forget: the actions of the grasshopper on the hook (Nick was always bothered by this as we saw in Now I Lay Me) and the half-light of the swamp recall the other, more violent side of nature. And although Hemingway is rightly often praised for his realistic rendering of nature, it should also be remembered that for him "... the great out-of-doors is chiefly a state of mind, a projection of mood and emotional attitudes..." ⁽²⁾ In other words Nick/

(1) First 49, p. 329.

(2) "The Death of Love in The Sun Also Rises", Mark Spilka Hemingway and his Critics, ed. Carlos Baker Hill and Wang, New York, 1961, p. 85.

Nick is reminded of pain and violence by what he sees precisely because he is still in the frame of mind to see things in such a manner. The fishing in the swamp might very well be unpleasant, but only to Nick is it tragic.

In Big Two-Hearted River Nick has achieved as much of a solution to the problem of knowledge of pain and death as is possible for him at this point; he has created a kind of schizophrenia which allows him to separate himself from the being who was wounded in the war and knew death. Such a solution, as the story shows, is not a final one, for Nick's equilibrium is in precarious balance, but it does allow one to live. At the very least, through suffering one learns "how to live in it".

Hemingway was to write one more story about Nick Adams, Fathers and Sons, one that concludes his biography of Nick as well as any final chapter of a book. In this story the wheel has indeed come full circle, as we see Nick, now thirty-eight, driving in his car with his young son; in Indian Camp he was the son of a father, now he is the father of a son. The main theme of the story is the problem of the relationship between father and son, a dramatization of the "... paradox of togetherness and separateness,"⁽¹⁾ both between Nick and his father and Nick and/

(1) Baker, p. 134.

and his son. The story fills in many of the gaps in our knowledge of Dr. Adams: in The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife we had seen a side of Dr. Adams which was slightly disquieting, for he allowed himself to be bullied by a half-breed Indian and backed down from a fight which he himself provoked. Moreover, he and his wife were incompatible in many ways: she is a Christian Scientist; he is a doctor; and he has a love of the outdoors and of Indians which she is unable to share. In Fathers and Sons Nick emphasizes this dual aspect of his father's nature: on the one hand, his father had taught him how to fish and shoot. "It was a passion that had never slackened and he was very grateful to his father for bringing him to know it"; he has loved his father "very much and for a long time."⁽¹⁾ But, on the other hand, Nick and his father had had their differences; in particular Nick remembers one incident when he was forced to wear his father's old underwear, although he had said he hated the smell, and was whipped when he threw it away and said that he had lost it: "Afterwards he had sat inside the woodshed with the door open, his shotgun loaded and cocked... and thought 'I can blow him to/

(1) First 49, p. 589.

to hell. I can kill him." (1) After he was fifteen, Nick tells us, he had nothing in common with his father. However, what really bothers Nick about his father is something which he only hints at and has something to do with the manner of his death. Dr. Adams was both a sentimental and cruel man who was much abused and who also had bad luck. As a result "He had died in a trap that he had helped only a little to set, and they had all betrayed him in their various ways before he died." (2) These thoughts of his father, Nick tells us, are "not good remembering", particularly the picture of his father in his coffin. In Death in the Afternoon Hemingway listed the death of his father as one of the things a writer might profitably study, (3) and Nick has the same idea: "If he wrote it, he could get rid of it. He had gotten rid of many things by writing them. But it was still too early for that." (4) The death of Dr. Adams, the tragic causes of which Nick only hints at here, was as traumatic an experience for him as was his wound. Like the wound, the/

(1) First 49, p. 594.

(2) Ibid., p. 587-588.

(3) Death in the Afternoon, p. 11.

(4) First 49, p. 589.

the death of his father was something which posed a problem of adjustment, but which he has not yet been fully able to do. Nick's feelings towards his father thus remain ambivalent; he is still in the process of working out the exact state of emotions towards him and what he did.

We must not forget that there is another son present here all during the time that Nick thinks back over his father and his relationship to him. Nick's son wakes up and startles Nick who had forgotten about him; the boy wants to know what it was like when Nick was young, a question Nick finds difficult to answer; the same problem of communication that existed between Nick and Dr. Adams also exists between Nick and his son. More important, the boy brings up the subject of his grandfather and wants to know why they never go to pray at his tomb. This, of course, is exactly what Nick feels he must avoid, just as he knows he must not think about the place where he was wounded. Nick's son is very much like Nick was in Indian Camp: death has not yet become something to be feared and thus can be rationally discussed. The whole story very neatly gives a sense of the circularity in the lives of human beings: Nick's position is now very much like his father's was: like him he is being asked difficult questions and is giving answers which do not satisfy the boy, and he also/

also is beginning to fail in his relationship with his son. And Nick's son is very much like Nick was as a boy: secure in his innocence and unaware of his mortality. But we also know that like Nick he too will have to go through the same process of growing up that we have been watching and learn the same hard lessons which no one can teach him and which he will have to learn for himself. The story is thus a fitting conclusion to the Nick stories because it sums up the central themes they have developed and emphasize that the process we have seen Nick undergo is a universal one.

One other aspect of the story adds to its sense of circularity. Nick's memories of his boyhood still retain an image of it as a time of innocent simplicity to which he longs to return; there is a nostalgia in him for things long past. He remembers the times in the woods and the relationship he had with Trudy, an Indian girl who reminds us of Prudence in Ten Indians, which was distinguished by its lack of complications and responsibility: Nick and Trudy make love in the presence of her brother Billy and do not worry about the possibility of having a baby: "Make plenty baby what the hell,"⁽¹⁾ as Trudy puts it. The/

(1) First 49, p. 593.

The older Nick, wistfully remembering all this, feels unable even to describe how he felt back then: "Could you say she did first what no one has never done better...?" But Nick knows that the Eden of his childhood is lost forever: "Long time ago good. Now no good."⁽¹⁾ Nick is still haunted by the sense of "how simple it all was once", a desire to return to a childhood that exists as a purely innocent state only in his memories of it; childhood is a kind of paradise lost: although a return to it is impossible, the memory of it can sustain us. Fathers and Sons vividly sums up what Leslie Fiedler has called "the double truth about childhood: how truly wonderful it is to remember our childhood, and yet how we cannot recall it without revealing to ourselves the roots of the very terror, which in adulthood has driven us nostalgically to evoke that past."⁽²⁾

However, the Nick Adams stories are important not only in themselves but also, as we pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, as an excellent introduction to the main themes, situations, and characters of the main body of his work. The central theme of the Nick Adams stories has been shown to be the loss of personal immortality, or, to phrase it another way, the knowledge of death. This knowledge has been/

(1) First 49, p. 595.

(2) Fiedler, p. 591.

been obtained in a number of ways: the experiences Nick had in Michigan, for example; but what finally brought the lesson home to Nick was the wound he received in the war. This wound had two effects: it separated him from his past and the values of the society from which he came, and it forced upon him in irrevocable fashion the fact of his own mortality, that the end of life is death and that the problem of survival is essentially how to live with this knowledge.

The discovery of evil that Nick makes in the course of his growing up is, then, a discovery of death, not only that it exists, but that it exists for him. As an innocent child he could believe in absolutes, that nothing was ever finished, but to grow up is to lose this innocence, although he is haunted by it long after he knows it is invalid. In exchange for that loss Nick receives operational knowledge of the world; he does not ask "why" but rather "how", not why is the world like this, but given such a world how does one live in it.

And in this connection it is important to note that one of the concerns that stems from this knowledge of death is the problem of one's own suicide. We have seen Hemingway approach this problem directly but fail to come to any solution/

solution to it in Indian Camp, touch on it in The Killers, and almost come to grips with it in Fathers and Sons. It is not at all illogical that he should be so concerned; if the discovery of death is the central fact of growing up, and if it cuts oneself off from the past and its traditional answers to the problem and places the emphasis on man's freedom, then one must eventually be faced with the fact that one can choose whether to live or not; this is, in a sense, man's greatest freedom and his greatest responsibility. This is not the place to go into the problem as it concerned Hemingway, but we should note that it was an obsessive though hidden concern of his from the very start, and to remark that on the whole it is "grace under pressure", the ability to survive and endure, that Hemingway valued most.

In order to demonstrate that grace, Hemingway dealt in situations where death or violence was inherently present; two of the most important of such situations were introduced in the Nick Adams stories: the war and the bullfight. The former situation we have already mentioned; the latter occurs in six of the "inter-chapters" of In Our Time. Although the sharply realistic manner in which they are described might seem to indicate Hemingway was interested in/

in the bullfight as a spectacle, in actual fact his real interest lay with the bullfighter and his confrontation of death in the form of the bull. In Death in the Afternoon Hemingway explained his interest in the bullfight in detail; here it is enough to note his early interest in it as a situation, a situation of which death is the essence.

And lastly the Nick Adams stories introduce the central figure of Hemingway's fiction, Nick Adams, the archetype of all of Hemingway's fictional heroes. Hemingway filled in the details of this sort of man in his later works, but the central fact about him was present from the beginning: he is a man acutely aware of the fact of death, particularly his own, and the problem of his existence is how to live in the world without letting this knowledge destroy him. F.J. Hoffman, in one of the best single essays on Hemingway, summed up the problem of the hero and his death:

"It is death which comes as a violent disruption of life. It is unreasonable (that is, it not properly 'motivated', cannot be understood in terms of any ordinary system of motivation). It puts traditional securities to shame... it demands a new form of resourcefulness and courage and... a new type of moral improvisation. The sudden injury inflicted impersonally... is the symbol of this type of/

of death and of the death-in-life which is its consequence. The problem of this death remains unsolved." (1)

It is this kind of man, faced with this sort of problem, that stands at the centre of Hemingway's work, which is to say his view of the world is anthropomorphic: man, not men, is his chief concern.

CHAPTER III

WITH GRACE UNDER PRESSURE

"There is honour among pick-pockets and honour among whores. It is simply that the standards differ."

Ernest Hemingway.

The experiences of Nick Adams form the background of the rest of Hemingway's study of man, and it is important to emphasize that his concern is always with the individual man in his own personal and particular situation. Nick Adams is the generic prototype for what has loosely been called the "Hemingway hero", a concept that by its constant use has lost the sharp edge of its original meaning. What the concept means is not, as some critics have felt, that Hemingway wrote about the same man in each of his fictional works, but that the background of his heroes and the problems they face have a logical consistency. Hemingway once said (1) "The most complicated subject I know is a man's life", and the majority of his work is devoted to examining the complicated issues in the life of a certain kind of man - the wounded man, aware of his personal mortality, isolated by that awareness, and facing in his personal situation the existential question of "how to be".

The function of the wound as seen in the Nick Adams stories was a double one: it not only cut off its recipient from his past, it also revealed to him the fact of his personal mortality. With his religious faith gone and alone with the knowledge of his mortality, the problem for the Hemingway character became how to survive with grace; as/

(1) "The Christmas Gift II", Ernest Hemingway
Look 18 (May 4, 1954). p. 86.

as a result aesthetic values became recharged with significance and were equated with ethical values, and there followed a subsequent emphasis on aesthetic style in living and in imparting "good form" to one's actions. ⁽¹⁾ As E.M. Halliday has pointed out, "Given Hemingway's suspicion of ultimate doom and his passionate fondness for being alive, it is no surprise that his philisophical preoccupation is mainly ethical." ⁽²⁾ Faced with a situation where he has no traditional values to shore him up and aware of "the absolute nudity of oneself", ⁽³⁾ the world can be one of terrifying meaninglessness, the "whiteness" that Poe and Melville both wooed and fled from and which has been a constant motif in American literature ever since. For Hemingway the terror of a world without meaning and dominated by death was best described by nada, the Spanish word for nothing. In his short story "A Clean, Well-lighted Place" Hemingway made clear the exact nature of what lurked "out there".

It/

- (1) Hemingway and the Dead Gods, John Killinger
University of Kentucky Press, Louisville, 1960. p. 61.
- (2) "Hemingway's Ambiguity: Symbolism and Irony", E.M. Halliday Interpretation of American Literature, ed. Charles Feidelson Oxford University Press, New York, 1959. p. 298.
- (3) Radical Innocence: Studies in the Contemporary American Novel, Ihab Hassan, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1961, p. 20.

It is two o'clock in the morning in a Spanish sidewalk cafe, and two waiters, one middle-aged and one young, sit and discuss the one client left in the cafe, an eighty year old man who "last week tried to commit suicide."⁽¹⁾

The dialogue that follows this statement establishes the two different concepts of "nothing" the waiters have, and out of their opposition emerges the meaning of the story:

'Last week he tried to commit suicide,' the young waiter says.

'Why?'

'He was in despair.'

'What about?'

'Nothing.'

'How do you know it was nothing?'

'He has plenty of money.'" (2)

The rest of the story is devoted to the development, as Carols Baker has pointed out, of this Nothing into a terrible Something.⁽³⁾ For the younger of the two waiters, anxious to get home to his wife who is waiting for him in bed the matter is simple: if one has plenty of money and tries to kill oneself, it is a despair over nothing. For him nothing is equated simply with not having, but for the older waiter, whose approaching old age has made him/

(1) First 49, p. 476.

(2) Ibid., p. 476.

(3) Baker, p. 124.

him increasingly aware of his mortality, nothing is a definite reality not to be equated with not having but with a definite state of being. He knows that too great a concentration on the element of nothing in a man's life can lead to total despair, a despair which has nothing to do with a lack of material possessions.

The young waiter's treatment of the old and slightly drunk client is in keeping with his lack of sympathy with his situation. He wants to get home to bed and callously tells the old man that he should have really killed himself last week. The difference between the two waiters' feelings towards the old man can be seen in their further conversation about him. It seems that the old man tried to hang himself and was cut down by his niece; he has no wife to look after him:

"'A wife would be no good to him now,' the younger waiter says.
'You can't tell. He might be better with a wife.'
'His niece looks after him.'
'I know. You said she cut him down.'
'I wouldn't want to be that old. An old man is a nasty thing.'" (1)

The younger waiter completely misses both the ironies here; the ironical remark by the older waiter that in effect what the niece's taking care of the old man means is/

(1) First 49, p. 479.

is that she will cut him down if he is hanging himself, and that is about all, and secondly, the irony of his own remark that he doesn't want ever to be like the old man. The point is, of course, as the older waiter well knows, that this is exactly what will happen - we all grow old, containing within us the seeds of our own decay, and the condition of the old man who has no place to go is the profoundly human one all men must face, that of old age and death.

Although it is an hour until closing time, the younger waiter gets rid of the old man who leaves drunkenly but with dignity. The waiter has youth, confidence, and a job, and in his youthful innocence he thinks this is everything. The older waiter knows better, that these are passing things, and that what is really needed is a "clean, well-lighted place" for people to come to and to keep out the darkness. He is "... with all those who like to stay late at the cafe. With all those who do not want to go to bed. With all those who need a light for the night."⁽¹⁾ Such ideas are beyond the younger waiter's comprehension, and his companion rightly tells him, "You do not understand."⁽²⁾

After/

(1) First 49, p. 480.

(2) Ibid., p. 480.

After the younger waiter leaves, the other waiter continues to muse on the situation of the old man and the need for a cafe where such as he can go. A bar or a bodega, those places that are not clean, that have music, and that make one stand while one drinks, are of no use, for they are distractions from the cafe's primary purpose which is to provide an oasis against the darkness that surrounds it. The last part of the story illustrates completely the concept of nada with which it began:

"What did he fear? It was not a fear or a dread. It was a nothing he knew too well. It was all a nothing and man was a nothing too. It was only that and light was all it needed and a certain cleanness and order. Some lived in it and never felt it but he knew it was all nada..." (1)

"A Clean, Well-lighted Place" movingly depicts the situation of a man who has become aware that man can only dominate, can only introduce a sense of order into a very small area of his universe; these clean, well-lighted places are only small areas of cleanness and order in the midst of the meaninglessness that surrounds them. Moreover, it should be noted that the clean, well-lighted cafe is only a temporary refuge, only a palliative.

It/

(1) First 49, p. 481.

It is a place to which people can retreat for peace, but only temporarily, for even the best sort of cafe has a closing hour. The value of the cafe is thus not so much in itself, but in its setting up the optimum conditions for the creation of a clean, well-lighted place within oneself.

Nor are the conditions within this particular cafe all that perfect: although the older waiter feels tremendous kinship with the old man, he is unable to communicate it to him; he can only talk about it to the other waiter. And the older waiter's sympathy does not inspire him to prevent the younger waiter from ejecting the old man. What is remarkable about the story is the gulf between feeling and acting on that feeling on the part of the older waiter - in a world of nada it appears there is never much we can do for another. In order to survive there must be a selfish concern with one's own mental health. To become too aware of the nada in life is to despair as the old man has done and retreat from the pains of life by suicide. As Albert Camus has pointed out, to do so is in effect to say that life is not worth living,⁽¹⁾ which is to say it has no meaning./

(1) The Myth of Sisyphus, Albert Camus
Vintage Books, New York, 1959. p. 3.

meaning. The older waiter is painfully aware of this fact of life, this knowledge which if dwelt upon and given into can lead to suicide, or, as in his case, an inability to sleep: "After all, he said to himself, it is probably only insomnia. Many must have it."⁽¹⁾

If the concept of nada, the idea of surrender into nothingness and meaninglessness defines one limit of the Hemingway world, the idea of complete submission into something outside oneself defines the other limit. On the one hand, one finds no meaning in the world, on the other hand, one allows a particular meaning to become that of the universe. Such a substitution in Hemingway was usually political idealism or organized religion.

The rejection of political doctrines as a substitute for one's own personal code of behaviour formulated out of one's own experiences can be seen in a number of Hemingway's works, especially the short story "The Revolutionist" and the novels A Farewell to Arms and For Whom the Bell Tolls. "The Revolutionist" is really only a vignette, but it catches perfectly the inadequacy of political idealism. In it the anonymous narrator describes his meeting with a youthful Hungarian communist who "...believed altogether in/

(1) First 49, p. 481.

in the world revolution." (1) The cynical and more experienced narrator shows how mistaken the youth is in his beliefs by the irony of his remarks: he tells us that "I did not say anything" when the young man told him that Italy would be "the starting place of everything", (2) and the story ends with the flat statement "The last I heard of him the Swiss had him in jail near Sion." (3)

Although the rejection of political idealism is implicit in this story, Robert Jordan in For Whom the Bell Tolls is explicit in his refusal to affiliate himself with a political party. He is not, he emphasizes, a communist, but an "anti-fascist", not so much for a political ideal as against one. Thus he has put himself under Communist command simply because in time of war it provides the best discipline. Even though he follows orders faithfully, his code of conduct remains his own personal one; the communists do not do his thinking for him. Jordan's remark "He liked to know how it really was; not how it was supposed to be" (4) makes the essential point that commitment to a political/

(1) First 49, p. 255.

(2) Ibid., p. 255.

(3) Ibid., p. 256.

(4) For Whom the Bell Tolls, Ernest Hemingway
Charles Scribners Sons, New York, 1960. p. 230.

political party or ideal necessitates seeing everything from its point of view; it is only with an outlook independent of any political commitment that one can see things as they really are.

In a similar fashion one can trace throughout Hemingway's work a rejection of organized religion. In The Sun Also Rises Jake Barnes is "technically a Catholic" (1) and often goes to church, but it is clear that the basis of his behaviour is not his Catholicism but his own personal code of conduct which he has created out of his particular situation. As Jake says to Brett, "Some people have God. Quite a lot," (2) but for the people of The Sun Also Rises it is their personal code of conduct that is, as Brett puts it, "what we have instead of God." (3) Some twenty-five years later Hemingway demonstrated the consistency of his rejection of organized religion in his novel Across the River and into the Trees. At the end of that book Colonel Richard Cantwell explicitly rejects the possibility of a last minute religious conversion: "You/

(1) The Sun Also Rises, Ernest Hemingway
Charles Scribners Sons, New York, 1954. p. 124.

(2) Ibid., p. 245.

(3) Ibid., p. 245.

"You going to run as a Christian?.... Maybe I will get Christian toward the end. Yes, he said, maybe you will. Who wants to make a bet on that?"⁽¹⁾

For Hemingway either to dwell on the meaninglessness of a hostile universe or to try to substitute a particular ideal for a world order is not to live "truly". Both solutions are falsifications, or, what is worse, evasions, of the central question of how to live in the world as it exists.. His feelings towards religion and politics as substitutes for the personal code of conduct of the individual is much the same as William Campbell's in Hemingway's story "The Pursuit Race". When told by his solicitous friend "Sliding Billy" Turner that there is a cure for everything, even the drugs to which Campbell is addicted, he replies, "No, they haven't got a cure for anything."⁽²⁾ For Hemingway religion and politics are "cures" of the same order, reducing the complexity of the individual human existence to a simplicity which does not exist.

Suspended between the twin dangers of nada and idealism, the central issue for the Hemingway character becomes that of creating for himself his own personal code of behaviour, and his primary concern is the control of himself in a difficult/

(1) Across the River and Into the Trees, Ernest Hemingway Jonathan Cape, London, 1961. p. 241.

(identified hereafter as ARIT)

(2) First 49. p. 451.

difficult world. Life is visualized as something which must be given form and meaning. How is this to be done? Not by giving into the nada one knows is always there, nor evading it by the submission of one's self into the security of an overwhelming ideal, but by the individual facing his own situation and forging out of it his own solutions. It is, I think, a fair appraisal of Hemingway's fiction to say that its basic concern is with the individual formulating through experience his own system of ethics. Morality in Hemingway's work is constantly in the process of formulation as well as application, each new experience teaching the individual a little more about the "rules" of existence. For Hemingway the wound his heroes suffered was a catalyst, forcing them to acknowledge facts and make choices. And the primary and fundamental choice is how one is to live. Over and over again Hemingway emphasizes the "correct" way to do things; in a world where nada threatens "the form's the thing".⁽¹⁾ It is the first duty of the Hemingway character to learn how to live, not to construct a metaphysic about life.

It/

(1) Killinger, p. 75.

It is in the key terms of control and form that ethics and aesthetics are connected in Hemingway: "... all of those who maintain a simple existence in Hemingway's fiction are also the same ones who strive to give aesthetic content to their lives... their ethics of existence and the very questions of living and dying, are aesthetic in nature: to exist, to stand out from all other beings, is automatically to assume an aesthetic factor."⁽¹⁾ To understand the real value and meaning of the "Hemingway code" it is essential to recognize that for him the form of an action was a direct indication of the ethics of its originator. This connection between ethics and aesthetics in Hemingway can be seen in the fact that his vocabulary used in his discussion of ethical matters is primarily aesthetic in nature.

An understanding of this "code", as it is called, is complicated by a number of factors. The critical tag of "code" which has become affixed to Hemingway's system of ethics has tended to simplify a rather complex matter. The concept of a code is misleading, for it implies a rigidly fixed, easily located statement of ethics, /

(1) Killinger, p. 70.

ethics, Hemingway's secular version of the Ten Commandments. The first thing that must be noted about the code is that it is not codified; that is to say that its only meaning as the basis of action exists in that moment of action itself, and as such it cannot be stated abstractly.

A Hemingway character rarely tells us what his system of morality is but rather demonstrates it through his actions. The code exists only in the individual and only for that individual - each man must hammer out his own code of conduct. It is the very opposite of the meaning of the Hemingway code to obtain it pre-packaged from another; you may admire and desire to emulate another's code, but it only has meaning for you when you have learned it and earned it through personal experience. For at the heart of the Hemingway morality is a tacit condemnation of any world view of human existence, of any abstract system of explanation. Such world views are either too inadequate for the individual's needs or too restrictive of his freedom.

Death in the Afternoon comes as close as anything Hemingway wrote to an explicit statement of the code of morality that his fictional work embodies. The central image of Hemingway's fiction is the bullfight, and like Manuel/

Manuel in "The Undefeated" Hemingway tended to think of life in the terms of the bullfight. This is not to say that he thought of life simply as a bullfight, as some critics have interpreted him. Such a simplification ignores the significance the bullfight had for Hemingway. He made such extensive use of the bullfight as a meaningful symbol of man's predicament precisely because of its artificiality, because it was dependent on numerous conditions and assumptions. As a highly codified ritual, the bullfight easily lent itself to observation and analysis. Since the primary concern of the matador is with form, of his control of himself and the bull, it became for Hemingway the best image of the connection between aesthetics and ethics. To understand Hemingway's feelings about the bullfight is to understand much of his way of thinking about life.

In that book Hemingway surveys the bullfight scene between the years 1926 and 1932 and analyses the performances of all the well known matadors. Although he sees many variations and differences in type, all the good matadors have certain characteristics in common with each other that the bad ones lack. By examining Hemingway's descriptions of these matadors it is possible to extrapolate out/

out of them the essential features of the matador's code which he clearly admires so much.

The matador Hemingway most admires is Manuel Garcia, also known as Maera. Although not an instant success as a matador, he had certain innate qualities that enabled him to become one. To begin with he had "... a valour that was so absolute and such a solid part of him that it made everything easy that he understood; and he understood it all."⁽¹⁾ In addition he had great pride in himself and in his profession. As a result of these qualities he became a great matador, a greatness that was heightened by the fact that he was ill with consumption. However, he ignored it and the pain of the wounds he received: "He was a long way beyond pain. I never saw a man to whom time seemed so short as it did to him that season."⁽²⁾ Hemingway describes an event in the ring which demonstrated perfectly all the qualities he admired in Maera: one time in going in to kill the bull the sword hit bone and dislocated his wrist. Instead of going to the infirmary as the other matadors try to get him to do or giving up the attempt to kill the bull high up between the shoulders where it is most difficult/

(1) DIA, p. 79.

(2) Ibid., p. 80.

difficult and dangerous, Maera persists in his attempts, for "... his honour demanded that he kill him high up between the shoulders, going in as a man should over the horn, following the sword in with his body." (1) After six attempts, in each of which he risks his life and endures tremendous pain from his wrist, he kills the bull in the correct manner.

The episode introduces the key word honour, which is the governing concept of the bullfighter's code. The Spanish word for it is pundonor: "... it means honour, probity, courage, self-respect, and pride in one word... it is a matter of pundonor not to show cowardice. Once it has been shown, truly and unmistakably shown, honour is gone..." (2) Translated into action the pundonor of the matador means "grace under pressure", a phrase which comes close to summing up the meaning of the Hemingway morality. Since the brilliance of the performance depends on the matador's honour, the bullfight becomes for Hemingway a moral art. Being an elaborately ritualistic pageant with special rules for each phase of its action, the bullfight presents the performance of the matador in a manner which can be easily evaluated. Within these rules, however,/

(1) DIA, p. 81.

(2) Ibid., p. 90.

however, the brilliance of his performance is left wholly to the matador:

"He can increase the amount of danger that he runs exactly as much as he wishes. He should, however, increase this danger within the rules provided for his protection. In other words it is to his credit if he does something that he knows how to do in a highly dangerous but still geometrically possible manner. It is to his discredit if he runs into danger through ignorance, through disregard of the fundamental rules, through physical or mental slowness, or through blind folly." (1)

This, then, is the bullfighter's situation: for fifteen minutes he is in the bullring where death is a real possibility; hence the pressure on him to perform well is at its greatest. It is up to him to control the bull and himself and to impart via the form of his actions an aesthetic experience to the spectators. For the space of time he is in the ring the matador's whole sense of identity is tied up with his code of conduct, for it is what defines him. His control of the situation will never be perfect no matter how rigidly he follows the rules and his personal sense of honour, for bad luck can happen. Luck for Hemingway, be it good or bad, should not be confused with/

(1) DIA, p.

with fate; in the Hemingway world luck simply equals luck, those external circumstances one cannot control, be it the gust of wind that blows up the cape as the matador goes in to kill or the cowardly bull who refuses to charge and spoils the matador's fine performance. Luck is simply the way things are, and since they cannot be altered it does no good to complain against them. But even if the matador cannot always control external circumstances, he must always control himself, must continue to assert his will even though it is insufficient in the light of the circumstances.

There are many examples of the bad bullfighter in Death in the Afternoon, the fighter who can control neither himself nor the bull and who is lacking in pundonor. One such example is Nino de la Palma who in his first season was a very promising young matador, but who, after being severely gored in his thigh, was no longer any good: "What had happened was that the horn wound, the first real goring, had taken all his valour. He never got it back. He had too much imagination"; as a result all his actions were "the brave actions of a coward", which although psychologically interesting destroy the emotional appeal of the fight. ⁽¹⁾ Here we see an essential fact about/

(1) DIA, p. 89.

about the wound: its value lies not in itself but in the use to which its recipient puts it. If its knowledge of mortality causes one to act with grace, to give significance to one's actions, then it is being used in the correct way. But the wound can also destroy one's initial courage which being untried is not of final value until it has been tested by the shock of the wound. Speaking about the promising young matador Manolo Bienvenida, Hemingway stresses that no final assessment can be made of him until after he has been wounded: "All matadors are gored dangerously, painfully, and very close to fatally, sooner or later, in their careers, and until a matador has undergone this first severe wound you cannot tell what his permanent value will be."⁽¹⁾ If one's bravery continues to exist after the first goring, it is of the best kind which "... permits the fighter to perform all acts he chooses to attempt, unhampered by apprehension."⁽²⁾ Nino de la Palma's wound destroyed his valour, and the consequent loss of pundonor meant he disobeyed all the rules which

(1) DIA, p. 160.

(2) Ibid., p. 93.

govern the fighter's actions in the ring. The loss of his pundonor was easily ascertained by the quality of his performance in the ring: lacking honour, he was unable to give a "fine" performance, and his actions were without aesthetic appeal.

All bullfighters are afraid before the fight begins, but this does not mean they are not brave: "Nearly all bullfighters are brave and yet nearly all bullfighters are frightened at some moment before the fight begins."⁽¹⁾ It is not wrong to be afraid, but what is wrong is to admit one's fear or allow it to control one's actions. A good case of this happening is an incident Hemingway relates about Domingo Herandorena, an apprentice bullfighter he saw fight in a novillada in Madrid. From the minute Herandorena came out it was apparent that he was afraid, particularly as "his feet were obviously not under his personal control and his effort to be statuesque while his feet jittered him away out of danger was very funny to the crowd."⁽²⁾ He is violating one/

(1) DIA, p. 60.

(2) Ibid., p. 23.

one of the fundamental rules of the bullfighter - admitting his fear and allowing it to control him. This in turn means that the form of his actions is aesthetically displeasing, for his passes do not give the spectator the feeling of life and death through their purity of line that they are supposed to. In the end Herandorena goes down on his knees before the bull because he cannot trust himself not to run away, and he subsequently is gored. In their discussion that night the spectators have no sympathy for him:

"Why did he go down on both knees? Because he was a coward. The knees are for cowards... It was preferable that he was gored rather than run away from the bull. To be gored was honourable; they would have sympathized with him had he been caught in one of his nervous uncontrollable jerks... the hardest thing when frightened by the bull is to control the feet, and any attempt to control the feet was honourable... When he went down on both knees,... Herandorena admitted his nervousness. To show his nervousness was not shameful; only to admit it." (1)

Thus Herandorena's performance as a bullfighter is bad both ethically and aesthetically: ethically because he violates the rules of the fight and the dictates of his pundonor and admits he is a coward; and aesthetically because this lack/

(1) DIA, p. 25.

lack of control takes away all the form of his actions and means his performance lacks any grace. In such a performance as his there is none of that "... pure, classic beauty that can be produced by a man, an animal, and a piece of scarlet serge cloth draped over a stick"⁽¹⁾ that is present in the good bullfight. Under the pressure of the advancing bull no grace emerges. In contrast to this we are to remember the performance of Maera who as the pressure on him became greater and greater only demonstrated more and more grace, a grace which is "... an altogether inherent quality"⁽²⁾ not a pose.

To recapitulate, then, the bullfight presents a situation in which danger is always present and in which death is imminent; this danger can be increased or decreased depending on the pundonor of the matador. His chief problem is control, both of himself and of the bull, and that control depends on a number of factors; first, his honour, then his skill, his knowledge of the rules, and lastly on his luck. If all these factors are present, and/

(1) DIA, p. 197.

(2) Ibid., p. 201.

and in addition he has the "perfect" bull, the one who welcomes the contest and charges in a straight line, then the form of the actions performed in the ring will be so aesthetically pleasing as to give the spectator a sensation akin to that of tragedy, of the relationship of life to death.

But the situation is not as simple as that, as Hemingway admits. The perfect bullfight probably occurs only twenty times in a season. The problem thus becomes the evaluation of the performances of matadors which are neither completely good nor wholly bad and to analyze the issues they raise. The whole matter hinges on the question of bravery, and there are different kinds of it.

"Nearly all bullfighters are brave. Some are not. This seems impossible since no man who was not brave would get into the ring with a bull, but in some cases natural ability and early training... have made bullfighters of men with no natural courage... the usual bullfighter is a brave man, the most common degree of bravery being the ability to ignore consequences. A more pronounced degree of bravery, which comes from exhilaration, is the ability not to give a damn about consequences; not only to ignore them but to despise them." (1)

Conversely, as Hemingway wrote in his introduction to Men at War, "Cowardice as distinguished from panic, is almost always a lack of ability to suspend the functioning of the/

(1) DIA, p. 61.

the imagination." (1) Thus the most meaningful kind of bravery of all is that of the intelligent man, because he sees all the issues clearly: "It is easier to be stupid and naturally brave than to be exceedingly intelligent and still completely brave." (2)

However, the connection between the pundonor of a matador and the quality of his performance in the ring is not always a straight forward one, because of this variable factor of bravery. Thus it is possible to have performances by matadors which are either ethically good and aesthetically displeasing or, conversely, ethically bad and aesthetically pleasing; an example of the former case is that of Antonio de la Haba, called Zurito and of the latter is that of Rafael El Gallo. In the case of El Gallo one had a matador who although he was lacking in pundonor could still give an aesthetically pleasing performance. This was because he was the first great matador deliberately to admit fear: "... when Gallo was afraid he dropped muleta and sword and jumped over the fence head first. A matador is never supposed to run, /

(1) Men at War, ed. Ernest Hemingway
Crown Books, New York, 1942. p. xxvii.

(2) DIA, p. 93.

run, but Gallo was liable to run if the bull looked at him in a particularly knowing way."⁽¹⁾ But in spite of this lack of bravery, Gallo could give a performance that no one could better; his performance at its best was "pure spectacle" and while lacking in the tragic emotion of Joselito or Belmonte, it could not be replaced, for "El Gallo in a panic was still closer to the bull than most fighters when they were showing their tragic domination."⁽²⁾ Consequently for Gallo, to be killed in the ring would be "bad taste", and prove the whole bullfight wrong "... not morally but aesthetically."⁽³⁾

This phrase is a significant one, because it is one of the few times Hemingway juxtaposes the terms moral and aesthetic, and deserves analysis for this reason. El Gallo "never admitted the idea of death, and he would not even go in to look at Joselito (his brother) after he was killed."⁽⁴⁾ In other words in spite of all his gorings Gallo never believed he was mortal, and believing in immortality his death would be without dignity, for it would not come as something prepared for, but as an unpleasant/

(1) DIA, p. 151.

(2) Ibid., p. 153.

(3) Ibid., p. 153.

(4) Ibid., p. 152.

unpleasant surprise. His death, then, would not be morally wrong, since all men must die, but it would be aesthetically displeasing because it would be a violation of form; never having admitted the idea of death, El Gallo would not be able to submit to it with grace.

An example of a fighter whose performance is ethically correct because he obeys the rules of the fight and adheres to his sense of pundonor but which is aesthetically displeasing is that of Zurito. This is because his bad luck and physical handicaps hinder the transformation of pundonor into graceful actions. A bullfighter who "... killed classically, slowly and beautifully, with a sense of honour which forbade him to use any trick or advantage..."⁽¹⁾ he never had any luck, that uncontrollable, incalculable element in a man's life. In his insistence on killing in the right way, high up between the shoulders, he took tremendous punishment, especially from blows from the flat of the horns on his chest. Every time he went in to kill he was bumped and consequently fainted. However, he refused to change his style of killing, for "... he only knew one way to kill and that was perfectly."⁽²⁾ Paradoxically, it was/

(1) DIA, p. 240.

(2) Ibid., p. 243.

was Zurito's undeviating adherence to his ethical values, to his sense of pundonor, which made his performance aesthetically displeasing: "Too much honour destroys a man quicker than too much of any fine quality, and with a little bad luck it ruined Zurito in one season."⁽¹⁾ So intense was his commitment^s to his ethical code and to his knowledge of the rules that nothing, not even continual pain and the humiliation of fainting, could make him change. One did not like his performance because it was aesthetically displeasing, but one had to admire the pundonor which was behind it.

In his discussion of individual bullfighters Hemingway cites the interesting case of Francisco Vega de los Reges, called Gitanillo de Triana who was gored in the ring in 1931 and died from the wound two and a half months later. He is important not only for the light he sheds on Hemingway's attitudes towards pain and suicide but also as an example of the limits of the code. What happened was this: Gitanillo had always had a certain "unsoundness of technique" and on this particular afternoon he ignored the tendency of the bull to hook to the left with his horns, /

(1) DIA, p. 243.

horns, passed him on the left, and was gored by the bull several times, once through the back as he lay against the wooden fence, pulling the sciatic nerve out by the root "... as a worm may be pulled out of the damp lawn by a robin." (1) Meningitis set in, but it took all that spring and summer for him to die; during that time the nerve pain became worse and worse, eventually making him delirious.

"You could hear him in the street. It seemed a crime to keep him alive, and he would have been much luckier to have died soon after the fight while he still had control of himself and still possessed his courage rather than to have gone through the progressive horror of physical and spiritual humiliation that the long enough continued bearing of unbearable pain produces... man is regarded as having an immortal soul and doctors will keep him alive through times when death would seem the greatest gift one man could give another." (2)

This is a crucial passage for one's understanding of the Hemingway code, for in it he admits that the concept of "grace under pressure" on which his whole ethical code is based can be a liability. It can fail when the pressure becomes too great to be endured by the individual, as in the case of the pain of Gitanillo. Up to a certain point the greater the pressure the more grace one shows under it, but the law of diminishing returns sets in, and instead of bringing forth more grace the pressure only causes one to/

(1) DIA, p. 208.

(2) Ibid., p. 209.

to commit the cardinal sin of losing control of oneself and consequently being physically and spiritually humiliated. With the loss of control provided by the code, one loses one's sense of identity, becomes delirious, and proclaims one's pain to all who pass by. The code is thus good only up to a certain point; exactly what that point is varies from individual to individual, and one is bound by the code to "hold tight against the pain"⁽¹⁾ to the very maximum of one's endurance, to try above everything else not to lose control of oneself and to demonstrate that loss by bad form.

But if this point is reached, then and only then is one justified in giving up the struggle, preferably by having someone kill you or, if that is not possible, killing oneself. This is the only circumstance where Hemingway would approve of self-death; in such a case it would not be a sin, for man does not have an immortal soul, but a gift, a gift that allows one to die with grace. For Hemingway dying well was a necessary condition of living well, and the manner in which one's life ends casts a reflection back over the value of that life. To live all/

(1) DIA, p. 139.

all one's life according to one's code and at the end to be denied the "grace of a happy death"⁽¹⁾ was inexcusable for Hemingway. The man who lives by his code deserves to die by it, not have the ultimate limitations of what he believed all his life revealed to him in the last moments of sensuous experience. A man's death is his last chance to demonstrate "grace under pressure", the greatest pressure of all being death, and that death should come quickly enough that control is possible up to the end. If this is not possible because of the magnitude of the pain or the possibility of being tortured, then having oneself killed or killing oneself is permissible. Indeed, if the situation is extreme enough, suicide can be an act of courage and an affirmation of belief. But such occasions where suicide is excusable, are very rare indeed, and to kill oneself out of cowardice, out of a desire to avoid pain, is the greatest breach of the code one can make, an act which violates the meaning of all that has gone before it. The incident of Gitanillo shows in capsule form the limitations of grace under pressure and the justification for suicide.

For/

(1) ARIT, p. 200.

For much of his fiction Hemingway was concerned with working out the exact nature of such problems.

If the situation of the bullfight and the resulting code of conduct form the basis of Hemingway's ethical values, a number of objections must be answered.

In The Sun Also Rises, Robert Cohn tells Jake Barnes that "I'm not interested in bullfighters. That's an abnormal life", ⁽¹⁾ and his objection is perfectly valid. The bullfight is a highly contrived, highly artificial situation, one of the few remaining instances in modern life in which a sword is used, and one in which at the most only three hundred men are accomplished killers. We cannot all be bullfighters, nor does it make much sense to aspire to be one. Moreover, many of these performances are aesthetically and ethically displeasing and hence completely lacking in emotional appeal. What Hemingway is offering up to our attention and what he used as one of the dominant images in his fiction is a highly limited situation, both in appeal and in application.

Hemingway's solution to the obvious limitations of the bullfight was to make them work to his advantage. He originally went to the bullfight because it depicted one of the simplest and most fundamental of all things - violent/

(1) SAR, p. 10.

(1) violent death. For Hemingway it is the simplicity, the contrived element, which is the advantage the bullfight has over other situations; all matters that might distract from the thing of primary importance - how a man acts under pressure - have been excluded and that one isolated element may be studied closely because of it. In this situation where the pressure of death impinges, the matter of first concern becomes control of oneself and control of the bull; it is a control that is derived primarily from one's sense of honour, or idea of oneself, for the code is often the chief means of self-definition. This sense of honour, of truth to one's self, controls all of one's actions and imparts to them a certain form which is best described as "grace under pressure"; that grace is, to paraphrase, the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. It is the translation of an ethical value, honour, into an aesthetic form, grace; pudonor, the abstract ethic, is given an aesthetic shape and in its dramatization can be understood.

Here another fact about the code must be admitted: it cannot be defined, it can only be shown in action. As such it cannot be used to pre-judge such things as, say, motives./

(1) DIA, p. 10.

motives. The presence or absence of the code in a person can only be ascertained by referring to his actions. The form of the action, that is to say its aesthetic appeal, gives the observer the indication that an ethical value was behind it. This is part of the reason why Hemingway says, "So far, about morals, I know only that what is moral is what you feel good after and what is immoral is what you feel bad after..."⁽¹⁾ Moral judgements must come after the action because that action is the only reliable indication of the nature of the ethical code of the actor. Talking about the code proves nothing, and indeed is often one of the signs that one does not have it: "Don't talk about it. You'll lose it"⁽²⁾ is one of Hemingway's constant warnings. While it is certainly true that such an "after the fact" manner of looking at things renders abstract moral judgements impossible, it also prevents hasty pre-judgements. For Hemingway what a person says cannot be taken as the truth until it has been verified by that person's actions.

Since/

(1) DIA, p. 11.

(2) SAR, p. 245.

Since the form of every action of the bullfighter is controlled by his sense of honour, it follows that he is responsible for everything he does - everything, that is, except those things that are controlled by luck. If one has "bad luck", cannot control events, one can still control oneself, and this one must always, do. It is this emphasis on constant control of oneself that is behind Hemingway's emphatic remark in Green Hills of Africa, "Every damned thing is your own fault if you're any good."⁽¹⁾ The last thing that a matador should do is use his bad luck as an excuse for his own bad performance. Such a man is the "phenomenon", the fighter who claims to have had "a little bad luck in killing", and in your mind you see "the phenomenon, sweating, white-faced, sick with fear, unable to look at the horn or go near it...."⁽²⁾ For Hemingway the number of things that are not our fault are very few indeed, and this is especially true in the bullfight where the man has the most complete chance of control, more so than he will ever have in his life outside the ring.

Perhaps/

(1) GHOA, p. 271.

(2) DIA, p. 214.

Perhaps the most fundamental objection to the bullfight comes down to the situation it presents, one which embodies certain death for the bull and possible death for the man. As Hemingway points out, we of the twentieth century do not like the idea of death nor to see it: "We, in games, are not fascinated by death, its nearness and avoidance. We are fascinated by victory, and we replace the avoidance of death with the avoidance of defeat."⁽¹⁾ But it is precisely because the bullfight contains so much death that it is of such interest to Hemingway. To begin with, it is the pressure of death which proves the ultimate value of the matador's code. The first wound has great significance for the matador: it is the first important test of his valour. If his pundonor remains with him after the wound and its subsequent shock of mortality, then the fighter can be said to be truly brave. However, the giving and receiving of death has a more important function than this, for the actual moment of death is what the whole fight has built up to. It is only the matadors with the highest degree of pundonor that can kill properly, waiting without moving for the bull to charge and letting the/

(1) DIA, p. 28.

the bull impale himself on the sword rather than running toward him. The Spanish term for the killing of the animal is the "moment of truth", that instant when the matador declares his worth. Hemingway felt this concept to be a meaningful one in any man's life: in all of our lives there are such moments of truth, perhaps not as dramatic, but equally as revealing. A man's life can be visualized as a series of such moments in which a choice between two alternatives must be made. It is at this crucial point of the fight that honour and grace come together, "... that flash when man and bull form one figure as the sword goes all the way in, the man leaning after it, death uniting the two figures in the emotional, aesthetic, and artistic climax of the fight."⁽¹⁾

Hemingway clearly felt that it was no mistake that the giving and receiving of death was at the centre of the bullfight, for he felt that it should be the central concern in a man's life. Man should be aware of his mortality and let that awareness cause him to live each moment more fully. For Hemingway the bullfighter is so vitally alive because he deals in death. As Jake Barnes says, "Nobody ever lives their life all the way up except bullfighters."⁽²⁾

The/

(1) DIA, p. 234.

(2) SAR, p. 10.

The lesson that we as spectators are to draw from the bullfight is that of the influence death can have in a man's life, particularly in the formulation of his values and in his actions. The authentic man is one who is aware of death as the bullfighter is, not in a morbid sense but as a positive force causing him to live his life "all the way up" and act with grace under pressure. Hemingway does not say "Life is a bullfight", but rather that there are things about the bullfight that are of value in any man's life. As such he sees it not as a direct statement about the nature of existence, but as a symbol of it, a helpful but not exhaustive emblem about the need for an ethical code in every man's life.

CHAPTER IV

THE CODE: CONDUCT AND CONTROL

"It's sort of what we have
instead of God."

The Sun Also Rises.

A fruitful way with which to examine Hemingway's fiction is to see how he translated and assimilated the code of the bullfighter into the terms of his fictional world; in a sense Hemingway's artistic problem was to translate this "pure" statement of his ethical values as seen in the bullfight into terms more applicable to the ordinary human situation. In some of his fiction, usually those stories in which a matador is the protagonist, the bullfighter's code is relatively the same as it existed in Death in the Afternoon; in other stories the code of the matador has been more completely assimilated into the particular world that that story depicts, and in such cases it usually appears as the controlling and dominating image; and finally there are stories in which the code of the bullfight has been so completely assimilated that it is only recognizable by certain essential features it has in common with the morality of the story.

In The Undefeated the translation of the bullfighter's code into wider terms is at its lowest level; the difference between it and the accounts of bullfighters in Death in the Afternoon is simply that The Undefeated is fiction and Death in the Afternoon is factual. Ostensibly the story is about an aging and second-rate matador called Manuel Garcia. Just/

Just out of the hospital from a bad goring, he manages to get a job fighting in the nocturnals, the night-time bullfights which are for matadors who are either at the beginning or the end of their careers. In the course of that fight Manuel is gored and killed because of his insistence in killing the bull in the correct manner, high up between the shoulders.

There are many obvious points of similarity between Manuel and the bullfighters in Death in the Afternoon. To begin with Manuel has great pundonor, the sort which makes him keep on trying to kill high up between the shoulders just as Maera did; intensely committed to his code like Zurito, he would rather be killed than violate it. Similarly his whole identity is bound up in being a matador, as symbolized by his coleta, the long pigtail at the back of his head that is the sign of the bullfighter. His reply to the manager Retana's suggestion that he get a job is "I don't want to work. I am a bullfighter."⁽¹⁾ He has a commitment to his profession that he cannot explain in words, not even to his friend Zurito the picador who agrees to "pic" for him in the nocturnals on the provision that he will "cut the coleta" if he is not a success. So great is Manuel's commitment to his profession that he can only think in/

(1) First 49, p. 334.

in terms of the bullfight: "Sometimes he had a thought and the particular piece of slang would not come into his mind and he could not realize the thought. His instincts and his knowledge worked automatically, and his brain worked slowly in words."⁽¹⁾

By stressing Manuel's commitment to his sense of himself as a matador, Hemingway widens the meaning of the story into a parable about the nature of courage. Quite clearly Manuel is the man with the code, who because of it demonstrates grace under pressure. However, the story is not just a fictional representation of this fact alone. More importantly the story shows how a man can be saved from defeat by adherence to the code. The title of the story proclaims its ironical meaning: in what sense can Manuel, a second-rate, aging matador who gets killed in the nocturnals be called "undefeated"?

On one level, that of the physical, he quite clearly is defeated, for he is killed. But on another level, that of the spirit, he quite clearly is a victor: he has killed the bull in the correct manner and in doing so has shown us what a man can be, how it is possible to lose and yet win. As Hemingway has said elsewhere, "A man can be destroyed but not/

(1) First 49, p. 358.

not defeated." (1) Manuel himself knows this at the end when on the operating table Zurito tries to cut off his coleta. He sits up and says, "You couldn't do a thing like that." (2) Zurito cannot cut off the identifying mark of Manuel's profession because he is still a bullfighter as long as he believes himself to be one; if one is committed to one's code, then the physical ruin that may result does not matter.

And it was precisely this undeviating adherence to his code, his refusal to compromise and kill the bull in a safer manner, that caused Manuel's death. Other people, such as the newspaper critic in the stand or Retana, may not appreciate the meaning of Manuel's death, but this only heightens it for us. The Undefeated, while still dealing with the code as it exists in the bullfight, reveals another important fact about it to us. Complete dedication to it can be its own reward, regardless of the personal cost. As an example of this Manuel becomes an emblem of courage and commitment, and the lesson we learn from his death is a moral one, that of a man who refused to be anything less than himself.

That not all bullfighters automatically have a superior code of ethics can be seen in The Mother of a Queen. The story/

(1) The Old Man and the Sea, Ernest Hemingway
Jonathan Cape, London, 1961. p. 103.

(2) First 49, p. 363.

story is told by Roger, the former friend of Paco, a Mexican bullfighter who in refusing to pay the twenty dollars necessary to continue his mother's grave perpetually allowed her bones to be dug up and thrown on the common bone heap. The incident is only one indication of many that he is a man without honour: he refuses to pay his debt to his friend, although he has plenty of money; in addition he is a bad bullfighter: "He had only fought twice in Spain, they couldn't stand him there, they saw through him quick enough... (1) In fact all his actions lack form - we are told by his friend that "Everything he did I could do better." (2) What is worse, he allows himself to be insulted: a year after Roger has left him in disgust, he meets Paco on the street and tells him to his face he never had a mother, which is "... (3) the worst thing you can say to insult a man in Spanish." , but Paco passes off the insult as a joke. Paco is the man without any moral values, without any sense of identity; he is, in the narrator's term, a "queen": "You can't touch them. Nothing, nothing can touch them. They spend money on themselves or for vanity, but they never pay... I told him what I thought of him... in front of three friends, but he speaks to me now when we meet as though we were friends. What/

(1) First 49, p. 515.

(2) Ibid. p. 516.

(3) Ibid. p. 517.

What kind of blood is it makes a man like that?"⁽¹⁾

It is the lack of any ethical code and a resulting messiness in his actions that is what is wrong with Paco. A "queen" cannot be insulted because there is nothing in him to insult, no set of values which can be offended. The story illustrates that a bullfighter is not, qua bullfighter, any more in possession of a moral code than an ordinary man. Like all other men, regardless of their profession, the bullfighter must form his code out of his own personal experience.

II

To the superficial reader of The Sun Also Rises it may come as a surprise to hear it stated that it is a book which is fundamentally concerned with morality. The subject matter itself would seem to preclude any such claim for it, dealing as it does with the unsavoury events in the lives of Jake Barnes, an American journalist rendered impotent by a wound in the genitals, Brett Ashley, an English alcoholic nymphomaniac, Mike Campbell, a Scottish bankrupt, Robert Cohn, a slightly persecuted, slightly pathetic Jew, and various other members of the Paris expatriot group of the 1920's. In the course of the novel Brett, who is hopelessly in love with Jake, sleeps with at least three different men; there/

(1) First 49, p. 517.

there are several unpleasant arguments in which Cohn is badly insulted, culminating in Cohn's knocking out both Jake and Mike; and enough alcohol is consumed to strain anyone's credulity.

However, the slightly squalid surface of the subject matter should not be allowed to obscure the fact that behind it lies a deep concern with morality, with the problem of the values behind any action. Far from being an immoral book, The Sun Also Rises, within its own particular context, is a very moral book indeed, concerned with subtle but definite moral discriminations, and it is not a novel of nihilism, but an affirmation of the belief in certain abiding and permanent values.

Dramatically conceived, the story can be seen as a series of concentric circles with Pedro Romero, the young matador, at the centre. Around him are grouped, according to the degree to which they understand and appreciate the code of conduct Romero embodies, the "initiates": Jake, Brett, Bill, and Mike. Of these four, Jake comes the closest to a full appreciation of Romero's worth; this is partly because he has aficion, or a love for the bullfight, and partly because of his own personal situation of having been wounded and having created his own personal code of conduct. Brett is not far behind Jake in her understanding of Romero's qualities./

qualities, and on the physical level is closer to him than anyone else, for she is his lover for a brief time. Bill and Mike lack the intensity of understanding that mark Jake and Brett, but they are still aware of Romero's worth; as Bill says, Romero is "quite a kid".⁽¹⁾ Also included within this circle of initiates are people like Count Mippipopulous. The Count, who by his own admission "... has been around a very great deal",⁽²⁾ has the characteristics of behaviour that identify him as a member of the initiates. As Brett says, "He's quite one of us... He's one of us, though. Oh, quite. No doubt. One can always tell."⁽³⁾

Although the image of the bullfight is at the centre of the book, one does not necessarily have to have aficion, or love for the bullfight, in order to have the code, nor, conversely, does having aficion mean one also has the code. For example, there is no indication that Montoya, the owner of the hotel in Pamplona, is in possession of the code, although he does have great aficion. Similarly, Wilson-Harris, the Englishman whom Jake meets in Burgete definitely has the code, but he has no love for the bullfight; indeed, he/

(1) SAR, p.202.

(2) Ibid. p. 59.

(3) Ibid. p. 32.

he explicitly refuses Jake's invitation to go to Pamplona to see the bullfight, preferring to stay where he is and fish.

The group of the initiates in the novel are clearly defined as comprising a separate community first of all in their relation to Pedro Romero. He is the moral touchstone of the book and affects all who come in contact with him, particularly Jake, Brett, and Robert Cohn. The initiates recognize, admire, and try to emulate the code of conduct Romero, as bullfighter and as a man, embodies. A second characteristic of this inner circle is that they have all been wounded in some way: most noticeable, of course, is Jake, "It was a rotten way to be wounded and flying on a joke front like the Italian", he muses to himself, ⁽¹⁾ and his problem now is to learn how to live with it. Brett also has been wounded, although her scars are psychic. First married to a mentally unbalanced soldier who made Brett sleep on the floor and kept a loaded revolver beside the bed with which he threatened to kill her, Brett hasn't "... had an absolutely happy life. Damned shame, too. She enjoys things so." ⁽²⁾ Mike Campbell, like Jake, was also in the war, and from what we know of his medals was probably a good one. More than likely his bankruptcy is a reflection of his inability/

(1) SAR, p. 31.

(2) Ibid. p. 203.

inability to return to normal life after the war. Also in the war was Wilson-Harris who has "... not had much fun since the war,"⁽¹⁾ and who in this, his disavowal of religion, his ability to be a good companion, and his love of drinking shows himself to be one of the initiates. And lastly, proof positive that Count Mippipopulous is one who has the code comes when he lifts his shirt and displays his arrow wounds to Jake and Brett, much as one would show another a membership card.

Another common characteristic of the initiates is their rejection of religion or any code of conduct external to them. This is done in a number of ways, but particularly in Jake's relationship to Catholicism. Jake is, as he tells Bill, "technically a Catholic";⁽²⁾ exactly what that means neither he nor Bill are sure. One thing that is certain is that the primary foundation of Jake's code of conduct is personal and pagan not Catholic.

The separation of Jake from Catholicism in anything but a technical sense can be seen in the train ride he and Bill take from Paris to Bayonne. So crowded is the train with Catholic pilgrims on their way to Lourdes that Jake and Bill are/

(1) SAR, p. 129.

(2) Ibid. p. 124.

are unable to get a meal until late in the day. "It's a pity you boys ain't Catholics," says the American who shares their compartment. "I am", replies Jake, "That's what makes me so sore."⁽¹⁾ Not only is Jake separated from the general Catholic community, his religion is also of little help to him in adjusting to his wound: "The Catholic Church had an awfully good way of handling all that. Good advice, anyway. Not to think about it. Oh, it was swell advice. Try and take it",⁽²⁾ thinks Jake as he lies awake having a "bad time". In the lonely darkness of one's room at night religion is of little help - control must come from the inner qualities of pride, courage, and honour.

Both before and during the fiesta Jake goes to church. His first attendance is in Bayonne before Mike and Brett are supposed to arrive, and it turns out to be a failure. His attempts at prayer fail to take his mind off his own personal problem:

"... all the time I was kneeling with my forehead on the wood in front of me, and was thinking of myself as praying. I was a little ashamed, and regretted that I was such a rotten Catholic, but realized that there was nothing I could do about it, at least not for a while and maybe never, but that anyway it was a grand religion, and I only wished I was more religious." (3)

This/

(1) SAR, p. 87.

(2) Ibid. p. 31.

(3) Ibid. p. 97.

This passage makes the essential point about Jake and Catholicism: he has a religion, but he is not religious; that is to say that he follows the prescribed rituals - he prays - but there is no emotional commitment behind it.

Before the actual festival begins, Jake goes to church several times in Pamplona, once with Brett. But she is as incapable of commitment to values outside of herself as Jake is, although she shows it more clearly. She is definitely outside the pale of religion: Jake's confession that she wants to hear is "... in a language she did not know"⁽¹⁾; she is stopped from going into the San Fermin chapel, ostensibly because she has no hat. The meaning of these two incidents is reinforced by having Brett involved in a pagan ritual immediately after each of them. In the first incident where Jake tells her she would not understand his confession, she then goes to a gypsy camp and has her fortune told, her pagan ~~the~~ counter-part to Jake's confession. We are left to speculate on what that fortune was, but presumably it was in a language that she understood. In the second incident where she is turned away from the church, she is immediately surrounded by a group of riau-riau dancers: "Brett wanted to dance but they did not want her to. They wanted/

(1) SAR, p. 151.

wanted her as an image to dance around." (1) In both of these incidents Christianity and paganism are contrasted, and Brett is identified with the latter.

The whole matter of the possibility of religion as a substitute for the code and its dismissal as inadequate is best seen in the scene in the Hotel Montana in Madrid where Brett tells Jake of how she sent Romero away and why she did it. Her decision "not to be a bitch" has made her feel good:

"'It's what we have instead of God,' she says
'Some people have God,' I said. 'Quite a lot.'
'He never worked very well for me.'
'Should we have another Martini?'" (2)

Indeed the code of conduct that Brett and Jake have is "what they have instead of God". Judged on the only reasonable grounds by which ethics can be evaluated in the Hemingway world, their practical use as a basis for action, God just doesn't work. While it is quite true that "some people have God", quite clearly Brett and Jake as well as the other initiates do not. Religion is seen in The Sun Also Rises as a possible alternative for some people to the code as embodied in Romero, but it is rejected by most. One's personal code of conduct, derived from actual experience, does work, does allow one to get through life with/

(1) SAR, p. 155.

(2) Ibid. p. 245.

with a minimum amount of mess. For the characters of The Sun Also Rises the appeal of Catholicism is primarily aesthetic; that is to say that its elaborate rituals and ceremonies have an order and meaning of their own which as an escape is attractive. In the end Jake and the others must reject religion because while it may work for some people, it has never worked for them.

It has been said that Pedro Romero is the moral centre of the novel, the vital touchstone that influences all those who come in contact with him and who reveals the presence or absence of a code of conduct in those he meets. Nowhere can this be seen better than in the character of Robert Cohn, for if Romero is the moral centre of the book, then Cohn is its emotional and dramatic counter-foil. Many readers, not being aware of Cohn's importance, have failed to see why Hemingway began The Sun Also Rises with a long discussion of Cohn and his past career. What Hemingway is doing in that initial chapter about Cohn's life at Princeton and his first marriage is setting the stage and preparing us for the dramatic climax of the book - the fight between Cohn and Romero. Cohn's role is to serve as the means by which the code is revealed not only in Pedro Romero during his fight with him, but also in the others during the fiesta. Cohn is a catalyst, an alien presence that must be reacted against because he is different.

Not only has Cohn's importance in The Sun Also Rises been misunderstood, so also has Cohn himself. The most frequent criticism made of him is to compare him unfavourably to the other people in the novel and say he has no code; for example Carlos Baker feels that there exists in Cohn a "moral vacuum".⁽¹⁾ But surely this is incorrect, for what is really the case is not that Cohn has no code at all, but that he has a different one than any of the others. His code of conduct is primarily that of the romantic, of one who has read The Purple Band and taken it as a guide to life. As the twentieth century version of the chivalric knight, Cohn is willing to do battle for his beliefs and his lady love not with a sword but with his fists. Time and again Cohn's romantic preconceptions get in the way of his seeing the world as it really is: he thinks that going to South America will cure him of his restlessness and will not listen to Jake's advice: "Listen, Robert, going to another country doesn't make any difference. I've tried all that. You can't get away from yourself by moving from one place to another."⁽²⁾ Particularly does his romantic code fool/

(1) Hemingway: The Writer as Artist, Carlos Baker
Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1956. p. 86.

(2) SAR, p. 11.

fool him about Brett; his first remarks to Jake about her reveal how little he knows about what she is like: "There's a certain quality about her, a certain fineness. She seems to be absolutely fine and straight."⁽¹⁾ He refuses to listen to Jake's flat statement of what she is really like: "She's a drunk. She's in love with Mike Campbell, and she's going to marry him. He's going to be rich as hell some day."⁽²⁾ In other words Cohn refuses to accept the world as it exists, an acceptance that is the first premise of the initiates; instead Cohn tries to shape the world to conform with his beliefs. Of course he fails, as is painfully revealed to him in his fight with Romero. He can defeat Romero with his fists, but he cannot destroy the inner qualities that make Romero what he is, and in the end it is Cohn that is destroyed and not Romero. He admits to Jake the defeat of all his dreams, a pathetic figure in his white polo shirt just like the one he used to wear at Princeton: "I've been through such hell, Jake. Now everything's gone. Everything."⁽³⁾

What Robert Cohn represents, then, is a man with a different code than the others, a code external to him gotten from books not experience, and as such all its inadequacies are fully revealed. However, this code is also the/

(1) SAR, p. 38.

(2) Ibid. p. 38.

(3) Ibid. p. 194.

the clue to the fascinating ambiguity of Cohn's character; as Bill says, "The funny thing is he's nice, too. I like him. But he's just so awful."⁽¹⁾ The initiates of The Sun Also Rises are uneasy in the presence of Cohn, for in him they sense a set of values alien to their own. Cohn, they have to admit, has appealing qualities. "... I never heard him make one remark that would, in any way, detach him from other people. He was nice to watch on the tennis court, he had a good body, and he kept it in shape; he handled his cards well at bridge, and he had a funny sort of undergraduate quality about him."⁽²⁾ Jake admits.

But the "niceness" of Cohn is more than these external qualities; it has to do with his romantic code itself. The initiates know, as Cohn does not, that the romantic picture of life he has is no longer possible, but they also dimly perceive in Cohn's code the measure of what they have lost and what they have been left with. These veterans of World War I know that love, love of the romantic, unrealistic sort that Cohn imagines, is no longer possible for them, and their dislike of Cohn is partly, I think, compounded of resentment and a sense of loss. Jake expresses for all of them the sense of frustration they feel toward Cohn in his remark after Cohn has knocked him out: "That damn Cohn.

He/

(1) SAR, p. 101.

(2) Ibid. p. 45.

He should have hit somebody the first time he was insulted, and then gone away. He was going to stay, and true love would conquer all."⁽¹⁾ That frustration is also present in Mike's drunkenly plaintive cry, "Go away. Go away now."⁽²⁾ There is no room in the world of Romero and the initiates for a person like Cohn, no room because he will not give up his romantic preconceptions about the world and love. In the end Jake hates Cohn where he once liked him, a hate first born out of jealousy of Cohn for having gone off with Brett and then for his bad behaviour. Brett also hates him, significantly not just for what he is, but, as she says, for "his damned suffering",⁽³⁾ that willingness of Cohn to undergo any kind of degradation as long as he is near the woman he loves.

Cohn's behaviour is viewed with distaste by the others, not so much because of his feelings, which they themselves can understand, but because he cannot control them as they do. Cohn's basic sin in the World of The Sun Also Rises is one of admission as well as commission; he admits, indeed proclaims his feelings and sufferings. This, of course, is one of the things a person with the code must never do - to have feelings, emotions, and fears is not wrong, but to make your/

(1) SAR, p. 199.

(2) Ibid. p. 178.

(3) Ibid. p. 182.

your troubles the burden of someone else because you are lacking in control is wrong.

Essentially Cohn is out of place because he is out of date; his romantic certainties about love, his postulating of absolutes, all were destroyed for the others by the war, "that dirty war", ⁽¹⁾ as the poule Jake picks up calls it. For people who have experienced the war, true love such as the honest love Jake and Brett have for each other, has become "hell on earth". ⁽²⁾ As a challenge to the peace of mind of the initiates Cohn must be cast out.

The key figure in the morality of The Sun Also Rises is that of Pedro Romero, the nineteen year old bullfighter. Thematically Romero becomes the hero of the book, embodying as he does the concept of grace under pressure, and externalizing in his actions the moral values of the book. To begin with he is the perfect bullfighter, and "there had not been a real one for a long time." ⁽³⁾ Possessing pundonor in its fullest degree, Romero's performance in the bull ring is aesthetically perfect, his absolute control revealed through the grace of his actions:

"Romero never made any contortions, always it was straight and pure and natural in line... Romero's bullfighting gave real emotion, because he kept/

(1) SAR, p. 17.

(2) Ibid. p. 27.

(3) Ibid. p. 164.

kept the absolute purity of line through the maximum of exposure, while he dominated the bull by making him realize he was unattainable, while he prepared him for the killing." (1)

Romero's performance in the ring on the first day of the fiesta becomes for the initiates the symbol of the ideal in conduct.

Between Romero's first and second appearance in the ring occurs his fight with Cohn. Cohn has every advantage - he knows how to use his fists and Romero does not.

Although Cohn can knock Romero down, he cannot knock him out, cannot really defeat him: "Then Cohn leaned down to shake hands with the bullfighter fellow. No hard feelings, you know. All for forgiveness. And the bullfighter hit him in the face again."⁽²⁾

Cohn cannot touch the inner qualities that make Romero a man, cannot cope with the pundonor of Romero which enables him to get up every time he is knocked down. Although physically Romero is damaged, it is really Cohn who is defeated. As Mike says, "He ruined Cohn. You know I don't think Cohn will ever want to knock people about again."⁽³⁾

Romero's code is good outside the ring as well as in it, and just as one does not give up the attempt to kill/

(1) SAR, p. 168.

(2) Ibid. p. 202.

(3) Ibid. p. 203.

kill the bull properly, neither does one give in to superior physical strength alone.

It is in Romero's final performance in the ring the day after his fight with Cohn that the full validity of his code can be seen. Physically in very bad condition from the fight, Romero goes on to give a brilliant performance, a performance made all the more brilliant by the inferior performance of Belmonte, once one of the greatest matadors in the world. The whole description of the final bullfight, taking up as it does some six pages, is important in its final revelation of the central significance of the bullfight in The Sun Also Rises. Seen in the entire context of the novel, the bullfighting scenes, with their emphasis on grace and control, are a powerful antidote to the graceless behaviour of the initiates during the fiesta.

Romero and the matador's code he embodies is an ideal form of the code, and as an ideal none of the characters can achieve it, although their efforts to emulate it are of value. It is important to realize this fact about The Sun Also Rises - none of its characters can achieve the ideal moral code that is embodied in Romero. Jake, Brett, and the others can identify with and indeed embody to a certain extent the code of the bullfighter, but not/

not completely. The dominating image of the novel is that of the bullfight, and it is in its light that the actions of the main characters must be evaluated.

The fact that the example of Romero remains an unobtainable ideal is revealed in a number of ways, nowhere better than in Jake's and Brett's treatment of him. Hemingway makes it clear that in the context of the book Jake's relation to Romero is that of a betrayer and corrupter, and the nature of this relationship is symbolized by the gradual decline of Jake's friendship with Montoya, who in addition to being the owner of the hotel in Pamplona is also the unofficial head of the aficionados of the bullfight. In the beginning he and Jake are bound closely together by their mutual love of the bullfight: "... bullfighting was a very special secret between the two of us; a rather shocking but really a very deep secret we knew about... it was something that we understood."⁽¹⁾ Montoya trusts and respects Jake: he introduces him to Romero, and together at his first fight they recognize that Romero is a "real one". It is to Jake that Montoya turns for advice when Romero is invited to meet the American Ambassador: should he give Romero the invitation? "People take/

(1) SAR, p. 131.

take a boy like that", he says, "They don't know what he's worth. They don't know what he means."⁽¹⁾ Jake does know Romero's worth; as the embodiment of grace he should not be corrupted, and Jake tells Montoya not to give Romero the invitations.

However, while recognizing the worth of Romero, it is Jake who betrays him and allows him to be corrupted. Jake is responsible for introducing Romero, whom he meets in the cafe, to Bill, Mike, and Brett on the very day that he has advised Montoya not to let Romero meet the American Ambassador. The poise and dignity of Romero, who is a conscious artist, talking "... of his work as something altogether apart from himself. There was nothing conceited or braggartly about him",⁽²⁾ contrasts sharply with the drunken vulgarity of the initiates. Nothing could better demonstrate the ideal nature of Romero's code than the picture we have of him, sitting in his graceful innocence in the midst of those who admire him but can only shout drunken insults. Although in their admiration for Romero they toast him, that toast also reveals their inability to communicate with him, for the toast starts out as a lewd remark by Mike, only to be saved at the last moment by Jake.

Into/

(1) SAR, p. 172.

(2) Ibid. p. 174.

Into this scene appears Montoya, and the real nature of what he feels Jake is doing to Romero is seen in his snub of Jake who no longer seems to know what Romero is worth:

"He started to smile at me, then he saw Pedro Romero with a big glass of cognac in his hand, sitting laughing between me and a woman with bare shoulders at a table full of drunks. He did not even nod." (1)

To Montoya, the man with aficion, Jake's action of introducing Romero to the rest of his friends can only have one result, the corruption of his pundonor.

And Jake completes the process of betrayal by actually arranging the start of the affair between Romero and Brett; there is some truth in Cohn's accusation that Jake is nothing but a pimp. The aficionados in the cafe who have seen Jake send Brett off with Romero know what Jake has done, too: "The hard-eyed people at the bullfighter table watched me go. It was not pleasant." (2)

The final condemnation of Jake's treatment of Romero comes again from Montoya. Where he welcomed Jake at the start of the fiesta as his friend and sharer in aficion, at the end he refuses even to say good-bye: "We had lunch and payed the bill. Montoya did not come near us." (3)

Thus/

(1) SAR, p. 177.

(2) Ibid. p. 187.

(3) Ibid. p. 228.

Thus while Jake admires Romero both as a man and as a matador embodying the ideal of the code, it is he who betrays him by introducing him to Brett.

The actual affair of Brett and Romero is an interesting demonstration not only of the ideal nature of the code but also of how it influences the conduct of one who admires it and appreciates it. Brett's initial impulse toward Romero is purely physical, an admiration of his physical beauty; Jake calls him "... the best looking boy I have ever seen."⁽¹⁾ Captivated by his physical charm, Brett is a "goner": "it's tearing me up inside."⁽²⁾ But she also initiates the affair out of something besides pure lust; in Romero she sees a chance to rescue herself from the degradation caused by her experiences with Cohn and Mike: "I've got to do something. I've got to do something I really want to do. I've lost my self-respect."⁽³⁾ Thus her affair is undertaken for partly therapeutic reasons, and after the affair is over she can say with relief, "I'm all right again. He's wiped out that damned Cohn."⁽⁴⁾

Like Jake in his introduction of Romero to his friends, Brett knows she is wrong to take up with Romero: "I don't say it's right. It is right though for me. God knows, I've/

- (1) SAR, p. 163.
- (2) Ibid. p. 183.
- (3) Ibid. p. 183.
- (4) Ibid. p. 243.

I've never felt such a bitch." The fact that it is right for her and wrong in the eyes of the world, is of no surprise, for in the Hemingway world the dictates of one's own personal code often cause one to act outside the conventional rules of right and wrong. Brett knows that only by doing something she really wants to do can she regain her self-respect, even though society will condemn her for it, as Mike does, "Bad thing to do. She shouldn't have done it."⁽²⁾

. What begins as physical infatuation develops into something far more serious. As Mike explains, Brett "... loves looking after people,"⁽³⁾ and after the fight with Cohn, Romero badly needs taking care of. In the end a genuine love between the two develops: Romero wants to marry her, and Brett is deeply upset when she has to end the affair. Nothing defines the ideal nature of Romero's code better than the fact that the affair between them is ended and is ended by Brett. She explains to Jake when he comes to Madrid to help her that she made Romero go because "It wasn't the sort of thing one does... He shouldn't be/

(1) SAR, p. 184.

(2) Ibid. p. 223.

(3) Ibid. p. 203.

be living with anyone. I realized that right away... You know, I'd have lived with him if I hadn't seen it was bad for him... I'm not going to be one of those bitches that ruins children."⁽¹⁾

The affair was wrong for Brett because she could not fit into his life; at the start Romero was ashamed of her and wanted her to grow her hair long. Just as none of the characters in The Sun Also Rises have the code perfectly, so a lasting relationship is impossible between Romero and Brett. Of all the people in the novel Romero alone does not lose control; Jake cries at night, Mike tips over a table in the cafe, Bill's voice breaks, and Brett cries at the end in spite of herself. Romero and Brett inhabit two different worlds and neither can live for long in the other's. Brett's world is that of compromise, of life with Mike who is "... so damned nice and he's so awful. He's my sort of thing."⁽²⁾ Nothing shows the pragmatic nature of Brett's code better than her decision to go back to Mike; although hardly ideal, it is the best compromise available. On the other hand, Romero's world is that of absolutes, "... of absolute purity of line in his movements."⁽³⁾

The/

(1) SAR, p. 243.

(2) Ibid., p. 243.

(3) Ibid., p. 168.

The code of the bullfighter is at one remove from the main characters of The Sun Also Rises. They cannot participate completely in it, cannot give grace to their every action because of the nature of the world in which they live. As a result they must make their code a compromise between their appreciation of the matador's code and their ability to translate it into terms possible in their own world. The bullfight is an ideal which the code of the initiates participate in but which it cannot wholly achieve. Their code is of necessity a pragmatic one, a compromise with life as they find it, and as such it can only draw upon the rules of the bullfight, not achieve its perfection.

What both of these codes have most in common is an emphasis on control through the assertion of the will. Since no action should be the result of mere chance, one is responsible for all of one's actions. This is one reason why Cohn is so disliked, because he refuses to exert his will and control his actions, because he insists on answering any criticism with an uppercut or a tear. When he allows his emotions to control his actions, he expects tolerance from the others, but no moral laxity of this sort is permitted in The Sun Also Rises. Since one's code of conduct is made for oneself out of oneself, no deviations or exemptions are permitted.

Both/

Both Brett and Jake feel that her action of sending Romero away was a very moral one, and the incident is a good demonstration of the subject of the novel. That subject is primarily morality, the examination of the bases of action and then, secondly, moral discrimination, or the judging of actions to be good or bad. It should be clear by now that Hemingway's ethics are of the pragmatic and empirical variety. There are no absolute moral postulates for Hemingway, although there are norms of conduct. It is not always wrong to lie or commit adultery - it depends on the individual and the situation involved. Thus his characters exist in a world beyond conventional moral good and evil.

It is unfair to Hemingway, however, to conclude from this that "anything goes" in his fictional world, for his fiction bristles with "not done", and once having learned the rules, his characters are not allowed to deviate from them. Consequently the emphasis in The Sun Also Rises is on fidelity to the demands of the code, not to questioning why such a code is necessary. One of the first premises of the initiates is to accept the world as it is, not try to understand it. Understanding life is secondary to living it: "Perhaps as you went along you did learn something I did not care what it was all about. All I wanted to know was/

was how to live in it. Maybe if you found out how to live in it you learned from that what it was all about." (1) Thus the central issue for Jake and the rest is a practical one, that of "... learning how to live according to their own feeling of good and bad." (2)

One thing that the people in The Sun Also Rises can be sure of is that you never get something enjoyable for nothing; the bill for it is always presented in the end. Jake realizes that his suffering from being with Brett in Pamplona is the payment of the bill for having her as a friend without thinking about her side of it: "I had been getting something for nothing. That only delayed the presentation of the bill. The bill always came. That was one of the swell things you could count on." (3)

How does Brett know that her action of sending Romero away was a moral one? The only reason she can give to Jake is that "... I feel damned good." (4) This idea of "feeling good" after an action is the closest thing to real assurance a Hemingway character ever has that an action of his has been a good one; the morality of any action in the/

(1) SAR, p. 148.

(2) American Fiction: 1920-1940, Joseph Wood Beach
MacMillan and Co., New York, 1942. p. 81.

(3) SAR, p. 148.

(4) Ibid. p. 245.

the Hemingway world can only be judged by its consequences as reflected in the feeling one has about it afterwards. Jake himself has told us earlier that immorality is "... things that made you disgusted afterwards."⁽¹⁾ This in turns connects with Hemingway's remark in Death in the Afternoon: "So far about morals, I know only that what is moral is what you feel good after and what is immoral is what you feel bad after."⁽²⁾

To some this may seem a simple and even childish definition of morality, but the matter is far more complex than it appears at first glance. Starting without any assumptions, the Hemingway character pursues an inductive and empirical course in his search for moral standards; everything must be learned from direct experience, nothing will be taken on authority. Joseph Warren Beach summarizes the matter very well: "The text is a simple one: the good things are those that make you feel good. First, feel good at the time; and then, more complicated, feel good afterward. Immorality is 'things that make you feel disgusted afterward'".⁽³⁾ In a sense all of the characters in The Sun Also Rises are engaged in discovering or proving their own moral standards through direct personal experience. Brett knows that her affair with Cohn was immoral because she/

(1) SAR, p. 149.

(2) DIA, p. 11.

she feels disgusted about it afterwards, just as she knows her affair with Romero was moral because she feels good about it afterwards. Learning moral standards is a personal and painful business, since each value must be tested by experience. But the values that emerge are also ones in which one can believe, based as they are on a reservoir of personal experience. In this struggle for a code of conduct, other people are of little help, if only because the values one has cannot be talked about without in some way "losing" them, without diluting the meaning of that value for you. As Jake warns Brett as she talks about her affair with Romero, "You'll lose it if you talk about it."⁽¹⁾

At the end of The Sun Also Rises we are left with a definite hierarchy of values, and the book is both a statement of those values and a definition of their worth. The first article of the code is accepting the world as one finds it and taking nothing about it on faith. From this first premise follows the value of courage, both physical as symbolized by the grace of Romero in front of the bull, and spiritual, as in Brett's recognition that she is bad for Romero. From this courageous honesty with oneself comes honesty with others - sincerity must be present in all relationships. From sincerity comes loyalty, especially for/

(1) SAR, p. 245.

for one's friends. One of the things one must never do, however, is to emote, to proclaim one's feelings, which is what Cohn does. And lastly, at the head of the hierarchy of values, comes love.

There are two different kinds of love in The Sun Also Rises: the love of men without women and the love of men and women. The importance of love as the ultimate value is established early in the novel in a conversation between Jake, Brett, and Count Mippipopolous:

"'You see, Mr. Barnes, it is because I have lived very much that now I can enjoy everything so well. Don't you find it like that?'

'Yes. Absolutely.'

'I know,' said the count. 'That is the secret. You must get to know the values.'

'Doesn't anything happen to your values?', Brett asks.

'No. Not any more.'

'Never fall in love?'

'Always', said the count. 'I am always in love.'

'What does that do to your values?'

'That, too, has got a place in my values.'

'You haven't any values. You're dead, that's all.'

'No, my dear. You're not right. I'm not dead at all.'" (1)

This dialogue emphasizes that the knowledge one has of values is in direct proportion to the amount of experience one has had with which to test their validity and also that of these values love is the most important, and indeed forms a framework of reference for the rest of them.

The/

The love between men is best seen in the comradeship between Jake and Bill, especially during their fishing trip to Burguete. It is a relationship characterized by understanding, communication, respect, and affection. The understanding they have for each other's feelings is almost instinctive: when Bill inadvertently mentions impotency while kidding Jake, he stops suddenly: "He had been going splendidly, but he stopped", Jake thinks. "I was afraid he thought he had hurt me with that crack about being impotent."⁽¹⁾ At times the fellow-feeling does brim over into words, from Bill's direct remark, "You're a hell of a good guy, and I'm fonder of you than anybody on earth"⁽²⁾ down to the embarrassingly inarticulate, "Old Bill. You bum!"⁽³⁾ The love of Bill and Jake is of an unselfish variety, and is in sharp contrast to the actions of the initiates during the fiesta.

The second type of love in the novel is that between men and women, and it is of two kinds: the physical love between Brett and Romero and the "higher" love of Brett and Jake. There is no doubt that in the context of the novel/

(1) SAR, p. 115.

(2) Ibid. p. 116.

(3) Ibid. p. 116.

novel both loves are genuine, no matter how promiscuous Brett may be. Brett's love for Romero is strongly associated with physical pleasure, and there is no possibility of a lasting relationship between them. On the other hand the love of Jake and Brett is based on a spiritual rapport that is continually frustrated on the physical level; it should be remembered that Jake is not a eunuch, only physically incapable of making love. Consequently, their love is not an "enjoyable feeling", but "hell on earth": (1)

'It's good to see each other,' Jake says.
'No. I don't think it is.'
'Don't you want to?'
'I have to.'" (2)

This feeling of having to see each other, of mutual compulsion towards each other which is constantly checked on the physical level is what leads to the deep sense of frustration in their love.

It is the nature of the world that neither of these loves is possible; there is no room in Romero's life for Brett, and she herself is honest enough to see that a relationship with Jake where there would be no physical consummation would be impossible. In answer to Jake's asking if they couldn't just live together she replies, "I don't think so. I'd just tromper you with everybody. You/

(1) SAR, p. 27.

(2) Ibid. p. 27.

You couldn't stand it... It's my fault, Jake. It's the way I'm made."⁽¹⁾

And so the novel must end with Jake's remark, "Isn't it pretty to think so" in answer to Brett's anguished cry,⁽²⁾ "Oh Jake, we could have had such a good time together." Love, while the highest of values is sometimes only an ideal one, as ideal as the code of the bullfight which stands at the centre of The Sun Also Rises.

III

The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber is an important story for a complete understanding of the nature of the Hemingway code not only as a demonstration of how he translated the code of the bullfight into more every day terms but also as a revelation of how the code is learned by one who is initially without it. Among other things the story is also about the nature of fear and the effect the risk of death has on one's system of values. Indeed the story is in many ways the most comprehensive statement Hemingway ever wrote on the nature of the code and its effect on a man's life.

The story concerns itself with the events that occur during a two day period in the lives of three people:

Francis/

(1) SAR, p. 55.

(2) Ibid. p. 247.

Francis Macomber, a wealthy American playboy; Margot, his shrewish wife; and Robert Wilson, their British guide. The Macomers are on safari in Africa, and the story opens on them sitting underneath the fly of the tent, eating lunch. Macomber, we are told, has "... just shown himself, very publicly to be a coward."⁽¹⁾ Through the device of the flashback we learn exactly what the nature of that cowardice is: it seems that that morning they had been hunting a lion, and, when only wounded by Macomber, it had disappeared into the high grass. When Wilson and Macomber went in after it, Macomber ran blindly away in panic when the lion charged; Wilson stood his ground and killed the lion. All this occurred in full view of Margot Macomber, who celebrated Macomber's loss of manhood by kissing Wilson on the mouth.

The situation of facing the charge of a wounded lion is closely analogous to that of the matador facing a charging bull: in both cases one must stand firm, resist the urge to flee, and kill the animal. If one has pundonor, an inner system of ethics and self-identity, this will be revealed in the grace one shows under the pressure, in the ability to face the possibility of death without flinching. Quite clearly Macomber's action proves him/

(1) First 49, p. 103.

him to be without the code as much as the matador's jumping over the fence proves it in his case. However, Hemingway is careful to show that Macomber lacks the code not only in this crucial moment of danger but also in his daily life, that all of his actions are lacking in form.

To begin with Macomber is a man who is obsessed with appearances, as his first two remarks indicate: it is "the thing to do" to have a drink, and he asks Wilson "What had I ought to give (the gunbearers)?"⁽¹⁾ Macomber does not act out of his own feeling of what is right, but out of a desire to obey the conventions of society, to do the socially correct thing and maintain the correct appearance. This concern with appearances has meant that Macomber has "... few things that he really knew",⁽²⁾ and he knows even less in what for Hemingway is the only valid way, through experience. Macomber is condemned for his false knowledge about "... sex in books, many books, too many books."⁽³⁾ Like Robert Cohn who got his romantic values from reading The Purple Land, Macomber has also made the mistake of having obtained knowledge from books. In Hemingway's view he is ignorant because he is inexperienced.

However it is not only because Macomber adheres to conventional morality and gets his knowledge out of books that he is initially condemned: measured against the standard of/

(1) First 49, p. 102. (2) Ibid. p. 120.

(3) Ibid. p. 120.

of the bullfighter's code, he is also found wanting. That code is embodied in the character of Robert Wilson; he is the "code hero", a figure who occurs repeatedly in Hemingway's fiction. The "code hero" is a man to be carefully distinguished from the Hemingway protagonist. In many ways he is simply an embodiment in pure form of the code, an ideal against which the protagonist is measured and from whom he learns. In Robert Wilson we have one of the best examples of the code hero.

Firstly, all his knowledge, from the habits of wild animals to the behaviour of American women such as Margot ("They are, he thought, the hardest in the world; the hardest, the cruelest, and the most predatory..."),⁽¹⁾ is based on direct personal experience. Secondly, he is skillful in his profession, just as the good bullfighter is in his, and the two figures are very similar: "Each makes his living by killing animals for pleasure and pay, and - therefore - each has the strictest rules by which the activity can be pursued."⁽²⁾ For Wilson the hunting of wild animals is a highly ritualized profession in which certain things are "done" and "not done": one does not leave wounded animals to die, one does not shoot animals from a car.

Like/

(1) First 49, p. 107.

(2) Ernest Hemingway, Philip Young
Rhinehart and Co., New York, 1952. p. 68.

Like Manuel in The Undefeated, Wilson's idea of himself, the means which he has to define himself, are closely bound up with his profession; indeed it is impossible to separate what Wilson is from what he does, for the two are one in the same. It is because of this sense of identity and devotion to his profession that Wilson continues to hunt with Macomber after the incident with the lion: "He did not want to hunt... with Macomber at all... but he was a professional hunter..."⁽¹⁾ What this means is that Wilson has a hard core of integrity, what Hemingway refers to in Death in the Afternoon as the quality of having cojones. While he will sleep with Macomber's wife, this does not violate his integrity, for "... he made his living by them; and their standards were his standards as long as they were hiring him."⁽²⁾ About the actual pursuit of his trade, Wilson has the strictest of standards: "He had his own standards about the killing and they could live up to them or get someone else to help them. He knew, too, that they respected him for this."⁽³⁾ This does not mean that Wilson's rules about hunting are inflexible, for he will chase the buffalo from the car because it seems "sporting enough to me", although to do so is illegal. Wilson's rules for hunting are his own, not those of society.

It/

(1) First 49, p. 125.

(2) Ibid. p. 125.

(3) Ibid. p. 125.

It is against this rigid yet undefined code that Macomber keeps offending. To begin with he is emotive in much the same manner of Robert Cohn, indulges in what Wilson calls "emotional trash".⁽¹⁾ He does not keep the tight-lipped control over his emotions that is expected. In a world of continual pain and certain death each man has enough of a task maintaining the proper control without being burdened with someone else's problems as well. So tight is Wilson's control over his emotions that one feels he instinctively mistrusts language because through it he might inadvertently betray more of his feelings than he is willing to reveal. Thus he speaks in a kind of linguistic short hand, often eliminating the subject or the verb of the sentence and especially avoiding the use of the first person.

After Macomber has been purged of his fear, Wilson warns him about talking about it, just as Jake did to Brett: "Doesn't do to talk too much about all this. Talk the whole thing away. No pleasure in anything if you mouth it up too much."⁽²⁾ Language is viewed by Wilson as a betrayer; if one talks too much about something good one has done, then one loses it through diluting the intensity of the experience. If, on the other hand, one talks about something bad one has done, then one simply exposes one's shame/

(1) First 49, p. 106.

(2) Ibid. p. 132.

shame for all the world to see, and one is disgraced publicly as well as privately. This is what Macomber does, continually verbalizing all his emotions and asking all the wrong questions. Thus he publicly toasts Wilson for "what you did" in saving him from the lion, and tacitly condemns his own behaviour. He asks Wilson not to talk about his cowardice to others and then apologizes for doing so when Wilson insults him. And he tells Wilson with complete lack of self-respect that "It's not very pleasant to have your wife see you do something like that."⁽¹⁾ To Wilson this kind of remark is a double offence against the code: "I should think it would be even more unpleasant to do it, wife or no wife, or to talk about having done it."⁽²⁾

In the crucial moments after the lion has been wounded Macomber does everything wrong by Wilson's standards: he wants to send a beater in alone, which as Wilson points out would mean a certain mauling for the man, or just to leave the lion where he is. This suggestion is so alien to Wilson's code of conduct that he feels "... as though he had opened the wrong door in a hotel and seen something/

(1) First 49, p. 104.

(2) Ibid. p. 110.

something shameful." (1) To leave the lion where he is is just "not done": for one thing the lion is bound to be suffering, for another someone might happen along and be attacked by the lion.

What Macomber fails to understand is the principle involved here, a principle which Hemingway elaborated on in an article in Esquire: "For any good man would rather take chances any day with his life than his livelihood and that is the main point about professionals that amateurs never seem to appreciate." (2) As an amateur, Macomber cannot understand why Wilson is willing to risk his life by going in after the wounded lion when the safest thing would be "just to drop it". For Wilson his profession is far more important than his life, and to die while pursuing that profession would be an honourable death.

If the first part of The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber is devoted to showing the ways in which he is lacking the code, then the second part is devoted to showing how Macomber overcomes his cowardice, learns the code, and for a period of some twenty minutes has a happy life. Macomber's basic mistake was in allowing his fear of death to/

(1) First 49, p. 116.

(2) "Notes on Dangerous Game", Esquire 2 (July, 1934), p. 19.

to govern his actions. In admitting his fear Macomber makes the same sort of error the matador Hernandez made in going down on his knees and admitting his fear and his inability to control himself. Macomber's fear is a fear based first of all on an apprehension which "... had started the night before when he had wakened and heard the lion roaring somewhere up along the river." (1) It is that fear, now become panic, that causes Macomber to run away from the charging lion. Hemingway once defined cowardice as "... a lack of the ability to suspend the functioning of the imagination." (2) Having heard the lion all night, Macomber allows his imagination to conjure up what might happen rather than controlling it and living in the actual moment. Conversely, then, courage is "... learning to suspend your imagination and live completely in the very second of the present moment with no before and no after..." (3) Granted the irrevocable act of cowardice, how is Macomber to rid himself of his fear and learn this kind of courage? His fear is essentially one of consequences, and his problem is how to get rid of this fear of what may happen and to learn that "... danger only exists at the moment of danger. To live properly the/

(1) First 49, p. 110.

(2) Men at War, ed. Ernest Hemingway Crown Books, New York, 1942. p. xxvii.

(3) Ibid. p. xxvii.

the individual eliminates all such things as potential danger. Then a thing is bad only when it is bad."⁽¹⁾

Macomber's chance to learn the code comes the day after his debacle with the lion. Hemingway skilfully uses a situation almost completely analogous to the lion episode in order to emphasize the change that has occurred in Macomber. Having chased and presumably killed three buffalo, they are faced with the situation of one of them getting up and going off into the bush. Margot feels that this will be "just like the lion", but Wilson disagrees, and he is right, because Macomber "... for the first time in his life (is) wholly without fear. Instead of fear he had a feeling of definite elation."⁽²⁾ Exactly how this change has been accomplished cannot be explained: "It had taken a strange chance of hunting, a sudden precipitation into action without opportunity for worrying before hand."⁽³⁾ In the Hemingway world not only does talking about something lose it; often some things, such as how courage is acquired, cannot be talked about at all; there is a great deal of the ineffable in Hemingway.

Regardless of its cause, the change in Macomber is immediately/

- (1) Ibid. p. xxvii.
(2) First 49, p. 130.
(3) Ibid. p. 132.

immediately apparent to Wilson: "More than a change than any loss of virginity," he thinks. "Fear gone like an operation. Something grew in its place. Main thing a man had. Made him into a man."⁽¹⁾ Margot sees the change as well and is worried by it because he knows Macomber's loss of fear means the end of her dominance over him. And Macomber is aware of the change himself; he tries to explain to Wilson how it feels: "Something happened in me after we first saw the buff and started after him. Like a dam bursting... something did happen to me. I feel absolutely different."⁽²⁾ It is the difference of a man who has been reborn.

Writing of the time when he lay wounded in an Italian hospital, Hemingway told of "... the sudden happiness and the feeling of having a permanent protective talisman when a young... British officer... wrote out for me... these lines: 'By my troth, I care not; a man can die but once; we owe God a death, and let it go which way it will he that dies this year is quit for the next.'⁽³⁾ It is this same quotation from Henry IV, Part 2 that Wilson recites to Macomber in recognition of his having attained manhood. Having done so he is embarrassed, "... having brought out this/

- (1) First 49, p. 132.
(2) Ibid. p. 131.
(3) Men at War, p. xiv.

this thing he had lived by, but he had seen men come of age before and it always moved him. It was not a matter of their twenty-first birthday." ⁽¹⁾ Closely analyzed, it is a little difficult to see exactly what comfort a man might draw from this quotation or what exactly there is in it that a man could live by. The "I care not" seems to be little more than a childish rejection of a hard fact, and the "owing" of God a death is hardly a very deep explanation of the necessity of death.

However, seen in the broad context of the story the meaning of the remark for Hemingway becomes clear. Essentially what Macomber has discovered through some mysterious purge of fear is that the worst thing that can happen to a man is death; having faced this squarely and adjusted to the fact of his personal mortality, he is now free to act without apprehension. Simply by facing the fact of his own death, it has become possible for Macomber to say, "After all, what can a lion do to you?" ⁽²⁾ Thus the actual meaning of the remark is that man should be aware of his personal mortality, recognize that it is the worst that can happen to him, thus lose the fear of the unknown, and act in the awareness of this fact without any fear of consequences.

Here, /

(1) First 49, p. 131.

(2) Ibid. p. 131.

Here, as with the bullfighter's code, we see that at the heart of Hemingway's ethical system is a concern with the effect death may have on a value: for any value to be valid it must be good up to and including the fact of death, for it is death that gives final significance to a value. If one faces death and dies by the code that one has lived by, then it must be valid. It is for this reason that the "permanent protective talisman" that Wilson passes on to Macomber really says nothing more than be aware of death.

That the lesson Macomber has learned is really valid is proved by what happens when he and Wilson go into the bush after the wounded buffalo. When the buffalo charges, Macomber gives empirical evidence through his grace under pressure that he is now a man with the code. He stands solidly in his place, shooting carefully "with the buffalo's huge bulk almost on him"⁽¹⁾. In the last moment before the buffalo reaches Macomber, Mrs. Macomber, ostensibly aiming for the animal, shoots Macomber in the back of the head and ends his short but happy life. Unable to endure the thought of losing control over Macomber (as Wilson says afterward, "He would have left you, too."⁽²⁾), she/

(1) First 49, p. 134.

(2) Ibid. p. 135.

she has done away with him.

In a paradoxical manner the death of Macomber proves the moral seriousness of the code by which he lived his short, happy life. Although death has triumphed, we have been given the picture of what a man can be and how he becomes it. In dying well Macomber has made an eloquent statement of the worth of the new life he had begun only twenty minutes before. The story is proof of Hemingway's belief that a man can achieve real stature in the very moment of his death.

As Ray West has pointed out, there is "... no natural distinction between the man Francis Macomber and the water buffalo... But there is one obvious distinction: for the buffalo death was neither victory or defeat - it was simply extinction. The courage of the human being was a rational discipline of his uncontrolled urge to flee, a conscious subjecting of himself to danger in order to prove his manhood."⁽¹⁾ Macomber's short life has been a happy one because he has been allowed what Hemingway called in Across the River and into the Trees the "grace of a happy death",⁽²⁾ a death which sums up the meaning of the life that/

(1) "Ernest Hemingway: Death in the Evening", Ray West Antioch Review IV (December, 1944). p. 574.

(2) ARIT, p. 202.

that has gone before it. The validity of the code Macomber has learned is ultimately based on the fact that life ends in death:

"... the risk of death lends a moral seriousness to a private code which lacks it. The risk is arbitrary; when a man elects to meet it, his beliefs take on a subjective weight, and he is able to give meaning to his private life... he moves forever on a kind of imaginative frontier... where the stakes are always manliness and self-respect and where death invests the scene with tragic complications." (1)

One comes away from a reading of The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber with a sense of "the exaltation of man's moral values", (2) with the satisfaction of having seen a man learn a code of ethics and be willing to follow its demands even to the death.

IV

The Gambler, the Nun, and the Radio is an excellent story with which to end this chapter on the Hemingway code of conduct because in many ways it embodies all of the aspects of the code that have been discussed. Moreover, in it one can see how completely Hemingway absorbed the code of the bullfight into his fictional world, for although the externals/

(1) "The Death of Love in The Sun Also Rises," Mark Spilka, Hemingway and his Critics, ed. Carlos Baker Hill and Wang, New York, 1961, p. 87.

(2) "Hemingway's Major Works," Pier Paolini, Hemingway and his Critics, ed. Carlos Baker, Hill and Wang, New York, 1961. p. 137.

externals of the bullfight and indeed any mention of it are missing in the story, it is the code of the bullfight, translated now into an everyday situation, that is behind the morality of the story.

Nothing could seem farther from the bullring than the situation of Mr. Frazer, the protagonist of the story. Having broken his leg badly in a fall from a horse, he has been in the hospital a "long, long time". So severe is the pain of his broken leg that after five weeks of the continual bearing of unbearable pain he admits that when the nurse goes out, "I cry an hour, two hours. It rests me. My nerves are bad now."⁽¹⁾

In the hospital where Frazer is there are two other people who are of interest: Cayetano, a Mexican gambler brought into the hospital with two bullet wounds in his stomach, and Sister Cecilia, a Roman Catholic nun whose two main interests are baseball and sainthood. Out of these three characters Hemingway constructed an amusing and instructive story about three different approaches to the problem of authentic living.

The figure of Frazer is a familiar one by now: he is the generic prototype of Nick Adams and all the rest, and like/

(1) First 49, p. 580.

like them he has been wounded and tries to keep from thinking about his mortality. The experience of lying in bed and under-going considerable pain is nothing new to Frazer: "His nerves went bad at the end of five weeks, and while he was pleased they lasted that long yet he resented being forced to make the same experiment when he already knew the answer. Mr. Frazer had been through all this before."⁽¹⁾ Like Jake his control is not always perfect and sometimes he cries, but it is at night when he is alone, and he gets through life with a minimum amount of mess and trouble to others.

Two of the things that help Frazer to endure the pain of his broken leg are alcohol, the "giant killer" as he calls it, and the radio, played so low at night that the utmost of concentration is required to hear it. The radio and the alcohol are not cures for the pain, but escapes from it, a means of distraction so that control will not be lost. It has frequently been said that Hemingway's characters drink an incredible amount of alcohol; they do so for two reasons: because it is a thing to be enjoyed in itself, as in the wonderful champagne drinking episode in The Sun Also Rises, and secondly because it is one of the best ways of insulating oneself from pain.

This/

(1) First 49, p. 578.

This same use of alcohol as an escape from one's situation can be seen in For Whom the Bell Tolls where Robert Jordan's drink of anis in a cave behind the enemy lines "... took the place of evening papers, of all the evenings in cafes... of all the things he had enjoyed and forgotten." ⁽¹⁾ Indeed it is safe to assume that all of Hemingway's characters would agree with Freud's statement that "... the services rendered by intoxicating substances in the struggle for happiness and in warding off misery rank so highly as a benefit..." that more people should use them. ⁽²⁾ For Frazer the radio is a new and therefore more distracting device for escape than alcohol, and with it he can ignore the pain by following the stations signing off across the nation and trying to create a mental picture of each city.

But Frazer knows that these are only temporary escapes, and in a famous monologue he lists all those things that are means of escape, "opiums of the people", to use a phrase he has picked up from a Mexican socialist who visits him in the hospital: "Religion is the opium of the people... and music... and economics... What about sexual intercourse; was that an opium of the people? Of some of the people. Of some of the best of people. But drink was a sovereign opium/

(1) FWBT, p. 51.

(2) Civilization and Its Discontents, Sigmund Freud
Hogarth Press, London, 1957. p. 31.

opium of the people, an excellent opium." Frazer goes on to list other opiums, concluding that "the real and actual opium of the people" is bread. ⁽¹⁾ The passage is not simply an exercise in pessimism but a recognition that almost all activities can be means of escape from something else, and that therefore no one of them is necessarily better than the others.

A perfect example of someone using the opium of religion to enable themselves to pass through the pains of life is Sister Cecilia. In his humorous treatment of her we can see again Hemingway's objections to organized religion. Sister Cecilia presents an amusing picture of a nun who alternately uses her power of prayer to further the chances of her favourite baseball team and her own chances for sainthood. "That's what I want to be", she tells Frazer. "A saint... All I want to be is a saint. That is all I've wanted." ⁽²⁾ Frazer's remark to this wish is, "You're three to one to be a saint", ⁽³⁾ and his use of a betting term from the sports world neatly puts Sister Cecilia's desire to be a saint on the same level as her hopes for her favourite baseball team. Although the character of Sister Cecilia is done with humour and sympathy, it is clear/

(1) First 49, p. 584.

(2) Ibid. p. 579.

(3) Ibid. p. 579.

clear that Hemingway is dealing with what is to him a serious problem. For him Sister Cecilia's naive religious faith, while admirable for its intensity of belief, is too complete an escape; prayer for her has replaced action, so much so that she cannot even hear Notre Dame College play a football game and instead must spend that time in the chapel praying for victory for "Our Lady". "It would be too much for me", she tells Frazer. "No, I'll be in the chapel doing what I can,"⁽¹⁾ Sister Cecilia is not only humorous, she is also ridiculous.

The character of Cayetano can be best understood by reference to Hemingway's remark in Death in the Afternoon, "There is honour among pickpockets and honour among whores. It is simply that the standards differ."⁽²⁾ To the conventional world Cayetano presents a moral affront; a professional gambler who not only makes his living off unsuspecting workers in card games that are admittedly dishonest, for "Little gambling is all crooked",⁽³⁾ but who also loves gambling: "I like to gamble", he tells Frazer. "To really gamble... When I make a sum of money, I gamble, and when I gamble I lose."⁽⁴⁾ But in spite of his reprehensible/

(1) First 49, p. 572.

(2) DIA, p.

(3) First 49, p. 581.

(4) Ibid. p. 581.

reprehensible profession it is clear from Frazer's admiration of him that Cayetano is the man with the code and is the embodiment of the moral ideal to which Frazer aspires.

Even without Frazer's admiration, however, Cayetano's function in the story would be clear, a function much the same as that of Robert Wilson in The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber. To begin with Cayetano is in complete control of himself and never once gives any indication of the tremendous pain from his wounds, a pain much greater than that of Frazer. Both Sister Cecilia and Frazer admire him greatly for this control. "Poor Cayetano", Sister Cecilia says, "he's having a dreadful time and he doesn't make a sound."⁽¹⁾ When Frazer remarks on his never complaining about his pain, Cayetano says deprecatingly, "So many people in the ward.. If I had a private room and a radio, I would be crying and yelling all night long."⁽²⁾

That he exhibits such grace under the pressure of the pain of his wound is nor surprising, for Cayetano has an inner system of ethical values that sustain him and make him close to the philosopher that Frazer calls him. It is a code which, while not that of conventional morality, is equally as rigid in its demands. Although it is true "One can,/"

(1) First 49, p. 570.

(2) Ibid. p. 580.

can, with honour, denounce one's assailant", ⁽¹⁾ Cayetano refuses to divulge the name of the man who shot him because it is against his code to denounce anyone to the police. In common with the other code heroes in Hemingway's fiction he has substituted this personal sense of right and wrong for any religious belief, and he refuses to go to confession in spite of Sister Cecilia's urging and his nearness to death. In place of religion he believes in luck, which he admits up to now he has been lacking. He is "... the poor idealist. the victim of illusions", as he mockingly calls himself, ⁽¹⁾ who waits now, as he has for fifteen years, for his luck to change.

Although the particulars of his situation are different, the essentials of Cayetano's code are like those of the bullfighter, transposed now to a hospital in Haley, Montana. Like the really good bullfighter with the perfect bull, Cayetano's every graceful action under the pressure of death is an outward sign of an inner code of courage, valour, and honour. Like the good bullfighter as well he accepts his wound as part of the hazards of his profession and does not complain against it nor the possibility of a permanently/

(1) Ibid. p. 581.

permanently paralyzed leg. And like the bullfighter his code is good even in the presence of death. Although close to death when he is brought into the hospital, he has the grace to thank Frazer for translating for him and can enquire about the amount of pain Frazer is having, just as he can later be embarrassed by the odour of his wound when peritonitis sets in. The risk of death, as in the bullring, lends further proof of the moral seriousness of the code.

It is a code, of course, which is by no means a perfect copy of that of the bullfighter in the ring; nothing can ever completely duplicate the austere perfection of that artificial situation. Because of the nature of the world in which he lives, Cayetano's code must be a compromise with life as he finds it: he must himself cheat at cards to win, for all small card games are crooked and not to cheat would only be unrealistic. Accepting the world as he finds it, Cayetano has hammered out a code of practical ethics.

Compared to this pragmatic ethic Frazer's attempts to cope with the need for control in life are seen as inadequate. That he can recognize the virtues of Cayetano and try to emulate them is to his credit, but he is never able to make the code completely his own. In The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber Macomber was only able to achieve the code that/

that Wilson stood for at the cost of his life, but no such heroic sacrifice is permitted here. The view we have of Frazer is that of a man who has tried but failed; for him the demands for living "truly" are too great and have caused him to break beneath the strain, to escape from the pains of life by alcohol and the radio just as Sister Cecilia has escaped from them by her religious faith. This, of course, is the easiest thing to do, for to be willing to face pain and death without any external help, to rely completely on one's inner system of ethics as Cayetano Ruiz does is more than most ordinary men can achieve. In the unlikely character of a failure of a cheating gambler we see the ultimate translation of the bullfighter's code. In Cayetano we see Hemingway's belief in moral integrity, of a man who has refused to give in to pain, to compromise in any way his ideal of himself.

V

In conclusion it is possible to make a few generalizations about the Hemingway code. First of all, there quite clearly exists a logically consistent scheme of morality in the Hemingway world, a morality which is easily recognizable once its main attributes are known. Most of its attributes can be traced back to the image of the bullfight which dominated/

dominated Hemingway's artistic consciousness. For him the bullfight was far more than a spectacle; it was the ideal enactment of all the virtues he most admired - courage, honour, dignity, and above all an undeviating sense of integrity to one's idea of oneself, a devotion so great that one would rather die than betray it. Indeed for Hemingway the best death is that death in which one dies by and for the values on which one has based one's life.

However, the code of the bullfighter in the ring is clearly separated in Hemingway from the code in the lives of ordinary people; the best people will have a code of conduct which draws upon the rules and values of the bullfight but it is, unlike the bullfight's absolute perfection, a compromise with life as it is found. The code is pragmatic while the bullfight is absolute.

Such compromises as life may demand of men may very well put their code of conduct outside the rules of conventional society, but the Hemingway character must ignore all external attempts to influence him, basing his conduct completely on his own personal sense of right and wrong which he has learned in the only significant way - through direct personal experience. Society continually poses a threat to the Hemingway character because it cannot tolerate the authentic man's desire to follow his own personal code.

Society/

Society cannot tolerate the isolated, different man because its first requirement is that all men live by the same rules, but for the Hemingway character to live by the same ethical system as someone else is inconceivable, for it is a betrayal of one's integrity. In the Hemingway world the man is the code and the code is the man; it is impossible to separate the two. It is a man's task to find in himself his own unit of measurement.

The code of ethics that can be distilled out of Hemingway's work marks him as a severe moral skeptic who believes in "... the strictly empirical approach to the problem of value determination."⁽¹⁾ Resolving to take no moral postulates on faith, Hemingway created in his fiction a code of conduct which above all else worked because it was pragmatic. It is a fair evaluation, I think, to say that all of Hemingway's fiction is about the human will and all that threatens to destroy it. Thus his stories are basically about conflict, either the inner conflict of a man beset by pain, as in the case of Frazer, or the external conflict of a man with his circumstances such as Manuel. It is in this "... sense of their own nature and in the consequent necessity of their own actions..."⁽²⁾ that/

(1) Beach, p. 82.

(2) "Joy Through Strength", Otto Friedrich
American Scholar 26 (Autumn, 1957). p. 529.

that the universality of Hemingway's fictional characters lie. The Hemingway hero finds himself, through no fault of his own, in a situation that makes the assertion of his own personal values extremely dangerous. The safe, and indeed the sensible thing to do, would be to give in to the demands of the situation, but it is not in the nature of a man like Manuel to do this. In refusing to violate his sense of integrity, in continually asserting his will in spite of the circumstances, the Hemingway hero is of course defeated, but "... in confronting defeat the stance they take is a kind of victory because even in defeat they have kept an ideal of themselves, some definition of how a man should behave."⁽¹⁾

Their code is thus paradoxically both the cause of their defeat and the measure of their victory. Hemingway named one of the collections of his short stories Winner Take Nothing, and the title expresses his sense of winning and yet losing and of losing and yet winning. In a world where religion has no meaning, at least for yourself, and death is terrifyingly near, the only meaning, the only sense of order that can be given to life is through one's personal system of ethics. For the code is/

(1) Understanding Fiction, R.P. Warren and Cleanth Brooks F.S. Crofts and Co., New York, 1943. p. 321.

is not just a practical guide to action, it is also a way of life, a means of imparting order to at least one clean, well-lighted place. It is the one way the Hemingway character can overcome the feeling of alienation between his sense of himself and his sense of his situation, and it is thus the only way he has of coming to some degree of understanding about the nature of existence.

Hemingway's system of ethics is a harsh one, for it makes man both the source and judge of the morality of every action. It is this compulsion to be true to one's idea of oneself that gives the feeling of necessity to Hemingway's fiction, a feeling which at times becomes that of a pervasive sense of doom. Given the character the Hemingway protagonist and the situation in which he finds himself, it is impossible to see how he could have done anything differently; one feels that freedom of choice in Hemingway has been narrowed down to two possibilities, one leading to death with honour, the other to death with ignominy.

It is this sense of necessity between the Hemingway character and his situation that accounts for their universality of appeal. In spite of, and because of the obvious restrictions and contrivances of the usual Hemingway story, it almost always stands for something more than/

than itself. Hemingway's heroes are heroic in a completely human manner, and their decision "to be a man", to obey their personal code regardless of the consequences, is not dependent on the particular situation for its meaning, for the situation the Hemingway character faces exists only to bring out and develop qualities that are inherent in all men. Ultimately, "... each struggle becomes representative of the human condition, for everyone exists in a similar, though less dramatic state of conflict, which springs from a similar contradiction between one's identity and one's situation."⁽¹⁾ The result of that conflict is always going to be defeat, for every story if carried out to its conclusion ends in death, but on a higher level, that of the will, control of oneself and adherence to one's sense of integrity can be maintained. It is in these far reaching examples of what a man can do and what he can achieve that Hemingway's stories assume the nature of a parable on man.

(1) Friedrich, p. 529.

CHAPTER V

"A VERY FINE PERFORMANCE"

"Do not go gentle into that good
night... rage, rage against the
dying of the light."

Dylan Thomas.

It is in Hemingway's novels that we get the fullest creation of his fictional world, the most complete dramatization of the issues and questions that were his fundamental concern. The consideration which over-rides and dominates all aspects of that world is the fact of death, realized through the individual discovery of one's personal mortality. Like the Preacher in Ecclesiastes Hemingway is of the persuasion that "The day of death is better than the day of one's birth." Having discovered mortality through his wound, the Hemingway protagonist is never content to let the matter rest there; he must continually be re-examining it, relating it to the world he lives in, and defining himself and his values through it: "All of Hemingway's compulsions stem from his feeling about death, with which he is concerned in a way that few authors have been since John Donne posed for a sculptor, wrapped in his winding sheet."⁽¹⁾ Robert Cash, in an unpublished M.A. thesis for the University of Kentucky, has enlarged on the various aspects of death which have interested Hemingway:

"It would be difficult to find an author who has written of death as often and as consistently as has Hemingway. At one time or another he has described the death of ants, salamanders, grasshoppers, and fish, how to kill a kudu, the proper way to execute/

(1) Hemingway and the Dead Gods, John Killinger
University of Kentucky Press, Louisville, 1960. p. 17.

execute horses, how bulls are slain, how soldiers die, death in childbirth, and death by suicide, death alone and death in a group; selfish death, sacrificing death, and graceful death." (1)

For the initiated Hemingway character the fact of death - his own and that of others - is the only absolute in a time of flux and change, the one security that can be counted on in a world where every value is open to challenge. Death for Hemingway is quite literally the end, the final snapping shut of what he was to call the "biological trap"; with the cutting off of sensuous experience nothing remains, and Hemingway's characters either reject the concept of a life after death completely or are extremely dubious of its existence. Although Robert Jordan in For Whom the Bell Tolls thinks that it would be nice to talk to his grandfather once again, he is sure that there isn't "... any such damn fool business as a hereafter."⁽²⁾ Having fixed the final pole of his existence firmly, the Hemingway protagonist is then at liberty, if he has, to use one of Hemingway's favourite expressions, the cojones, to make what he will out of life. Since all men must die, it is not their mortality that distinguishes/

(1) Hemingway and the Dead Gods, John Killinger
University of Kentucky Press, Louisville, 1960. p. 17.

(2) FWBT, p. 338.

distinguishes the one from the other, but how they use that knowledge of death during their life and face up to it in their final moments; it is not the fact that one dies that is important but how one does it. For some men the discovery of mortality may lead to despair over the great nada that confronts them, for others a panicked flight to the false security of religion with its lie of immortality, but for Hemingway the authentic man is the one who uses his knowledge of death as the basis for a full and rich life. To do this he must first accept mortality as an unalterable fact of human existence, not ask "why is death?", but rather "granted the fact death exists, what shall I be within its framework?".

In Death in the Afternoon Hemingway explained that the best attitude to have toward death is one of "common sense", which means to be interested in it and not to spend one's life hoping that it does not exist only to discover it when one dies. ⁽³⁾ Angle-Saxons make the mistake of thinking death is an accident not a necessity, a concept which is reflected in their games: "We, in games, are not fascinated by death, its nearness and avoidance. We are fascinated by victory, and we replace the avoidance of death by the/

(1) DIA, p. 249.

the avoidance of defeat." (1) For Hemingway for a man to be unprepared for death through avoiding the thought of it, for him to be surprised by its sudden discovery during the last and crucial moments of his life, is to complicate needlessly the moment of supreme importance in his life; all his efforts must be directed not towards understanding the necessity of death but on maintaining grace under this the last and greatest of pressures and in making a final statement about himself which will reverberate back over his life. The two requirements for a heroic existence in the Hemingway world are that one is aware of death while alive and that the actual process of dying take just so long as it requires to construct a fitting statement on the meaning of one's life and no longer, for the prolongation of the moment of death may lead to pressure so great that the character breaks beneath it and thus spoils this vital moment of truth. Having this sort of common sense about death, one will be like the people of Castilla, whom Hemingway admires greatly:

"They know death is the unescapable reality, the one thing any man may be sure of; the only security; that it transcends all modern comforts... They think a great deal about death, and when they have a religion they have one which believes that life is much shorter than death. Having this feeling, they take an intelligent interest in death..." (2)

(1) DE, p. 28.

(2) DIA, p. 250.

This concept of death as the "unescapable reality" in a man's life is, I think, at the very heart of an understanding of Hemingway's fiction. It is unescapable because the Hemingway character sees the fact of death in all that surrounds him, from the loss of a loved one to the actions of a grasshopper on the hook; in the landscape in which the Hemingway characters live "Death spies on them from behind every tree."⁽¹⁾ And death is a reality because it is the one sure definition a man has of his predicament as a human being and of his position in the universe: you are alive, in which case your senses carry to you the pleasures and pains of the world, or you are dead, in which case "It was all a nothing and a man was a nothing too."⁽²⁾ Between the two verifiable factors of birth and death the people in the Hemingway world are left to make "... what they can out of life by a pragmatic ethic spun bravely out of man himself in full and steady cognizance that the end is darkness."⁽³⁾

Granted/

- (1) "Nightmare and Ritual in Hemingway", Malcolm Cowley Hemingway: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Robert Weeks Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, 1962. p. 48.
- (2) First 49, p. 481.
- (3) "Hemingway's Ambiguity: Symbolism and Irony", E.M. Halliday Interpretation of American Literature, ed. Charles Feidelson Oxford University Press, New York, 1959. p. 299.

Granted the predominance of an interest in death in Hemingway's fiction, the question must then be asked what is its function? To what artistic purpose is it being put? If it is the case that "... the discovery of the role which death plays is the most important key to the interpretation of his work"⁽¹⁾, such questions must be answered. For simply to state and then enumerate the various manifestations of death as it appears in Hemingway's work is to ignore the deep philosophical significance it had for him.

Without over-simplifying matters it is possible to say that death manifests itself in two separate forms and has two different functions in Hemingway's fiction. The first manifestation of death is that of the wound, either psychic or physical which the Hemingway protagonist usually receives at an early age. For Nick Adams, the generic prototype of the Hemingway hero, it establishes the fact of his mortality, cuts him off from his past, and forces him to construct a code of conduct based on his personal experience. But the wound is more than just a traumatic occurrence, for it has an important effect on the kind of life/

(1) Killinger, p. 18.

life the hero leads after it. The wounding is both a death and a rebirth, and what follows it is thus a new and different sort of life. Having confronted the "unescapable reality" face to face, the Hemingway hero must now put his knowledge that the end is death to use. Basically he does this by relating everything in his life to the fact of his mortality. Starting with the assumption that a man is dead much longer than he is alive, he quickly saw that "Only in contrast to death does life have meaning and, conversely, death has meaning only when contrasted to life. A life must be completely lived up to and including death before either has meaning." (1) Or, to paraphrase Rilke, whoever rightly understands and celebrates life at the same time magnifies death, for to live life fully the Hemingway character must be aware of the principle of death-in-life, or, as St. Paul said, the fact that "we die daily." Biologically speaking man can only die once, but on the psychic level he can "die" again and again simply by recalling the fact of his mortality. Properly/

(1) Ernest Hemingway and Death, Thomas Cash Jr. unpublished M.A. thesis for the University of Kentucky, 1951. p. 35.

Properly understood, the knowledge of death the wound brings is the best means one has of giving meaning to life; it is the final touchstone to which everything must be referred. Knowing that death is the end, and living daily in that knowledge, the Hemingway character attaches a far reaching significance to his every action and finds an infinite preciousness in the sensuous enjoyment of the fleeting pleasures of the world.

The problem in living daily with the knowledge of death in order to give meaning to life is that the process of wounding must itself be continually recreated. The Hemingway character lives in what Sean O'Faolin has called the "Captive Now",⁽¹⁾ must be poised forever on the abyss of nothingness if he is to maintain the dynamic tension between life and death. In the moment of wounding, "... in the blinding flash of a shell, in the icy-burning impact of a bullet... in that ill-defined twilight between life and death where time and place are irrelevant questions, man faces his freedom. Nothing has any meaning at that instant except survival and existence."⁽²⁾ Having seen "real life", having/

(1) The Vanishing Hero, Sean O'Faolin, Eyre and Spottiswoode, London, 1956. p. 139.

(2) Killinger, p. 18.

having confronted the existential question of how to be, the Hemingway hero has had life reduced to its lowest common denominator, and henceforth he refuses to be put off by palliatives from continually confronting this essential problem in his day to day life. In each moment of that life he must constantly be aware of the fact of death that he discovered when he was wounded.

This continual recreation of the death experience in order to give meaning to life can be a precarious affair, however, for too great a concentration on one's mortality can lead to despair, a disavowal of the pleasures the senses report in the face of the great nada of extinction. Indeed underneath the emphasis on the joys of this life one finds in Hemingway's fiction a subterranean desire to escape from its pains and demands. As Philip Young has pointed out,

"The thought of death is one toward which we must sometimes be at least ambivalent, for just as death means the end of pleasure so it means, too, the end of pain: in this sense, if in no other, all of us with a part of our natures may occasionally wish to die. Death is the escape to end all escapes; when things are going badly it should not be hard to entertain thoughts of it, especially if one can dream up means to it which are attractive enough." (1)

At/

- (1) Ernest Hemingway, Philip Young
Rhinehart and Co., New York, 1952. p. 139.

At the organic level, as psychologists have pointed out, there is a unity between life and death which at the human level is separated into conflicting opposites, a dialectic between the death wish and the life force.

The constant recreation of the death experience poses another problem as well, that of fear. Each time the wound is recalled the fear of death it inspired is recalled as well, and the problem of the Hemingway character is to adjust to that fear without losing control of himself. To do this he can on the one hand exercise himself of that fear by unflinchingly and honestly contemplating it, as though by simply looking steadily at it the fear will go away. Thus it is not by accident that the generic Hemingway protagonist is frequently a writer or wishes to tell the story of what happened to him to someone, for he feels that by telling it he will get rid of it: thinking about an experience which wounded him deeply, Robert Jordan says "... my guess is that you will get rid of all that by writing about it... once you write it down it is all gone."⁽¹⁾ Having looked at death honestly, the fear of it is purified out, for that moment. On the other hand, the Hemingway hero gets rid of his fear of death by taking the life of another/

(1) FWBT, p. 165.

another human or of an animal, and thus transfers the self-destructive impulse to another through aggression. Speaking of himself, Hemingway once said, "Since he was a young boy he had has cared greatly for fishing and shooting. If he had not spent so much time at them... he might have written much more. On the other hand he might have shot himself."⁽¹⁾ To kill another living creature is in some way to prove to yourself that you are alive, and consequently "... one of its greatest pleasures... is the feeling of rebellion against death which comes from its administering... when a man is still in rebellion against death he has pleasure in taking to himself one of the Godlike attributes - that of giving it."⁽²⁾ It is not that fear is unnatural, Hemingway explained in 1935: "All human beings have it just as all human beings perform certain natural functions",⁽³⁾ rather it is the fact that it is a part of one's "trade" never to show it that accounts for these activities.

There are difficulties, however, in both these methods/

- (1) Young, p. 106.
- (2) DIA, p. 221.
- (3) "Million Dollar Fright", Ernest Hemingway Esquire 4 (December, 1935). p. 190B.

methods of controlling fear: too great a concentration on the knowledge of mortality can cause one to lose control, either physically as the cowardly bullfighter who jumps over the barrera, or mentally by upsetting the delicate inner balance. "When you have been concentrating so hard on something, you can't stop and your brain gets to racing like a flywheel with the weight gone,"⁽¹⁾ thinks Robert Jordan after a particularly bad memory. Similarly the sublimation of fear through the killing of another living creature can brutalize the killer and lead to a loss of that vital sensitivity to the pains and pleasures of the world that characterizes the Hemingway protagonist; to be a great killer calls for the "abnegation of self"⁽²⁾ of the simple man. "You mustn't believe in killing," Jordan warns himself, "you must do it as a necessity but you must not believe in it. If you believe in it the whole thing is wrong."⁽³⁾

The other manifestation of death in the Hemingway world is the actual moment of death itself, the passing from being/

(1) FWBT, p. 340.

(2) DIA, p. 220.

(3) FWBT, p. 304.

being to non-being. As the last moment of sensory experience it is a crucial one, for it is the final chance of the Hemingway character to declare himself, to make a fitting comment on all that has gone before it. A man's death is, in bullfighting terms, his greatest "moment of truth" in which, because the pressure on the man is at its maximum, so is the opportunity to exhibit the maximum in grace; for Hemingway "dying well is the crucial corollary of living well."⁽¹⁾ Karl Jaspers spoke in his philosophy of "boundary-situations" in which faced with a crisis the individual must develop into something finer or lose his essential being; the moment of death constitutes such a situation in the Hemingway world. Faced with the knowledge that this is quite literally the end, the complete cutting off of sensory experience after which all will be nada, how do his characters react? Hemingway makes us watch with almost clinical fascination as he builds up the pressures impinging on his protagonist - does he flinch in the slightest, retract one article of his code in the hope of getting off lighter? If he has, then he has partially destroyed the meaning of his life. The Hemingway protagonist is above all a man set apart from other men, one/

(1) Halliday, p. 299.

one who has dared more than other men, exposed himself to greater danger and therefore risked more greatly the possibilities of defeat and death. (1) In an article on Thoreau written in 1948 Joseph Wood Krutch aptly summarized the interest we feel in the death of such a man:

"... the last days of a rebel have a real significance. They furnish a test, unfairly severe, but a test nevertheless. In the old days a priest offered the dying heretic a crucifix. The waiting spectators took the news to the world, and the world usually hoped the message would be: 'He is saved and he is cancelled out... It was all merely pride and bravado... He did not mean what he said.' Some scene of which this is the simplified symbol must be acted out when any rebel comes to the end of his days and the question is, always, 'Did he or did he not persist to the end?' (2)

The true Hemingway protagonist does indeed "persist to the end" in his affirmation of the code by which he has lived. In maintaining his sense of pundonor in the very face of death, he triumphs over it, and by affirming his awareness of death magnifies life.

It is thus paradoxically the case that it is in the very moment of death that the Hemingway character achieves his greatest victory. Hemingway's ironical perception of life led him to see that like the wounded hyena in Green Hills of Africa we are all "racing the little nickelled death"/

(1) "Hemingway's Moment of Truth". M.S. Shockley
Colorado Quarterly (Spring, 1957). p. 386.

(2) "Thoreau", Joseph Wood Krutch
The American Treasury: 1455-1955, ed. Clifton Fadiman
Harper and Brothers, New York, 1955. p. 463.

death" within us in one form or another and gave him the idea of the victorious defeat and of the concept that "A man can be destroyed but not defeated."⁽¹⁾ Death in itself has no value other than man's awareness of it, but that awareness can give to a man a stature greater than he ever had in life. To the comic character death gives only a "temporary dignity",⁽²⁾ but for the man who has lived out his life in the knowledge of his mortality and faces it bravely death lifts him "... for his great moment..."⁽³⁾ far above the ordinary."

Although disclaiming the existence of an immortal soul, it is one of the curious paradoxes of Hemingway's work that a feeling of immortality is often attained when death is victorious: in the bullfight it is the faena, the ritualistic administration of death to the bull which "... takes a man out of himself and makes him feel immortal while it is proceeding",⁽⁴⁾ the very impermanence/

(1) The Old Man and the Sea, Ernest Hemingway
Jonathan Cape, London, 1961. p. 103.

(2) DIA, p. 14.

(3) O'Faolin, p. 152.

(4) DIA, p. 196.

impermanence of the experience itself giving the feeling of life and death. Similarly the death of El Sordo on a bare hill top in For Whom the Bell Tolls gives us a sense of the glory of man along with the meaningless quality of his death: ⁽¹⁾ "Dying was nothing and he had no picture of it nor fear of it in his mind. But living was a field of grain blowing in the wind on the side of a hill. Living was a hawk in the sky. Living was an earthen jar of water in the dust of threshing with the grain flailed out and the chaff blowing." ⁽²⁾

Thus it is not correct to accuse Hemingway of being a pessimist or a nihilist because of his concentration on death. Edmund Wilson has put this point very well: "Hemingway has expressed with genius the terrors of modern man at the danger of losing control of his world, and he has also... provided his own kind of antidote. This antidote, paradoxically, is almost entirely moral. Despite Hemingway's preoccupation with physical contests, his heroes are almost always defeated physically, nervously, practically: their victories are moral ones." ⁽³⁾ For the/

(1) The Technical and Stylistic Development of Ernest Hemingway, Robert L. Stevens unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Illinois, 1950. p. 93.

(2) FWBT, p. 312.

(3) "Hemingway: Gauge of Morale", Edmund Wilson The Wound and the Bow, Edmund Wilson University Paperbacks, London, 1961. p. 215.

the man who accepts the fact of death, lives his life in the full and steady cognizance of it, and dies continuing to assert the code of conduct by which he lived, death is not a defeat but a kind of victory, a triumph of the will over the flesh that imprisons it, a victory that transcends the here and now. In the end suffering and death are an isolated and personal matter, but what Hemingway shows us in his fiction is that although man will always be defeated on one level, that of the physical, he can, through the assertion of his will, triumph on a higher level, and thus become a symbol of "... what a man can do and what a man endures."⁽¹⁾

It is against this background of the wound and death that the novels A Farewell to Arms and For Whom the Bell Tolls must be examined. The key to an understanding of these two novels is to be found in a remark that Hemingway made in Death in the Afternoon:

"... all stories, if continued far enough end in death, and he is no true story-teller who would keep that from you. Especially do all stories of monogamy end in death, and your man who is monogamous while he often lives most happily dies in the most lonely fashion. There is no lonelier man in death, except the suicide, than the man who has lived many years with a good wife and then outlived her. If two people love each other, there can be no happy end to it.
...if/

(1) The Old Man and the Sea, p. 64.

... if you have not had love, it does not exist for you... All those who have really experienced it are marked after it is gone by a quality of deadness." (1)

Percy Lubbock has said that the most devastating question that can be asked of a piece of fiction is "what is it about?" To ask such a question of these two novels is to point up both their similarities and their differences. On the broadest level they are both about love, death, and the effect death has on one's values. In their treatment of these themes, however, the two novels are remarkably different, as are the conclusions which they draw.

The genesis for the plot of A Farewell to Arms is to be found in two short vignettes which appeared in 1926 in In Our Time; one, simply entitled "A Very Short Story" deals with the theme of love in the midst of war: a wounded American soldier falls in love with a nurse named Luz while he is in a hospital in Padua. After a three month idyll of love during which they want to get married but do not because of the lack of time, the soldier returns to the front. With the armistice the man departs for America to get a job so that he can send for Luz. There/

(1) DIA, p. 119.

There is no happy ending to this tale, however, for she throws him over for an Italian major who promises to marry her but never does, and he catches gonorrhoea "... from a sales girl in a loop department store while riding in a taxicab through Lincoln Park."⁽¹⁾ The theme of death in A Farewell to Arms had its origin in Chapter VI of In Our Time in which Nick Adams, wounded in the spine, waits in the hot Italian sun for the stretcher bearers. While he does so, he remarks to his friend Rinaldi "You and me we've made a separate peace... Not patriots."⁽²⁾

In a sense A Farewell to Arms does no more than expand upon these two themes. However, by weaving these strands together into an inter-related whole through charting their impact on the sensibility of Lt. Fredrick Henry, Hemingway welded the disparate themes of love and death together into a unified meaning. Like the Nick Adams stories the novel is really "about" the effect these experiences have on Fredrick Henry; in this sense the novel could be quite properly sub-titled "The Education of/

(1) First 49, p. 240.

(2) Ibid. p. 237.

of Fredrick Henry", for the movement of its action is that of initiation, of learning through suffering. The lessons that Henry learns are achieved in two ways: through his own experiences, especially the wound he receives, and through his relationships with other people, notably the priest in his mess, the surgeon Rinaldi, and Catherine Barkley, the woman he loves.

The picture we have of Lt. Henry at the start of the novel is that of the uninitiated individual living in the unnatural world of wartime, a world so disconnected from the ordinary plane of existence that its very unnaturalness has become the standard of normality; as Hemingway once put it, "When you are fighting... war, as it is, becomes an almost normal life."⁽¹⁾ Henry's position in such a world is even more unusual, for as an American in the Italian army he is further separated from participation in an ordinary sort of life. No patriotic motive was behind his enlistment, for he joined the Italian army simply because he was in Italy and spoke Italian. Moreover, so far as he can see his presence in it has no effect on its success - returning from his leave he finds everything in his ambulance section in/

(1) The Spanish Earth, Ernest Hemingway
J.B. Savage Co., Cleveland, 1938. p. 23.

in as good condition as when he left: "It evidently made no difference whether I was there or not."⁽¹⁾

In such a world the only value seems to that of pure physical appetite, and Henry thus rejects the offer of the priest to visit his home in Abruzzi where "You would like the people and though it is cold, it is clear and dry."⁽²⁾ Instead he goes "... to the smoke of cafes and nights when the room whirled and you needed to look at the wall to make it stop, nights in bed, drunk, when you knew that was all there was, and the strange excitement of waking and not knowing who it was with you... sure that this was all and all and all and not caring."⁽³⁾ He is the uncommitted man who allows himself to be carried along simply by the force of his physical desires, detached and uninvolved; the whole point of his casual affairs is that they are as easily broken off as they were taken up and with no loss to himself. But after his return from his leave Henry begins to wonder if physical sensation is "all there was". Certainly his friend Rinaldi is of that persuasion: his definition of a "beautiful/

(1) AFTA, p. 16.

(2) Ibid. p. 9.

(3) Ibid. p. 13.

"beautiful adventure" is whether one stays the whole night or not. Fredrick recognizes that in the priest's religious faith there is something with which he must come to terms, an assertion of a world beyond that of the senses that he dimly perceives: "He had always known what I did not know and what, when I learned it, I was always able to forget."⁽¹⁾

It is in his initial relationship with Catherine Barkley that the state of Henry's sensibility at the beginning of the novel's action is best defined. Significantly, he first hears of her and is introduced to her by Rinaldi, the priest of profane love who equates love with sex and who is later to tell Henry that "there is only one difference between taking a girl who has always been good and a woman. With a girl it is painful. That's all I know."⁽²⁾ Henry's first encounter with Catherine firmly establishes the twin themes of love and death. After an initial spate of verbal sparring, Catherine symbolically prefigures her own affair with Fredrick Henry by telling him of her romance with a boy who was killed in the Somme, after they had/

(1) AFTA, p. 14.

(2) Ibid. p. 69.

had been engaged for eight years. She didn't marry him before the war because "I thought it would be bad for him"; now, however, she knows "all about it", although she did not before. ⁽¹⁾ What she has learned quite simply is that when he was killed "that was the end of it". ⁽²⁾ When Henry questions the finality of such a statement, Catherine is very emphatic about it: "Oh, yes, that's the end of it." ⁽³⁾ Henry is still innocent enough to believe in the existence of values which transcend death, but Catherine, who has been educated by the loss of her lover, knows quite definitely from her experience that death is the end, not just of life but of love as well. It will take the whole course of their affair to show Henry, who at this point, as he admits to Catherine, has never loved anyone, the truth of the lesson he is asked to accept on faith at the very start.

The remainder of Fredrick's and Catherine's initial relationship is devoted to the establishment of the contrast between two kinds of love, one selfish, the other unselfish. As it develops, it becomes clear that both Catherine and Fredrick/

(1) AFTA, p. 19.

(2) Ibid. p. 19.

(3) Ibid. p. 19.

Fredrick are perpetuating the relationship for selfish reasons: Henry is simply out for physical satisfaction: it is far better "... than going every evening to the house for officers where the girls climbed all over you and put your cap on backwards as a sign of affection between their trips upstairs with brother officers";⁽¹⁾ in his mind there is little difference between Catherine and the whores of the Villa Rosa, for he approaches them both with the same purpose. Catherine is out for her own selfish ends as well, regarding her affair with Henry as a means of expiating the guilt that she feels towards her dead fiance through pretending that Henry is her first love and by giving Henry what she never gave him. Both of them know that what they are doing is really playing a game "... like bridge, in which you said things instead of playing cards. Like bridge you had to pretend you were playing for money or playing for some stakes. Nobody had mentioned what the stakes were."⁽²⁾ But only Catherine is honest enough to insist that it is a game, and that to talk about love, the love of mutual respect as well as attraction, is a lie.

Up/

(1) AFTA, p. 31.

(2) Ibid. p. 31-32.

Up to the point where Henry is wounded, love exists only as a physical, selfish appetite with no transcendent over-tones, although Henry does dimly perceive that there is something more involved in his feelings towards Catherine when he goes to visit her one night after having had too much to drink; she is ill and cannot see him, and Henry feels "... lonely and empty. I had treated seeing Catherine very lightly... when I could not see her there I was feeling lonely and hollow."⁽¹⁾

It is only in the last moments before he is wounded, when Henry comes to say good-bye to Catherine before going to the front, that there is any suggestion at all that there is a higher level to their love. At their parting she gives him a St. Anthony's medal, not because she is a Catholic, but because "they say a St. Anthony's very useful."⁽²⁾ With the introduction of this transcendent element of sainthood even in this context comes the suggestion that their love can rise above the mere physical, can become something more than a selfish search for personal satisfaction.

In/

(1) AFTA, p. 43.

(2) Ibid. p. 45.

In terms of the initiation of Fredrick Henry into knowledge of what the world is truly like and of his learning through suffering, the wound he receives from a trench mortar while waiting for the attack to begin is the key event. It has all the characteristics of the wound that Nick Adams received: like that wound it is unexpected (Henry is drinking wine and eating cheese at the time) and therefore is unreasonable, and like Nick, Fredrick sees the central issue of mortality in one blinding flash, and having experienced this principle of death in life he will hereafter be a different man. In his description of the experience Hemingway comes as close as anyone has to the realization in words of what it feels like to be wounded, and in the imagery he uses establishes the fact that the wound is both a death and a rebirth for Henry:

"Through the other noise I heard a cough, then came the chuh-chuh-chuh-chuh - then there was a flash, as when a blast-furnace door is swung open, and a roar that started white and went red and on and on in a rushing wind. I tried to breathe but my breath would not come and I felt myself rush bodily out of myself and out and out and out and all the time bodily on the wind. I went out swiftly, all of myself, and I knew I was dead and it had all been a mistake to think that you just died. Then I floated, and instead of going on I felt myself slide back. I breathed and I was back." (1)

From this moment, in which Henry is poised on the abyss
of/

(1) AFTA, p. 57.

of nothingness, dates the beginning of his life as an authentic, initiated person. The first lesson he learns from the wound is that Catherine was wrong in saying death was the end of it: you don't just die, but die, lose consciousness of yourself, and then come back to life to live the rest of your life in the full knowledge that you are mortal. And the knowledge of mortality that the wound gives also brings with it the fear that will haunt him the rest of his life, especially at night in his dreams or when he lies awake afraid to sleep: ". . . I looked at my leg and was very afraid. Oh God, I said, get me out of here."⁽¹⁾ The final acknowledgement of his separation from his past and his birth into a new life is marked by his baptism in blood that he receives on the way to the rear from the hemorrhage of the man above him in the ambulance.

In the field hospital where Henry is recovering before he is sent to a permanent hospital he has two visitors - Rinaldi and the priest - and his conversations with them show how the knowledge of death has changed him and also develop the theme of love. First to arrive is Rinaldi, full/

(1) AFTA, p. 58.

full of vitality and enthusiasm over his growing surgical skill, who tells Henry that he will receive a medal for his valour at the front. The news only convinces Henry of the existence of a gap between himself and the world of the army - far from doing anything heroic he was simply "... blown up while we were eating cheese."⁽¹⁾

The real difference in Henry is to be seen in Rinaldi's comment "You are so brave and quiet I forget you are suffering."⁽²⁾ Henry has learned one of the first articles of the code: one does not reveal one's pain to another. As to love, Rinaldi claims that he and Henry are alike underneath, "all fire and smoke and nothing inside",⁽³⁾ But Henry will not agree to this, any more than he will allow Rinaldi to classify Catherine as a "lovely cool goddess" who is good for nothing, in Rinaldi's conception of love, except to worship. Experienced from his wound, Henry feels justified in calling Rinaldi "stupid from inexperience"⁽⁴⁾ and in rejecting his division of women into either virgins or whores.

The/

(1) AFTA, p. 66.

(2) Ibid. p. 67.

(3) Ibid. p. 69.

(4) Ibid. p. 69.

The conversation with the priest who now occupies the same chair just vacated by Rinaldi develops fully the idea of love as a religious passion. In the priest's country it is understood that a man can love God; Henry can understand this but he cannot do so himself, only fear Him in the night, in the night when his bad memories of the wound and his fear of death return.

"I don't love much," Henry says.

'Yes', he said, 'you do. What you tell me about in the nights. That is not love. That is only passion and lust. When you love you wish to do things for. You wish to sacrifice. You wish to serve.'

'I don't love.'

'You will. I know you will. Then you will be happy.'

'I'm happy. I've always been happy.'

'It is another thing. You cannot know about it unless you have it.'" (1)

At this point Henry is still the uncommitted and uninvolved man; he has not fallen in love with Catherine yet. Nevertheless, he is in a more receptive frame of mind to listen to what the priest has to say about love, for he is beginning to realize that love seems to offer the only security in a meaningless world, and afraid of death Henry desperately needs something to keep out the darkness.

Of/

(1) AFTA, p. 75.

Of course, he cannot accept completely the priest's definition of love as the unselfish service to another simply because in Hemingway's world all values must be tested first in the fire of personal experience before they have meaning for a person: "... if you have not had love, it does not exist for you."⁽¹⁾ With Catherine very much on his mind, Henry asks the logical question - would the love of a woman be like that love of which the priest speaks? The priest cannot answer this question because he has never loved a woman. The conversation reveals the curious inability of Hemingway characters to communicate with each other, even among those who are aware of the same values; both must have personal knowledge of the value before it can be discussed. Although the priest and Henry do not communicate completely, Robert Penn Warren is certainly correct in saying that the priest's role here is "... to indicate the next stage of the story, the discovery of the true nature of love... by indicating a parallel between secular and Divine love, a parallel which implies Fredrick's question for meaning and certitude."⁽²⁾ Cut off from his past and its traditions and values by his/

(1) DIA, p. 119.

(2) Introduction to A Farewell to Arms, Robert Penn Warren Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1959. p. xxix.

his wound, Henry is adrift in a world of meaninglessness, unable to sleep at night from the knowledge that nada is close at hand. In such a situation it is only natural that he turns to the one thing which has seemed to survive the shock of the wound - his initial attachment to Catherine.

Love in the Hemingway world is always an unexplainable mystery, a gift which must simply be accepted when it comes. Thus when Catherine Barkley walks into Henry's hospital room in Milan, he cannot explain how it has happened that he loves her - it has just happened:

"When I saw her I was in love with her... God knows I had not wanted to fall in love with anyone. But God knows I had..."⁽¹⁾ Before this Frederick had been the uncommitted, uninvolved man, but he now gives himself completely to Catherine and their love. The whole interlude in Milan is devoted to establishing love as the highest good and stresses their complete devotion to it, a devotion so great that together they come to form a self-sufficient community of two isolated from the meaningless world that surrounds them.

That/

(1) AFTA, p. 97.

That their love has become a religious passion, a desire "to do things for", is made clear in a conversation they have the night before Henry's operation: Catherine wants to know if he has ever loved anyone, and Henry answers truthfully that he hasn't. But he has "stayed with" some, and even told them that he loved them, although he lies about this to Catherine, for whom it is very important that he has not. This interchange on the various sexual experiences of Henry establishes that there are two kinds of love - sex, the physical urge that Rinaldi believes in and which was all that Henry formerly had, and the higher kind of love of the priest which is what Henry and Catherine now have. Significantly while this conversation is going on Catherine is quite literally "doing things for" her lover - preparing him for the operation of the morning. Love as a service means a complete loss of self, of merging into the other; as Catherine says, "I want what you want. There isn't any me any more. Just what you want."⁽¹⁾

This religious aspect of their love is further stressed by Henry's desire to marry Catherine and her refusal to do so. Although firmly committed to the idea of love as the only/

(1) AFTA, p. 110.

only value, Fredrick is not able to rid himself completely of his adherence to his old ways of life and still believes in the need of social sanctions: "I wanted to be really married but Catherine said they would send her away...

I wanted us to be really married because I worried about having a child if I thought about it..." (1) Catherine makes it quite clear to Fredrick that love alone is enough and does not have to be sanctioned by society:

"We are married privately. You see, darling, it would mean everything to me if I had any religion. But I haven't any religion."

.....
'Then nothing worries you?'
'Only being sent away from you. You're my religion. You're all I've got.'" (2)

Thus when Catherine and Henry say good-bye when he has to return to duty, the fact that love has replaced religion is emphasized by having Henry, who still has not completely rid himself of his old beliefs, suggest to Catherine that they go into a cathedral and pray, but of course she refuses. Standing close to the wall of the church are another couple, and Henry hopes that they have a place to go. "They have the cathedral", (3) Catherine answers:/

(1) AFTA, p. 118.

(2) Ibid. p. 120.

(3) Ibid. p. 153.

answers: religion works for some people, but not for Catherine and Henry. They have a place to go - a room in a second-rate hotel where they celebrate their religion of love one last time before parting.

In spite of the idyllic quality of the interlude in Milan we are not allowed to forget that love exists in the context of war and death which continually threaten to break through that love and destroy it. The ultimate defeat that any such attempt as this to separate one's self from the world must suffer is suggested both by a symbolic use of rain and also by the introduction of the concept of the "biological trap". One night as they are lying in bed it begins to rain, and Catherine remarks that rain always makes her afraid. When Fredrick asks her why, she tells him it is because sometimes she sees herself and Henry lying dead in it. This fatalistic note is intensified by her remark that "... nobody can help themselves."⁽¹⁾ The covert remark about rain and its connection with death only brings to the surface an image that was present in the first chapter where the troops march along in the rain, their capes bulged forward "as though they were six months gone with child." And with/

(1) AFTA, p. 132.

with that same rain came the cholera, killing "only
seven thousand".⁽¹⁾

This note of ultimate doom and the linking together of pregnancy, rain, and death is furthered by the news that Catherine is to have a baby. When she asks Henry if he feels at all trapped, he replies, "You always feel trapped biologically."⁽²⁾ This, of course, is perfectly true, for man cannot escape from the absolute framework of his life which is birth and death. Both he, Catherine, and the unborn child are all trapped by their mortality; there can be no happy ending to this story. The fact that death threatens and will eventually destroy their love is hammered home in the ensuing conversation:

"If anything comes between us we're gone and then they have us," Catherine says.

'They won't get us... Because you're too brave. Nothing ever happens to the brave.'

'They die of course.'

'But only once.'"⁽³⁾

But Catherine knows better than this, as should Henry; the brave die two thousand deaths, die every time they remember that they are mortal, but because they are brave they do not mention it. The suggestion is that the brave, by standing out from the rest of humanity, lay themselves more/

(1) APTA, p. 4.

(2) Ibid. p. 145.

(3) Ibid. p. 146.

more open to the possibility of defeat; in risking more they run the risk of losing out more quickly. For Hemingway the excess of any heroic quality, be it courage, honesty, or bravery is to invite disaster simply by calling attention to oneself.

Only one connection with the outside world now remains, Henry 's position in the Italian army, and this is severed soon after his return to the front. Things are very different when he returns; no longer is there the gay camaraderie of the officers' mess. "It has been bad. You wouldn't believe how bad it's been,"⁽¹⁾ the major tells Fredrick, and nowhere can the effect of the war be seen better than in what it has done to Rinaldi. He has become a "lovely surgeon", but his work is not enough to sustain him, for once he stops operating he becomes depressed: "I only like two other things; one is bad for my work and the other is over in half an hour or fifteen minutes. Sometimes less."⁽²⁾ Henry makes a marked contrast to the condition of Rinaldi, secure as he is in his belief that his love is invincible, what Rinaldi now recognizes as his "sacred subject". Love is now truly religious for Henry, and he will not let Rinaldi apply/

(1) AFTA, p. 171.

(2) ibid. p. 177.

apply his concept of love as sex to it, just as the religious man dislikes hearing anyone malign the Lord's name. But in spite of the fact that Henry's glorification of love is of more use to him than Rinaldi's dedication to his profession, the latter has one advantage: "... I know many things I cannot say. I know more than you... But you will have a better time. Even with remorse you will have a better time."⁽¹⁾ What Rinaldi knows is what he has learned through the experience of war: no personal system of values, no code of conduct, be it devotion to one's work or to love, can ever completely subdue the world, can avoid the inevitable fact of death. Outside the secure little world that one creates lurks the fact of nada: "There's nothing else I tell you. Not a damned thing. I know, when I stop working."⁽²⁾ Although the effort to maintain the code is thus always self-defeating in the end, "fidelity to it... may be an index that allows the characters to see.. their true plight."⁽³⁾

The debacle of the Italian retreat from Caporetto finally severs Henry's commitment to the Italian army. In charge of taking four ambulances to Pordenone Henry does/

(1) AFTA, p. 176.

(2) Ibid. p. 180.

(3) Warren, p. xx.

does his utmost to follow his orders. When the ambulances get stuck in a side road, he makes every possible effort to free them and shoots one of the men when he tries to leave without helping. Now on foot he and his drivers set off for Udine, only to have Aymo, one of Fredrick's closest friends, shot by the Italian rear-guard. Henry himself is captured by the carabinieri, who in the confusion of the retreat are executing all officers above rank of major and anyone speaking Italian with a foreign accent. It is at this point that Henry makes his "farewell to arms", jumps in the river, and escapes. His obligation to the army has been portrayed from the start as being solely to the men in his command; as Catherine tells him when he remarks later on that he feels like a criminal for deserting, "Darling please be sensible. It's not deserting from the army. Only the Italian army." ⁽¹⁾ With his men gone he sees no need to be shot needlessly, and the summary execution of loyal officers cuts the last thread of his obligation. As Malcolm Cowley has rightly pointed out, Henry's plunge into the river is a baptism as well as an escape. ⁽²⁾ "Anger was washed away in the river along with any obligation. Although/

(1) AFTA, p. 260.

(2) "Nightmare and Ritual in Hemingway", Malcolm Cowley Hemingway: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Robert Weeks Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1962. p. 46.

Although that ceased when the carabinieri put his hands on my collar... I was not against them. I was through."⁽¹⁾

Later on he echoes Nick's words in Chapter VI of In Our Time:
"I had made a separate peace."⁽²⁾

It is in Stresa that Henry catches up with Catherine, and they spend two nights there before going to Switzerland to avoid arrest for desertion. While he is there Henry meets up with Count Greffi, a ninety-four year old Italian nobleman whom Henry knew before the war. They play billiards together and afterwards have a conversation which reveals several important lessons to Fredrick. He wants to know if the count would like to live on after death, then feels foolish for mentioning the word death, but the count has lived with that fact for such a long time that he is not bothered. "It would depend on the life. This life is very pleasant. I would like to live forever. I nearly have,"⁽³⁾ he replies. It is the enjoyment of the pleasures of this life that count, because it is all we can be sure of.

The theme of love is similarly introduced when Greffi wants/

(1) AFTA, p. 241.

(2) First 49, p. 237.

(3) AFTA, p. 270.

wants to know what Fredrick Henry values most; the answer is not unexpected - it is someone he loves. It is the same with the count, but it is not wise to do so because you stand to lose so much when the object of your love is gone. As to religion, the count feels he has out-lived his own. "My own comes only at night,"⁽¹⁾ Henry says. "Then, too, you are in love. Do not forget that is a religious feeling"⁽²⁾ is the count's wise remark. This is the final verification of the elevation of love to the level of religion, the thing that the priest told Henry he would not know about until he had had it. What happened before to Henry in the night was just "lust and passion"; now it is a "religious feeling".

Wholly committed to Catherine and their love Fredrick flees with her to Switzerland where they spend the remaining months before the birth of the child. Although his reason tells him he has escaped from the war, Henry knows instinctively that he has not. Sitting in the cocktail bar in Stresa, Henry thinks, "There was no war here. Then I realized it was over for me. But I did not have the feeling/

(1) AFTA, p. 272.

(2) Ibid. p. 272.

feeling that it was really over. I had the feeling of a boy who thinks of what is happening at a certain hour at the schoolhouse from which he has played truant." (1)

And once in their mountain hide-away above Montreux thoughts of the war continue to keep Henry awake at night: "... if I woke in the night I knew it was from only one cause... I knew from the papers that they were still fighting in the mountains because the snow would not come." (2) Behind all of their escape from the world lies the feeling that this attempt to dis-engage themselves from the world is bound to fail.

Just as the war is seen as a threat to their community of two so is the approaching baby. "She won't come between us, will she? The little brat," asks Catherine. "No", Henry replies, "We won't let her." (3) But in spite of this resolution "We knew the baby was very close now and it gave us both a feeling as though something was hurrying us and we could not lose any time together." (4) The impending birth of the child is not seen so much as a welcome event as one more thing that may destroy the "oneness" they feel against the world.

It/

(1) AFTA, p. 254.

(2) Ibid. p. 301.

(3) Ibid. p. 313.

(4) Ibid. p. 321.

It is Catherine's death in childbirth that has caused the greatest difficulty in understanding A Farewell to Arms; some people have thought that her death was simply the result of Hemingway stacking the cards on the side of disaster, that there was no reason in terms of the book's action that she should die, and that therefore the ending has simply been pasted on to the novel. However, seen against the background of the attempt to escape from the world of war and death through the elevation of love to the only value and as the initiation of Henry into true knowledge of the nature of the world, I think it is possible to see the death of Catherine and the child as arising necessarily out of all the action that has preceded it; indeed, the description of that death clarifies and resolves the issues that the previous action has raised.

From the very start it is clear that this will not be an easy birth, and after some twelve hours of labour it is decided to perform a Caesarian. The continual bearing of this unbearable pain has had its effect on both Catherine and Fredrick. In the beginning he simply prays for her, still clinging to the hope of a beneficent diety, but as the hours pass he begins to realize the meaning of the experience:

"Poor/

"Poor, poor Cat. And this was the price you paid for sleeping together. This was the end of the trap. This was what people got for loving each other.... So now they got her in the end. You never got away with anything. Get away hell! It would have been the same if we had been married fifty times. And what if she should die? She won't die... It's just nature giving her hell... What reason is there for her to die? There's just a child to be born, the by-product of good nights in Milan." (1)

With the realization that Catherine may very well die, Henry is forced to face certain issues: first, their attempt to escape from war and death was doomed from the start, not because their method was wrong but because the very nature of the "biological trap", the framework of mortality that humans live in, made it impossible; secondly, marriage would have made no difference at all, because the social sanction of their love would not have changed the biological make-up of Catherine which is what is to blame; and lastly, there is no reason for her to die that can be comprehended - logically considered the baby that is causing all the trouble is simply that by-product of all those good nights in Milan. The conclusion that Henry is forced to come to is that if Catherine is to die it will only be because that is the way things are, and they never can be changed.

As/

(1) AFTA, p. 330.

As for Catherine, the increasing pain only makes her realize what she knew from the beginning - death is the end. Underneath the mounting pressure of the pain she begins to break down, crying out for more gas, administered to her by Henry, the lover who wishes only "to do things for".

"I'm not brave any more, darling. I'm all broken. They've broken me. I know it now", Catherine says.

'Everybody is that way.'

'But it's awful. They just keep it up till they break you.'

.....
'I don't want to die and leave you, but I get so tired of it and I feel I'm going to die.'

.....
'You won't. You can't.'

'But what if I should?'

'I won't let you.'" (1)

This mention that "they" have broken Catherine immediately recalls one of Henry's musings of four months before as he lay in bed in Stressa unable to sleep:

"If people bring so much courage to this world the world has to kill them to break them, so of course it kills them. The world breaks everyone and afterward many are strong at the broken places. But those that will not break it kills. It kills the very good and the very gentle and the very brave impartially. If you are none of these you can be sure it will kill you too but there will be no special hurry." (2)

Nothing/

(1) AFTA, p. 333.

(2) Ibid. p. 258-259.

Nothing finer has been written by Hemingway, and it sums up exactly the meaning of A Farewell to Arms: the condition of life is death, and "they", that is to say the way things are, the "biological trap", will catch up with you eventually. When it will happen depends on the kind of person you are and the kind of life you have led: if you are very brave or good or gentle like Catherine, they will have to kill you to break you. If, like Fredrick Henry who has told Catherine, "I'm not (brave.) I know where I stand. I've been out long enough to know."⁽¹⁾, you are not one of the very brave then you will break easily and there will be no hurry to kill you. As one of the brave, and Catherine's bravery has been insisted on all along, she has refused to bend in the face of circumstances, and in order to be broken she must be killed. There is rarely such a thing as a "natural" death in Hemingway's fiction: people do not die of old age or disease, but are killed by them. In other words, death is seen by him as a wholly active agent, not a passive state we merge into. It becomes personalized as the destructive "they", which is simply Henry's personal construct for the biological trap.

Life/

(1) AFTA, p. 146.

Life is thus a sort of huge contest, the length of it determined by one's ability to "become strong at the broken places":

"That was what you did. You died. You did not know what it was all about. You never had time to learn. They threw you in and told you the rules and the first time they caught you off base they killed you. Or they killed you gratuitously like Aymo. Or gave you the syphilis like Rinaldi. But they killed you in the end. You could count on that. Stick around and they would kill you." (1)

Catherine and Henry have violated one of the "rules" of the game, that of compromise; in trying to escape from the world through the assertion of one value to the exclusion of everything else, they discover, as Christopher Isherwood has put it, that "Their love cannot transcend its consequences."⁽²⁾ Fredrick constructs for himself an unsophisticated metaphor for what has happened to himself and Catherine: once when he was camping - it may have been on the Big, Two-Hearted River - he put a log which was full of ants on the fire; some of the ants fell directly into the fire, "some got out, their bodies burnt and flattened, and went off not knowing where they were going";⁽³⁾ the remainder tried to escape by going to the

(1) AFTA, p. 338.

(2) "Hemingway, Death, and the Devil", Christopher Isherwood Decision I (January, 1941). p. 58.

(3) AFTA, p. 338.

the cool end of the log, but eventually they too were killed. At the time Henry thought it made a fine picture of the end of the world, and he could play the role of a messiah by lifting the log off the fire, but instead only threw a cup of water on the fire, which probably steamed the ants and increased their pain. This crude metaphor for what has happened reveals the great amount Henry has learned from his experiences and how nearly complete is his initiation. He is one of those in life who has been broken by the fire of death and allowed to live for another day; Catherine is one of those who is killed directly. All of his hopes in the existence of a beneficent deity are fruitless: if such a being as God does exist, his actions are just as likely to cause pain as relieve it.

The final lesson in Henry's education and the complete destruction of the world he and Catherine have created comes with her death. Up until the very end Henry refuses to admit the possibility of death, praying hopelessly to a God in which he no longer believes. Catherine herself recognizes that death has come and dies with a kind of grace, for her very awareness that she has been broken partially exonerates her from a charge of having violated the code by admitting her pain. Henry wants to know if/

if she would like a priest, but Catherine wants only him, only Fredrick who is her religion. All her thoughts are of him, and speaking almost from the grave she tells him not to worry about her, for she is not afraid - death is only a "dirty trick".⁽¹⁾

Henry's last farewell, his farewell to the arms of Catherine, takes place in the hospital room where she has died:

"I... shut the door and turned off the light (but) it wasn't any good. It was like saying good-bye to a statue."⁽²⁾

Catherine is dead - there is no more to say. Her death is the final closing of the biological trap, and with the failure of his attempt to make a fitting farewell to her dead body comes the final step in Fredrick Henry's education through suffering. Now there is quite literally nothing left for him to do, nothing, that is, except walk back to the hotel in the rain.

Thus the death of Catherine is directly related not only to the whole atmosphere of death, defeat, and doom, but also to the attempt to escape from that world through love, and to the initiation of Fredrick Henry. E.M. Halliday has/

(1) AFTA, p. 342.

(2) Ibid. p. 343.

has pointed out quite correctly that Catherine's death reveals the full irony of A Farewell to Arms: "It is as though the author has said, 'Do not imagine that the kind of cruelty and disruption I have shown you are confined to war: they are the conditions of life itself.'⁽¹⁾"

That death also reveals the ultimate defeat any attempt to escape from such a world must suffer in trying to substitute the limited meaning of a personal relationship for a universal meaning. And lastly, her death is the last step in the education of Fredrick Henry, an education achieved through suffering. So tenacious was Henry in his hold on the value of love and to the empty forms of society that it has taken this, the greatest loss he could endure, to show him how mistaken he was. Now Henry is marked by that "quality of deadness" that all who have experienced love show after it is gone.

The death of Catherine raises a larger issue as well: what the final effect of A Farewell to Arms is. Hemingway himself was firmly convinced that the book was a tragedy: "The fact that the book was a tragic one did not make me unhappy since I believed that life was a tragedy and knew it could only have one end",⁽²⁾ and he once remarked that/

(1) "Hemingway's Ambiguity: Symbolism and Irony", E.M. Halliday, Interpretations of American Literature, ed. Charles Feidelson Oxford University Press, New York, 1959. p.313.

(2) Hemingway: The Writer as Artist, Carlos Baker Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1956. p. 97.

(1)
that A Farewell to Arms was his Romeo and Juliet.
Here is not the place to discuss the larger problem of
which the controversy over whether A Farewell to Arms
is a tragedy is but one aspect, the problem of whether a
modern tragedy on twentieth-century man is even possible.
Critics such as Joseph Wood Krutch and artists such as
Arthur Miller have argued forcefully on both sides of
this question. Rather we shall here be limited to an
exposition of what Hemingway considered the main
requirements for a tragedy were and how A Farewell to Arms
relates to them.

It should not come as a surprise that he considered
the essential characteristic of tragedy to be that of death.
In order to understand this fully it is necessary to
examine Death in the Afternoon, for it contains Hemingway's
explicit statements on tragedy. He is quite definite
in his belief that the bullfight is a tragedy:

"the bullfight is not a sport in the Anglo-Saxon
sense of the word, that is, it is not an equal
contest between a bull and a man. Rather it is a
tragedy; the death of the bull, which is played,
more or less well, by the bull and the man involved, and
in which there is danger for the man but certain death
for the animal." (2)

The/

- (1) "Hemingway: Gauge of Morale", Edmund Wilson
The Wound and the Bow, Edmund Wilson
University Paperbacks, London, 1961. p. 198.
- (2) DIA, p. 22.

The tragedy of the bullfight is primarily that of the bull and only incidentally that of the matador; the bull's death is certain, and he will be dead fifteen minutes after the fight begins no matter what he does. Therefore, it is how the bull behaves, to what degree he exhibits his "nobility" that is important; it is for this reason that "... the bravery of the bull is the primal root of the whole Spanish bullfight."⁽¹⁾ The matador's task, especially when he has the perfect bull which is utterly brave and charges in a straight line, is to release and shape the energy of the bull into a feeling of mortality and immortality in the spectator, much as the musician of a steam calliope releases "... this force in the directions he chooses rather than applying force in a varying degree himself to produce music."⁽²⁾

In the perfect bullfight, the one which gives a truly tragic sensation to the spectator, the matador is never injured; his role is to make the complete faena "... that takes a man out of himself and makes him feel immortal while it is proceeding, that gives him an ecstasy ... of ordered, formal, passionate, increasing disregard for death that/

(1) DIA, p. 111.

(2) Ibid. p. 144.

that leaves you in the end... and the death administered to the animal that has made it possible, as empty, as changed, and as sad, as any major emotion will leave you." (1)

For Hemingway it is this moment in the bullfight, the actual killing of the bull, that is the catharsis in the tragedy; for one brief instant the spectator is purged both of any pity for the bull and of all fear of death. The matador is killed or injured either as a result of a lack of skill or through bad luck, and as examples of human fallibility this can be tragic, but the main source of the tragedy of the bullfight is that of the bull not of the man:

"... in a perfect bullfight no men are wounded nor killed and six bulls are put to death in a formal and ordered manner by men who expose themselves to the maximum of danger over which their skill and knowledge will allow them to triumph without casualties." (2)

For the matador to be killed in the ring may or may not be tragic, depending on why his death occurs, but it is not the motivating force behind Hemingway's interest in the bullfight which sees it as the "tragedy of the bull, not the man." (3) His comment on a portrait of the matador

El/

(1) DIA, p. 196.

(2) Ibid. no page number (picture caption).

(3) Ibid. p. 160.

El Gallo sums up the appeal of the bullfight perfectly:

"The bull, as he should be, is dead. The man, as he should be, is alive and with a tendency to smile."⁽¹⁾

It is possible to translate Hemingway's conception of the bullfight as a tragedy into more literary terms by referring to a remark he made in 1926 to his editor Maxwell Perkins:

"I've known some very wonderful people who even though they were going directly to the grave (which is what makes any story a tragedy if carried out until the end) managed to put up a very fine performance en route."⁽²⁾

This extremely revealing remark shows that what makes a man's life a tragedy for Hemingway is the fact of his mortality, but not simply this alone. Death is merely the tragic potential present in everyone's life; whether or not that life is a tragedy depends not just on the awareness of death but also how one behaves in the knowledge of that fact. In short it is the man who puts up a "very fine performance en route" to the death he knows is certain who achieves a tragic existence - simply to die is not enough - it is how one lives in the midst of death that matters. In the Hemingway theory of tragedy man must come to terms with his own death but not let that fact effect/

(1) DIA, no page number (picture caption).

(2) Baker, p. 81.

effect his desire to act with grace. It is for this reason that the assertion of the will is of prime importance in Hemingway's work, since it is only through the will that man can maintain his integrity in the face of death. It is only when the will of a Hemingway character breaks down that he becomes non-tragic; although to be broken does not necessarily mean a failure of the will, but sometimes of the power of the will to control external events. The will must keep on asserting itself even when circumstances are too much for it, and it is for this reason that in Hemingway's fiction the value of an action often lies not in its success but in the will which produced it.

Needless to say the correlation between Hemingway's theory of tragedy as he saw it expressed in the bullfight and as he embodied it in his fiction is hardly perfect; for one thing he frequently used the word tragic in a highly emotive rather than definitive sense: "... he was fighting in such bad physical condition that it was tragic to watch him."⁽¹⁾ Nor is the bull an ideal tragic protagonist - to begin with as an animal he lacks the awareness/

(1) DA, p.242.

awareness of his fate that we require of the hero of a tragedy. However, if we concentrate on the bull's behaviour in the ring, we can see in what respect Hemingway considered his death to be tragic. Faced with the pain from the wound inflicted by the picadors and the banderilleros, how does the bull behave? The cowardly bull will refuse to charge or will not insist in his attempts to get at the man, while "the really brave bull welcomes the fight, accepts every invitation to fight, does not fight because he is cornered, but because he wants to..."⁽¹⁾ In other words it is the bull's "very fine performance" that counts, not just the fact that he is killed. Maxwell Geismar has caught the essence of what is tragic about the bullfight to Hemingway:

"As the matador gains his dignity by facing death, and in the end, in one form or another, succumbing to it, the bull, even more surely, has less chance to escape it, and so gains a greater sense of crisis and tragedy. He is the victim, the sacrifice, the sufferer. He dies the death, not remotely or by chance, but through purpose here and now." (2)

And it is this same idea of the inevitability of death and of asserting one's will against it to the end that is behind the tragedy in Hemingway's fiction.

Obviously/

(1) DIA, p. 111.

(2) Writers in Crisis, Maxwell Geismar
Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1942. p. 55.

Obviously what makes the bullfight a tragedy and what makes A Farewell to Arms a tragedy is not identical; in a sense every work of art worthy of the name tragedy creates in part its own rules, even though it shares certain essential characteristics - what makes Oedipus a tragedy is not the same as what makes Hamlet one. Tragedy is at bottom an individual, personal matter. However, the tragedy of the bullfight and the tragedy of A Farewell to Arms are related in their concern with defeat, death, and a sense of triumph. In much the same fashion as the bull and the matador in the ring, Catherine and Henry are placed in a situation where all their efforts must be devoted to maintaining their pundonor in the face of death. The whole atmosphere of doom and death which permeates the book points to the fact that they are going "directly to the grave". In spite of this knowledge and also because of it, they manage to put up "a very fine performance en route."

Although the main emphasis of A Farewell to Arms is on the tragedy of Fredrick Henry, it should be noted that at the end of the novel we are presented with two tragic experiences: one, the tragedy of the man who becomes strong at the broken place, loses what he values most, and is allowed to live for another day; the other, the/

the tragedy of the woman who has the knowledge of death from the start, is broken completely, and dies knowing it. A Farewell to Arms presents us with a dual conception of tragedy, just as in the bullfight it is primarily the tragedy of the bull and only incidentally that of the man. Just as it is bad luck and not any failure of skill that accounts for the matador being gored when the wind blows up his cape so is Catherine killed not because of any lack of knowledge of the "rules" but by the bad luck of her biological make-up.

The picture of Catherine lying moaning and broken on the hospital bed was, I think, deliberately included by Hemingway in order to avoid the criticism that he did not take into consideration the possibility of what happens when a person does break. While the tragedy of A Farewell to Arms is that of a man who has the code and becomes strong at the broken place, the book also contains in capsule form the tragedy of a person who has the code and does break; even with the code you can be broken - this is the lesson to be derived from the plight of Catherine. Just as there are two kinds of tragedy for Hemingway - that of the broken and unbroken person - so are there two correspondent kinds of suffering: the suffering of the individual who has become strong at the broken/

broken place and must go on in spite of the knowledge of mortality and the loss of his loved one, and the suffering of the individual who has been broken and must endure the continual bearing of unbearable pain. In the case of the latter the dignity of the individual can be saved in spite of the fact that he or she has been broken by having them be aware of the fact. Thus A Farewell to Arms is a demonstration of one kind of Hemingway tragedy, as seen in Fredrick Henry, but it also contains the example of another kind, that of Catherine Barkley.

Ultimately A Farewell to Arms is a tragedy of loss, and although it is Catherine who dies, it is really Fredrick's tragedy. As Ray West has pointed out, "... she does not become admirable in her dying; she remains admirable according to the rules of decorum which Hemingway set up."⁽¹⁾ What Henry loses is Catherine to whom he has committed himself completely. In his introduction to the edition of his collected plays Arthur Miller has argued cogently that the essence of tragedy lies/

(1) "The Biological Trap", Ray B. West
Hemingway: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Robert
Weeks Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, 1962.
p. 147.

lies not in any Greco-Elizabethan standard but in exactly the same kind of commitment that Fredrick Henry makes; accordingly the "stature" of the man in terms of his rank in society has nothing to do with whether or not he is a tragic hero:

"It is necessary... not only to depict why a man does what a man does... but why he cannot simply walk away and say to hell with it... evasion is probably the most developed technique men have, and in truth there is an extraordinarily small number of conflicts which we must, at any cost, live out to their conclusions... that moment of commitment must be brought forth, that moment when... a man differentiates himself from every other man... the less capable a man is of walking away from the central conflict... the closer he approaches a tragic existence... the closer a man approaches tragedy the more intense is his concentration upon the fixed point of his commitment, which is to say the closer he approaches what in life we call fanaticism." (1)

Throughout the action of A Farewell to Arms Fredrick Henry is portrayed as a man committed completely to his love for Catherine who is the fixed point of that commitment, while at the same time he is aware that there is a conflict between his substitution of the meaning of their personal relationship for a universal one and the world of war in which it exists. In his and Catherine's complete assertion of love as the highest good they are fanatics. In that same introduction Miller insists that it is/

(1) Collected Plays of Arthur Miller
Cresset Press, London, 1958. p. 7.

is this kind of intensity, "the human passion to surpass his given bounds, the fanatic insistence upon his self-conceived role"⁽¹⁾ that is behind all tragedy, be it ancient or modern. He goes on to say that for him "... the lasting appeal of tragedy is due to our need to face the fact of death in order to strengthen ourselves for life.." ⁽²⁾ a view point which is in complete agreement with the Hemingway theory of tragedy, for it is only by facing death that one can triumph over it.

At the end of A Farewell to Arms we are left with an overwhelming sense of loss, it is true, but also with a feeling of victory in defeat. It has been claimed by Louis Martz among others that the book falls outside the spectrum of tragedy because it contains only "fruitless suffering", suffering which does not lead to any new knowledge, to any kind of affirmation, and therefore does not rise above pathos. ⁽³⁾ However, I feel that in A Farewell to Arms suffering does result in something more than pathos, does give rise to a new sort of knowledge; it leads to the realization of the most tragic fact of all, the fact of death. Through suffering Fredrick Henry has learned, and it is a/
a/

(1) Collected Plays of Arthur Miller
Cresset Press, London, 1958. p. 33.

(2) Ibid. p. 33.

(3) "The Saint as Tragic Hero", Louis Martz
Tragic Themes in Western Literature, ed. C. Brooks
Yale University Press, New Haven, 1960. p. 152.

a suffering he has incurred through his own actions. That suffering has taught him the impossibility of escaping from the fact of death, while at the same time it has impressed on him the power of such things as courage and love in man's eternal struggle to put up a "very fine performance en route".

II

Thinking about the prospect of his own death Robert Jordan remembers the Spanish saying that life is "a passageway with no exit"⁽¹⁾. The whole action of For Whom the Bell Tells bears out the truth of this concept, for from the beginning the movement of the novel's action is that of an inescapable tendency towards death. It is clear from the start that the nature of Robert Jordan's orders - to blow a bridge in the Guadarrama mountains just at the beginning of a daylight Republican attack on the Fascists - renders it impossible that there be any "happy ending" to this story. "When a thing is wrong, something's bound to happen,"⁽²⁾ as Jordan puts it. The "pattern of/

(1) FWBT, p. 305.

(2) Ibid. p. 469.

of tragedy"⁽¹⁾ that he discerns in the events of the three days he spends with Pablo and his guerrilla band thus grows out of the initial situation and not from any conflict of character: "It was wrong from the start and such things accentuate disaster as a snowball rolls up wet snow."⁽²⁾ Thus the novel can quite correctly be called a "study in doom"⁽³⁾ in which every one of its participants are aware that the necessity of blowing the bridge greatly increases the possibility of dying.

The atmosphere of ultimate destruction that permeates the book is carefully established by Hemingway in a number of ways. To begin with we constantly see the fact occurring to Robert Jordan: Hemingway's use of the third person narrative technique instead of the first person enabled him to penetrate far deeper into the consciousness of his protagonist than he could in A Farewell to Arms. For Whom the Bell Tolls abounds in interior monologues by Jordan which depict in detail the effect the knowledge of his inevitable death has on his consciousness. In spite of his admonition "You're a bridge-blower/

(1) FWBT, p. 393.

(2) Ibid. p. 386.

(3) Ernest Hemingway: The Writer as Artist, Carlos Baker Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1956. p. 250.

blower now. Not a thinker." ⁽¹⁾ he is unable to keep his thoughts off the vast wheel of human events, the wheel of fortune so popular to the Elizabethans, that in its revolution reminds Jordan of the unalterable return to the nothingness from which he began. With the theft of the detonator by Pablo Jordan knows absolutely that "We'll all be killed but we'll blow the bridge", ⁽²⁾ but his attitude is not one of "heroic resignation" but of defiant acceptance. As numerous commentators have pointed out, the first picture we have of Jordan is that of an unidentified man stretched out on the forest floor in the posture of a dead man, a posture which is duplicated at the end of the novel when Jordan lies in the exact same position waiting for the bullet that will end his life; in between "there has been for him only this long tendency to the grave." ⁽³⁾

Besides the increasing consciousness on the part of Jordan that he is going to die, the atmosphere of doom is enhanced by Hemingway's use of objects that gradually come to be associated by the characters with a sense of impending disaster. Most noticeable of these is/

(1) FNB, p. 17.

(2) Ibid. p. 371.

(3) Ernest Hemingway, Philip Young
Rhinehart Co., New York, 1952. p. 80.

is the effect the Fascist planes have on people such as Pilar, Maria, and Jordan. They first appear on the morning after Jordan arrives, thundering low over the clearing in front of the cave and then returning high above it: to Jordan "They move like no thing there has ever been. They move like mechanized doom."⁽¹⁾; to Maria they look like death, and for Pilar they are the "bad luck bird"⁽²⁾. The planes appear intermittently through out the action of the novel: after Jordan has shot a lone Fascist cavalry man and he and Augustin are preparing the camp against a possible attack, they see an enemy observation plane, a reminder of the planes of the day before which are now in Segovia like a bad dream waiting to become a reality.⁽³⁾ It is this same observation plane that directs the Fascist bombers to the hill top where El Sordo and his band are making their last fight against the fascist patrol that has followed their tracks in the snow, that snow, which, as Pilar says, is rotten stuff with an illusion of beauty.⁽⁴⁾ And at the very end, after/

(1) FWBT, p. 87.

(2) Ibid. p. 299.

(3) Ibid. p. 279.

(4) Ibid. p. 154.

after the bridge has been blown, the Fascist planes from Segovia appear for the last time on their way to bomb the attacking Republicans, an attack which is doomed to fail because of the loose tongues of the Republican rear-guard.

The sense of impending doom is also established through the use of superstition and premonition. In common with most primitive people the Spaniards in Pablo's band are great believers in the existence of persons with supernatural powers, a belief which has been intensified now that the Republic has "abolished" God. Soon after Jordan arrives, the gypsy Rafael tells him that if he wishes to know what will happen in the next three days to get Pilar, the mujer of Pablo, to read his palm. Shortly afterwards Pilar does exactly that and is obviously disturbed by what she sees; in spite of Jordan's declaration that he does not believe in such things, she refuses to tell him what it is she saw, but from the "feeling of the thwarting of all hope and promise"⁽¹⁾ that it gives her it was probably a very short "life line". Although Jordan frequently states that he does not believe in "ogres, soothsayers, fortune tellers, or chicken-crut gypsy witchcraft,"⁽²⁾

he/

(1) FWBT, p. 58.

(2) Ibid. p. 176.

he himself is basically a superstitious man in his belief in good and bad "signs" - for example forgetting Anselmo's name is a bad sign.

Not only does Pilar have the ability to read palms, she can also smell death on people who are about to die, as she did on Kashkin, a colleague of Jordan's who was with the band when they blew up a train. Jordan denies that such an ability exists and posits a logical explanation for what happened: "Seeing bad signs, one, with fear, imagines an end for himself and one thinks that imagining comes by divination."⁽¹⁾ Pilar treats him like a precocious child and goes on to describe to him what the smell of death-to-come is made up of: the smell of bull's blood on an old woman's breath, of a refuse pail with dead flowers in it, of the slop jars from the whore houses, and of "... an abandoned gunny sack with the odour of wet earth, the dead flowers, and the doings of the night."⁽²⁾ Although Jordan turns the description of the smell into a joke, one feels that such an odour really does exist, if only for Pilar.

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(1) FWBT, p. 250.

(2) Ibid. p. 256.

The theme of the fore-knowledge of death as symbolized by what Pilar has seen in Jordan's hand appears continually through out the book; both Jordan and Pilar become increasingly aware of the truth of what she has divined because the "pattern of tragedy" seems to confirm it. Jordan's attitude remains one of rejection, although he is willing to admit the reality Pilar's belief has for her: "... I don't think she was faking about the hand. Whatever she saw she believed in herself. But that proves nothing." (1) As for Pilar, the sequence of events in the pattern of tragedy - the snow, the death of El Sordo, and the desertion of Pablo - only convince her that she was right, and also that she must convince Jordan that she is wrong if he is not to be hampered in his work by apprehension. Accordingly just before the attack on the bridge she is careful to assure Jordan that "That is all gypsy nonsense that I make to give myself importance. There is no such thing... It is just a lying nonsense that I make. I would not have thee worry on the day of battle." (2) Jordan's ambivalent attitude towards Pilar's foreknowledge is present up to the very end: as he lies wounded and alone with/

(1) FWBT p. 176.

(2) Ibid. p. 387.

with the visible proof before him that he was doomed from the beginning, he still refuses to believe it was fated to end this way. "Do you believe that crap," he asks himself? "No... Not with everything that's happened? No, I don't believe it... She was afraid maybe I believed it. I don't though. But she does. They see something. Or they feel something."⁽¹⁾ As any sensible twentieth-century man would have done, he has rejected the idea of anyone having the ability to see into the future, but in spite of this there remains in his mind the nagging doubt that Pilar may have done just that. In any case the constant recurrence of the problem has reinforced the sense of inevitable doom that one has from the very beginning.

At the same time that there is an emphasis on death and defeat in For Whom the Bell Tolls there is also a positive affirmation of the joys of life. One aspect of this joy is a constant delight in the pleasures of sensuous experience. Jordan and Pilar are the best examples of this feeling; in reply to her question as to whether he/

(1) FWBT, p. 467.

he likes the "things of life" Jordan answers "very much". She already knows he likes to drink, for she has seen him treasuring his cup of anis. ⁽¹⁾ And just before this conversation Pilar has shown herself to be one of those who like the things of life in her lovingly detailed recitation of a week she spent in Valencia with Finito, the matador who was her lover before Pablo. She evokes all the pleasures that that time brought to her; the sight of the sea, the taste of the food and the beer, and the making of love in the middle of the hot afternoon.

In addition to Jordan and Pilar this love of life can be seen in the characters of Anselmo and Rafael. Anselmo, the sixty-eight year old hunter who hates no one, has a great love for the things of this life, particularly hunting, which he likes "more than anything." ⁽²⁾ In his house before the war there was a stuffed eagle: "It was a very beautiful thing and all of those things gave me great pleasure to contemplate." ⁽³⁾ And Anselmo has the same appreciation for alcohol that Jordan does: "That. That. That is what kills the worm that haunts us," ⁽⁴⁾ as he says.

In/

(1) FWBT, p. 56.

(2) Ibid. p. 39.

(3) Ibid. p. 40.

(4) Ibid. p. 205.

In Rafael the gypsy the love of sensuous experience is carried to its furthest extreme, for nothing exists for him except what he can feel, taste, or smell. He has no concept of the value of time except as demarcations of the alternating rhythm of his pleasures: "Twelve o'clock midday. Hunger. Twelve o'clock midnight. Sleep. Six o'clock in the morning. Hunger. Six o'clock at night, drunk. With luck. Ten o'clock at night--" ⁽¹⁾ Consequently he is perfectly capable of deserting his post to go and hunt two rabbits he heard making love in the snow. His excuse for leaving his post is that of the completely sensuous man: "Feel the fatness of the two for this time of year. Think what the Pilar will do with those two." ⁽²⁾

So strongly are the pleasures of this world stressed that it is no accident that Robert Jordan's last gestures are an acknowledgement of them:

"... he took a good long look around at everything. Then he looked at the sky... He touched the palm of his hand against the pine needles where he lay and he touched the bark of the pine tree that he lay behind." ⁽³⁾

Perhaps nowhere is this love of life better developed than in the love of Jordan and Maria. It is an unusual love/

(1) FWBT, p. 79.

(2) Ibid. p. 274.

(3) Ibid. p. 471.

love affair in that it really involves three people not just two - Pilar as well as Jordan and Maria. Pilar, with her deep knowledge of human nature, immediately perceives the initial attraction between Jordan and Maria and the necessity of bringing it to fruition. It is necessary to Maria because only the true love of a tender man can erase the scars of her rape by the Falangists. Long before Jordan appeared Pilar had told her that "... nothing is done to oneself that one does not accept and that if I loved someone it would take it all away." (1) Pilar also sees that love is necessary to Jordan because he has never had it before and because he is going to die in a little while. The morning after he and Maria have first made love Pilar tells him that he is a "cold boy" and asks him if he cares for women. "Yes", Jordan replies. "But I have not found one that moved me as they say they should move you." (2) But Pilar knows that he has begun to feel in such a way about Maria and that because there is not much time it is necessary that they be left alone. Jordan himself has the perception to see what Pilar's role has been; she did not push Maria on to him, but "... she made things easier... She/

(1) FWBT p. 73.

(2) Ibid. p. 91.

She is a damned sight more civilized than you are and she knows what time is all about."⁽¹⁾

Jordan also sees that Pilar herself has a selfish interest in the relationship, a desire to participate vicariously in it and thus recapture a feeling of youth. After Jordan and Maria have made love for the second time, Pilar has to know if Maria has had the sensation of the "earth moving", that sensation that only comes three times in a person's life. Jordan sees that her desire to know is not evil or perverted, but "... only wanting to keep her hold on life. To keep it through Maria."⁽²⁾

The concept of the earth moving at the climax of sexual intercourse suggests the mysticism with which the whole affair is shrouded. As Jordan says after Maria has told him that she has been "another time in la gloria", "I am no mystic, but to deny it is as ignorant as though you denied the telephone or that the earth revolves around the sun..."⁽³⁾ Their love is mystical not only because what they feel is unexplainable in its origin but also because love is the means of producing a magical sense of oneness:

"Afterwards/

(1) FWBT p. 168.

(2) Ibid. p. 176.

(3) Ibid. p. 380.

"Afterwards we will be as one animal of the forest and be so close that neither one can tell that one of us is one and not the other," says Maria... "I am thee and thou art me and all of one is the other." (1)

The agency by which this magical feeling of oneness is accomplished is sexual intercourse, and it is the emphasis on the sexual act that has led some readers to think that Hemingway is simply celebrating the pleasures of the flesh and nothing more. Jordan makes it quite clear that his love for Maria is not simply a matter of sex; before he met her, love had just been a matter of "dragging ashes, although it was pleasant enough... I am no romantic glorifier of the Spanish Woman nor did I ever think of a casual piece as anything much other than a casual piece in any country. But when I am with Maria I love her so that I feel, literally, as though I could die, and I never believed in that nor thought that it could happen." (2) With Maria Jordan is experiencing not just a sensuous pleasure, but a relationship between two people, a relationship which acknowledges the existence and importance of the other person. The earth can move only within the context of such a relationship. Sexual intercourse is important because it is the/

(1) FWBT, p. 262.

(2) Ibid. p. 166.

the best means of expressing the magical oneness that the lovers feel. D.H. Lawrence has put the importance of sex in love in this connection very well:

"Love is the mysterious vital attraction which draws things together, closer, closer together. For this reason sex is the actual crisis of love. For in sex the two blood-systems, in the male and the female, concentrate and come into contact, the merest film intervening." (1)

It is between these two poles - that of a love of life and a tendency towards death - that the drama of these last three days in the life of Robert Jordan is acted out. As is the case with all of Hemingway's fiction, the central concern of For Whom the Bell Tolls is with what happens to the protagonist, the effects the experiences he undergoes have on his sensibility, and not with any sweeping panorama of the Spanish Civil War. While it over-states the case, Wyndham Lewis's remark that the Hemingway here is "the man to whom things are done"⁽²⁾ suggests the degree to which the Hemingway character is a product of the forces that impinge upon him. However, For Whom the Bell Tolls differs radically from the other novels in that it is/

(1) "Studies in Classic American Literature," D.H. Lawrence The Shock of Recognition, ed. Edmund Wilson W.H. Allen, London, 1956. p. 967.

(2) Men Without Art, Wyndham Lewis Cassell and Co., Edinburgh, 1936. p. 16.

is also concerned with what has already happened to the protagonist, what Arthur Miller has called the "viable (1) unveiling between the past and the present", or the effect the past has on influencing the present and shaping the future. This is to say that we know far more about the past life of Robert Jordan - at one point we go back in time to an incident that occurred when he was seven - than we do about any other Hemingway protagonist, and consequently we know far more about the motives which led him into his present situation. Usually the hero of a Hemingway novel is, to use Charles Baker's phrase, "screened at both ends", (2) as even a superficial glance at Fredrick Henry shows, but in Jordan's case a whole vista into his past life is opened up to us.

Such a difference between For Whom the Bell Tolls and the rest of Hemingway's fiction is not an unimportant one, for the knowledge of Jordan's past is a valuable means of understanding his present situation. It should be remembered that "... what a person seeks to become may, at times, well decide what he attends to in his past. The past is an image that changes with our image of ourselves. It/

(1) Collected Plays of Arthur Miller
Cresset Press, London, 1958. p. 21.

(2) Baker, p. 155,

It has been said that we learn looking backward - we live looking forward." ⁽¹⁾ Commenting on the power of recollection, Hemingway once said, "Memory, of course, is never true." ⁽²⁾ I think what he meant by that remark was not that we remember things which never happened, but that by its very nature memory is selective - what it chooses to recall is a function of one's present situation. This would explain the peculiar nature of Robert Jordan's memories, many of which, such as the suicide of his father, are painful to him, but which the situation of his own death causes his mind to recall; as such they are a help to him in facing the inevitable fact that he will die.

This is to say that Jordan's memories are determined in part by what he is trying to become, a man willing to do his duty even though it necessitates his death. The knowledge we have of his past is thus not simply background material presented to us as an interesting tour de force, but a vital means to our understanding of his situation and his methods of dealing with it. Jordan's past is not just a dead memory to him, but rather an active influence on everything he does in the present.

The/

(1) "Attitudes toward Death in Some Normal and Mentally Ill Populations", Herman Feifel, The Meaning of Death, ed. Herman Feifel, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1959. p. 116.

(2) DIA, p.

The majority of what we know about Robert Jordan is learned through our watching him recollect, sometimes in tranquility, but more often in anguish, the experience of his childhood, adolescence, and early manhood; the tone of these recollections is retrospective, a constant checking of what is happening at the present moment against what has already occurred. "Usually," Jordan says, "his mind was very good company", ⁽¹⁾ and the memories are pleasant, as when he remembers his conversations with his grandfather who had fought in another Civil War, the American one, but sometimes his mind recalls things he would much rather forget, experiences which have wounded him deeply: the sight of a Negro hung and then burned in front of his house when he was a small boy, or the time he had to shoot one of his colleagues who was too badly wounded to travel. Unlike Fredrick Henry who declares he is "not made to think", ⁽²⁾ Robert Jordan cannot keep from thinking, although sometimes he would like to.

The peculiar feature of the retrospective quality of Jordan's mind is that it leads to a division into two separate/

(1) FWBT, p. 340.

(2) AFTA, p. 242.

separate mental beings, and his recollections usually take the form of a formal dialogue or question and answer session between the two parts of his mind. Although at one point he tells himself to "Quit thinking like a schizophrenic."⁽¹⁾, there does exist in him a curious split between two aspects of his being. Roughly speaking one might say that the difference between them is the same as that between personality and character: personality is a strictly private affair, representing the deepest part of Jordan's being, that part which contains the memories, good and bad, of his childhood and his love for Maria; it is a mirror which faces inward. Character, on the other hand, is a more public matter, that part of him which converses directly with the outside world, what other people see of him; it is an aperture which sometimes gives glimpses of his personality. To appreciate the difference as it exists in the novel, it is necessary to examine several incidents in which Jordan uses his own terms for the two aspects of his being. The first occurs after his interview with El Sordo when he realizes the gravity of the situation and how much he loves Maria:

"If/

(1) FWBT, p. 394.

"If this was how it was then this was how it was. But there was no law that made him say he liked it. Nor that this could happen to me. I would like to have it for my whole life. You will, the other part of him said. You will. You have it now and that is your whole life... if now is only two days, then two days is your life... if you stop complaining and asking for what you will never get, you will have a good life." (1)

In Jordan's conception of himself there are two beings - "he" and "the other part of him". The "he" part is the personality aspect; it is the questioner, the worrier, and the complainer and needs to be reassured. The "other part of him" would seem to be that of character - it is self-assured, confident, and sees the real issue clearly: that Jordan can "... make up in intensity what the relation (with Maria) will lack in duration and continuity." (2)

Another example of this sort of division occurs after Jordan has shot the Fascist cavalryman who has accidentally happened upon Pablo's camp; the problem at issue is whether or not it was wrong to kill him:

"Listen, he told himself. You better cut this out. This is very bad for you and for your work. Then himself said back to him, You listen, see? Because you are doing something very serious and I have to see you understand it all the time. I have to keep you straight in the head...

But I won't keep a count of people I have killed..., he told himself. I have a right not to count, and I have a right to forget them.

No/

(1) FWBT, p. 169.

(2) Ibid. p. 169.

No, himself said. You have no right to forget anything. Shut up, he told himself. You're getting awfully pompous. Nor ever to deceive yourself about it, himself went on. All right, he told himself. Thanks for all the good advice..." (1)

Here the division of Jordan's being into two different aspects has resulted in the virtual creation of two distinct entities, each with its distinguishing characteristics and an equal role in the conversation. "He" again seems to represent that aspect of Jordan which has been called personality: the worrier and complainer, afraid that the killing that Jordan has done may upset the delicate mental balance and control lost. "Himself" is close to what has been called the character aspect of Jordan, that more public part of him which is more self-assured, confident, and clear-seeing than the frightened "he". "Himself" sees the need for Jordan to examine his feelings about killing in order to keep him "absolutely straight in the head",⁽²⁾ and also the necessity of his loving Maria as a counter-balance to the killing.

At times, however, this division of his mental being into two separate parts can become so extensive that instead of the vital dynamic tension between them the two parts merge/

(1) FWBT, p. 304-305.

(2) Ibid. p. 304.

merge into an unwieldy whole. After Pablo has returned from his temporary desertion, bringing back with him five additional men, a sense of relief overwhelms Jordan, and the "he" aspect of his mental being, which in the despair before the return of Pablo had dominated Jordan, now welcomes the re-creation of the "himself" aspect with its aura of assurance:

"And you, he said to himself, I am glad to see you getting a little something back that was badly missing for a time. I was ashamed enough of you, there for a while. Only I was you. There wasn't any me to judge you. We were all in bad shape. You and me and both of us." (1)

Jordan's mental health depends on the maintenance of a dialectic between these two aspects of his mental being, each drawing strength from the other. This rather peculiar state of mind is thus the most satisfactory method Jordan has found to cope with the situations in life that threaten to upset his control. By dividing himself into two separate beings he is able to secure a double perspective on each problem that confronts him.

It is the continual dialogue between these two aspects of Robert Jordan that accounts for his remarkable degree of self-awareness and self-examination - one part of/

(1) FWBT, p. 394.

of Jordan is always anxiously watching the other to see how it reacts, the public character reassuring and correcting the private personality. But the book is not a simple matter of the use of a stream of consciousness technique, for the important actions of the book exist in the actual events which occur and not in the convolutions of the hero's mind. These events in turn have important effects on the personality and character of Robert Jordan; the novel is not a rousing war story but an accurate recording of the changes that occur in the hero's complex sensibility. Thus it is correct to say that For Whom the Bell Tolls is another story concerned with initiation, but in a different sense than the term has been used thus far. It is not an initiation into the knowledge of mortality, for Jordan has come to terms with that knowledge long before we see him; he is the man who has become "strong at the broken places", has been wounded and recovered to live for another day. He has achieved his control by sublimating his sense of mortality to his sense of duty; in a way his code of conduct has become in time of war an adherence to his duty, to his orders no matter what the personal risk. If Jordan's devotion to his duty were any less severe, he would be able to avoid the tragic necessity of blowing up the bridge.

At/

At the very beginning of the novel, before Jordan has arrived at Pablo's camp, he tells us that he does not worry because he "... did not give any importance to what happened to himself."⁽¹⁾ Such a statement immediately sets him apart from any other Hemingway protagonist, all of whom care deeply, even obsessively, about what happens to them. This difference between Jordan and the other Hemingway protagonists comes out clearly in a conversation he has with Pilar the morning after he arrives:

"'And have you no fear?', she asks.
'Not to die,' he said truly.
'But other fears?'
'Only of not doing my duty as I should.'
,.....
'You are a cold boy.'
'No', he said. 'I do not think so.'
'No. In the head you are very cold.'
'It is that I am preoccupied with my work.'
'But you do not like the things of life?'
'Yes. Very much. But not to interfere with my work.'" (2)

No other Hemingway hero shows this degree of devotion to a non-personal commitment outside himself, a devotion so great that it has overcome the fear of death and made death itself seem unimportant. Jake Barnes, Fredrick Henry, and all the rest are committed to the doctrine of self-interest, as to a certain extent is Robert Jordan. Where he/

(1) FWBT, p. 4.

(2) Ibid. p. 91.

he differs from them, however, is in his belief that there are things in the outside world which deserve and demand commitment, things such as "... a duty toward all of the oppressed of the world" which "... you gave such importance to and the reasons for it that your own death seemed of complete unimportance; only a thing to be avoided, because it would interfere with the performance of your duty."⁽¹⁾ The words sacred, glorious, and in vain which embarrassed Fredrick Henry are now the ones which Robert Jordan believes in and tries to live by.

While Jordan's experiences are thus not an initiation in the usual sense of the word, they are most certainly an education, an education based partly on his conscious desire "... to know how it really was; not how it was supposed to be",⁽²⁾ and partly on the effect the events of the last three days of his life have on his consciousness and its values. Jordan's desire to know how it "really was" not how it was "supposed to be" is related mainly to his political education and to his realization that "... the things he had come to know in this war were not so simple."⁽³⁾ It is an education which has occurred mostly/

(1) FWBT, p. 239.

(2) Ibid. p. 230.

(3) Ibid. p. 248.

mostly in Madrid under the direction of Karkov, a Russian journalist who has shown him the different kinds of Communism that exist - the "puritanical religious" Communism of Velasquez 63, the headquarters of the International Brigade, and the cynical, realistic Communism of Gaylords, the hotel taken over by the Russians.

The result of such an exposure is all a "part of one's education," Robert Jordan thinks. "It will be quite an education when it's finished. You learn in this war if you listen."⁽¹⁾ It is an education which is not predicated on the adherence to any one political system or doctrine, but simply on a love of Spain and a belief in the ideals of the Republic. Consequently he has no politics in the conventional sense of belonging to a political party, but is just an "anti-fascist". Jordan's self-conceived role in the war is thus a curiously detached one in spite of his fighting on the side of the Republic. At one point he explains his position as follows:

"He was serving in a war and he gave absolute loyalty and as complete a performance as he could give while he was serving. But nobody owned his mind, nor his faculties for seeing and hearing, and if he were going to form judgements he would form them afterwards." (2)

Perhaps/

(1) FWBT. p. 135.

(2) Ibid. p. 136.

Perhaps the best way to describe Jordan's position politically would be to call him a committed observer.

Jordan undergoes a personal as well as a political education, an education that is accomplished not by a conscious desire to learn but by the effect the events he experiences have on his sensibility. This education is achieved in two ways: through the love he has for Maria and she for him and through the experience of his own death. The initial picture we have of Jordan is that of a man whose devotion to duty excludes any possibility of commitment to another person. "I have enough to think about without girls," he tells General Golz,⁽¹⁾ and he echoes this remark when he tells Maria upon first meeting her that "I have no time for any woman. That is true."⁽²⁾ That such a thing as love, as distinguished from sex, does exist he knows, but he himself has never been moved as "they say they should move you"⁽³⁾ and he has lived so long without love that he has begun to doubt if it can ever exist for him. "Until thee I did not think I could love one deeply," he tells Maria,⁽⁴⁾ and he goes on to explain what/

(1) FWBT. p. 8.

(2) Ibid. p. 25.

(3) Ibid. p. 91.

(4) Ibid. p. 344.

what his frame of mind was before he met her: "Do you know that until I met thee I have never asked for anything? Nor wanted anything? Nor thought of anything except the movement and the winning of the war? Truly I have been very pure in my ambitions."⁽¹⁾

When love develops between Jordan and Maria, it is, as is always the case in Hemingway, an unexplainable mystery, a mystery presided over by Pilar with her magical powers. It has been objected that such things as the sudden discovery of love by Jordan and Maria and their immediate consummation of it do not exist in "real life". The thought occurs to Jordan himself that this may all be a dream, the sort of wish-fulfillment one has at night with movie stars, and by actually placing the objection to the romance in the mind of one of his characters, Hemingway counter-acts the objection. "Such things don't happen," he thinks. "Maybe you dreamed it or made it up and it never did happen. Maybe it was like the dreams you have when someone you have seen in the cinema comes to your bed at night..."⁽²⁾ But by reaching out and touching Maria he knows that this dream is a reality. To understand the speed with which they fall in love one must appreciate the/

(1) FWBT, p. 348.

(2) Ibid. p. 137.

the dramatic necessity of compression under which Hemingway was working; by limiting his time scheme to three days he hoped to achieve intensity and depth and was willing to sacrifice the leisurely depiction of a growing romance in order to do so.

The influx of love into Jordan's life has two effects: it modifies his sense of duty by creating a conflict between its value and the value of love, and it intensifies his desire to live in spite of the fact he knows he is going to die. After he has made love to Maria for the second time, he realizes the effect love has begun to have on him:

"Enemies of the people. That was a phrase he might omit... That was one thing that sleeping with Maria had done. He had gotten to be... bigoted and hide-bound about his politics... But since last night and this afternoon his mind was much clearer and cleaner on that business. Bigotry is an odd thing. To be bigoted you have to be absolutely sure you are right...

Maria was very hard on his bigotry. So far she had not affected his resolution but he would much prefer not to die. He would abandon a hero's or a martyr's end gladly." (1)

Here we see both effects of love - it has tempered his political thinking, purifying out of it the earlier self-righteousness, and it has also made him want to live, to abandon the idea of a heroic end for a long life with Maria.

This/

(1) FWBT p. 164.

This is not to say that love has affected his resolution, his determination to carry out his orders, but it has made him aware of the waste that will result from his death.

As the action moves towards its climax of the bridge-blowing, Jordan becomes increasingly aware of the value love has assumed for him. The third time they consummate their love is during the second night Jordan is with Pablo's band; only one day and a night remain before the bridge must be destroyed. Holding Maria close to him, Jordan feels she is "making an alliance against death with him", ⁽¹⁾ but later that night he wakes and realizes that no such alliance can exist, and in desperation he holds her tightly "... as though she were all of life and it was being taken from him. He held her feeling she was all of life there was and it was true." ⁽²⁾ Maria does represent "all of life" to Jordan, but it is a life he cannot have, for his sense of duty forces him on to his doom. And so he must lie awake in the night, as all of Hemingway's heroes do, thinking of the great nada, death, that awaits him. The next logical step is a secular marriage, and in the privacy of their sleeping bag on the last night before/

(1) FWBT, p. 264.

(2) Ibid. p. 264.

before the attack Jordan tells her, "We are married, now.
I marry thee now. Thou art my wife." (1)

In the end love becomes one of the prime means by which Jordan's education is completed. After Maria has told him she has been once more in la gloria it suddenly comes home to Jordan,

"How little we know of what there is to know. I wish I were going to live a long time instead of going to die to-day because I have learned much about life in these four days; more, I think, than in all the other time... I thought I knew about so many things that I know nothing of.

... I have the smallest beginnings of an education. The very small beginnings. If I die on this day it is a waste because I know a few things now." (2)

One of the things that Jordan knows is the value of love, and it is the destruction of this love through Jordan's death that is a large part of the sense of waste we have at the end of For Whom the Bell Tolls, a sense of waste that it has in common with such romantic tragedies as Romeo and Juliet or Antony and Cleopatra.

Just before the blowing of the bridge Jordan's sense of duty reasserts itself, as it must if he is to perform his task well, and he puts his love for Maria out of his mind as a miracle that cannot exist in time of duty: "He knew/

(1) FWBT, p. 354.

(2) Ibid. p. 381.

knew he himself was nothing, and he knew death was a nothing... he had learned that he himself, with another person, could be everything. But inside himself he knew that this was the exception.... That cannot be taken away or lost. But that is over and done with now on this morning and what there is to do now is our work."⁽¹⁾

Love has educated Robert Jordan - it has shown him the value of caring for another person and in doing so has come into conflict with his sense of duty; the result of this is to reveal to Jordan the complexities of life. Existence when you are dominated by only one value is much easier than when your values are in conflict: "Two days ago I never knew Pilar, Pablo, nor the rest existed. There was no such thing as Maria in the world. It was certainly a much simpler world."⁽²⁾ But it was not a better world, for love is a mystical union that can outlast death as nothing else can: "If thou goest I go with thee,"⁽³⁾ Jordan tells Maria as he sends her away at the end, and the experiences in the novel make his statement ring true.

The other crucial aspect of Jordan's education is his facing of death, and it is also crucial for an accurate understanding/

(1) FWBT, p. 393.

(2) Ibid. p. 228.

(3) Ibid. p. 463.

understanding of the book as a whole. With the successful blowing up of the bridge and the survival of Jordan comes a feeling of "false dawn" so common to tragedy - one feels for a moment that he has escaped his fate and that this story will have a happy ending. Jordan himself has the same feeling: "... he still felt numb with the surprise that he had not been killed at the bridge. He had accepted being killed so completely that all of this seemed unreal."⁽¹⁾ But this feeling of having escaped from death only accentuates the inevitability of his defeat when it comes: while crossing the road to safety Jordan's horse is hit by a shell from the Fascist tank on the other side of the bridge, and in the fall Jordan's leg is badly broken. A quick examination reveals that the compound fracture will prevent him from riding a horse and that he must be left behind.

The moment it becomes clear that Jordan must be left alone to face death, the ideological framework of the story melts away. Up until this point Jordan has been portrayed as a man intensely committed to an ideal located outside himself, although most of his declarations of commitment are accompanied by such personal reservations as/

(1) FWBT, p. 452.

(1)
as "hoping it was true". It has been this fact of an outside, non-personal commitment that has prompted some critics to feel that For Whom the Bell Tolls is the closest thing to a real tragedy that Hemingway wrote. Maxwell Geismar's remark may be taken as representative of this point of view: "... the true sense of man's depths and his tragedy, first denied to Hemingway by the social pattern of 1929 and then in turn thwarted by his isolation... is possible only within the framework of man's effort."⁽²⁾ However, as an examination of the final scene of the book proves, For Whom the Bell Tolls is far closer to Hemingway's usual conception of tragedy than one would think at first glance. In actual fact the importance of Jordan's outside commitment is severely diminished by the fact that the Fascists have heard of the surprise attack and shifted their positions. As a result General Golz, who receives Jordan's message that the Fascists are preparing for the attack too late to do anything about it, can only say, "Rien à faire. Faut pas penser. Faut accepter. Nous ferons notre petit possible."⁽³⁾ The value of Jordan's commitment to his duty is thus effectively reduced/

(1) FWBT, p. 91.

(2) Writers in Crisis, Maxwell Geismar Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1942. p. 82.

(3) FWBT, p. 429.

reduced to a personal one, that of doing his "little possible" no matter what the results. The value of the effort lies in the attempt, not in the result.

By convincing Maria that the mystical oneness of their love can survive any separation, Jordan manages to persuade her to leave, and he is left at the end in the traditional Hemingway situation: the man alone facing death with only his personal code of conduct to sustain him. Before Augustin leaves, he asks Jordan the crucial question: "Do you want me to shoot thee, Inglés? — It is nothing."⁽¹⁾ This problem of what to do when one is wounded and must be left behind has been fore-shadowed by the fact that Kashkin, Jordan's colleague, was wounded, had to be left behind, and was shot by Jordan at his request. When Jordan told this story early on the first day of his arrival, Pablo had asked him, "And you. If you are wounded in such a thing as this bridge, you would be willing to be left behind?" "Listen to me clearly," was Jordan's reply, "If ever I should have any little favours to ask of any man, I will ask him at the time."⁽²⁾ That time having arrived, Jordan refuses to take the easy way/

(1) FWBT, p. 465.

(2) Ibid. p. 21.

way out by avoiding the pain of dying and instead decides to face death bravely when it comes. "In war," as he tells Augustín, "there are many things like this."⁽¹⁾

Once Jordan is left alone it becomes very clear that the forces which brought him to this situation are not going to sustain him now that he is in it, and he reverts back to his own personal code in the face of death. Faced squarely with the inevitable fact of his imminent death, Jordan undergoes an ordering of experience, weeding out those values that are clearly of no use to him in this the final and greatest test. He sees exactly what his situation is and does not protest against it: "Everyone has to do this, one day or another. You are not afraid of it once you have to do it."⁽²⁾ While not afraid of the fact of death, he is concerned about the process of dying because he realizes that this is what constitutes the greatest threat to his control, and consequently he watches himself carefully for signs of "breaking". One thing he is sure of - there will be no last minute religious conversions:

"Who/

(1) FWBT, p. 465.

(2) Ibid. p. 466.

"Who do you suppose has it easier? Ones with religion or just taking it straight? It comforts them very much but there is nothing to fear. It is only missing it that's bad. Dying is only bad when it takes a long time and hurts so much that it humiliates you." (1)

Jordan is one of those who "takes it straight" without the comfort of either religion or the "giant killer" alcohol.

As the pain of his broken leg increases, the crucial problem for Jordan becomes whether he will be able to hold out until the Fascist patrol arrives and by shooting one of the officers delay them or whether the pain will become so great that he will have to commit suicide rather than be "humiliated" or captured. The problem of suicide is not one that has occurred to Jordan for the first time, for it has been very much on his mind ever since his father killed himself when Jordan was a boy. With maturity he has come to understand why his father did it: because he was a coward and "... that was the worst luck any man could have." (2) But though he can understand his father's reasons, he cannot approve of the act: "You have to be awfully occupied with yourself to do a thing like that... He understood his father and forgave him everything and he pitied him but he was ashamed of him." (3) The only justification/

- (1) FWBT, p. 468.
- (2) Ibid. p. 339.
- (3) Ibid. p. 340.

justification for suicide is when the pain becomes so great that it humiliates you, as with Gitanillo de Triana in Death in the Afternoon, but one only knows that the pain is too great to be borne after one has failed in the attempt to bear it.

"Listen, who dies well?", Philip Rawlings asks somewhat hysterically in The Fifth Column,⁽¹⁾ and the answer in the Hemingway world is that people die well who have deserved it by living well, die believing in what they have lived by, usually an ideal of themselves. True to the Hemingway pattern of conduct, Jordan wishes his death to be a fitting statement on the meaning of his life and a vindication of the code by which he has lived. At the end the two halves of his mind conduct an investigation as to whether or not it would be all right under the circumstances to kill himself: on the one hand there is the danger that he may lose consciousness and be captured by the Fascists; on the other hand, if he can hold out until the Fascist cavalry arrive, he can effectively delay them and perform a last significant act as well. Besides it is against Jordan's entire code of conduct to do so - it would put him in the same class as his father: "I don't want to do/

(1) First 49, p. 42.

do that business that my father did. I will do it all right but I'd much prefer not to have to. I'm against that."⁽¹⁾
As the pain becomes more severe, he becomes more convinced that "... really... it would be all right",⁽²⁾ but he still refuses to give in, clinging to the ideal of courage and endurance symbolized to him by his grandfather. And in the end we are told that Robert Jordan's luck "... held very good because he saw, just then, the cavalry ride out of the timber and across the road."⁽³⁾

In the time between the departure of Maria and the arrival of the Fascist patrol, the word luck is mentioned some ten times, and the obvious importance that luck has to Jordan raises the question of whether his death is not merely contrived, an accident that could easily have turned out the other way. A reviewer in Time magazine summed up this sort of objection in his remark that "The trouble with the metaphysics of chance is that it is too shallow for a true tragic destiny."⁽⁴⁾ Such a statement presupposes a naturalistic and probable conception of tragedy where everything is the result of a simple cause and effect pattern. However, all tragedy, and particularly/

(1) FWBT, p. 469.

(2) Ibid. p. 470.

(3) Ibid. p. 471.

(4) Time (July 14, 1961). p. 87.

particularly romantic tragedy, is dependent to a certain extent on chance and coincidence for its tragic effect - the delay of the friar with the message in Romeo and Juliet, the handkerchief being dropped at just the wrong moment in Othello, and the sending of Cresyde to the Greek camp in Chaucer's Troilus and Creseyde being the most obvious examples. Thus while there is no arguing the fact that Jordan's death is simply bad luck, the result of the fact that he was the last person to cross the road, this does not prevent For Whom the Bell Tolls from being a tragedy. In Hemingway's vision of life a great many things that happen are a result of luck, and he believed that man lives in a world where there are not reasons for everything that happens. Jordan himself is aware that he has had both good and bad luck in the short happy life of his last three days: referring to Maria he says, "We had all our luck in four days", and he knows that he has had a "lot of luck... to have had such a good life."⁽¹⁾ While he praises his good luck, he does not complain about his bad luck, for luck is simply the way things are, and one cannot change them. Grace comes to the Hemingway hero only when he accepts the way things are and lives within their limiting framework. The greatest luck Jordan had in Hemingway's/

(1) FWBT, p. 466.

Hemingway's view was that he was allowed to die with grace and courage, not broken on the wheel of circumstances. There has been no failure of conduct on Jordan's part; he has not made any mistake or error of judgement. His death is simply the inevitable outcome of the way things are: given the situation of blowing up the bridge in daylight and Jordan's rigid sense of duty, his death was inevitable, even though it was mere bad luck that caused the final catastrophe.

For Whom the Bell Tolls is essentially a tragedy of the same order as A Farewell to Arms. Like that book it is also about the loss of a loved one, defeat and death, and it too is a demonstration of Hemingway's remark, "If two people love each other, there can be no happy ending."⁽¹⁾ Like Fredrick Henry, Robert Jordan is a man who is strongly committed, both to his love for Maria and to his sense of duty, and it is this sense of commitment that makes his death all the more wasteful. And like A Farewell to Arms For Whom the Bell Tolls is concerned with "the fine performance en route" of its characters. Indeed, the greater degree of awareness on the part of Robert Jordan that the end is the grave makes for a more tragic effect. As a result of the fact that he definitely knows he is going to die/

(1) DIA, p. 119.

die his "fine performance" is all the more valuable. Everything he has done has been in the full awareness of his own mortality, and his opportunities for "breaking" are far more numerous than Fredrick Henry's; he has that "common sense" about death that Henry lacks until the very end.

It is this heightened degree of "fineness" in Robert Jordan's performance that accounts for the strong sense of moral triumph one feels at the end of For Whom the Bell Tolls. In spite of the fact that he will die shortly, Jordan has blown up the bridge. "Thy bridge is blown, Ingles. Don't forget that", ⁽¹⁾ Pilar tells him when he begins to ennumerate the "ifs" which led to the death of Anselmo, the old man whom Jordan likes so much. And in doing his duty, in honouring his commitments to himself, he has shown us how a man can triumph over death. When Hemingway tells us that at the very last Robert Jordan is "completely integrated", ⁽²⁾ we can only nod our assent, for it is indeed a complete man that lies there, his heart beating on the pine needle floor of the forest.

(1) FWBT, p. 447.

(2) Ibid. p. 471.

CHAPTER VI

THE RIVER, THE ROAD, AND THE TREES

"For all creatures, death has
been prepared from the beginning."

The Talmud

Although separated in date of composition by sixteen years, "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" and Across the River and into the Trees form ideal companion pieces, variations upon the same theme - the psychology of a dying man - and as such it is profitable to study them in conjunction with each other. As examinations from two different view points of the thoughts and feelings of a dying man, the two stories represent a logical culmination in the development of Hemingway's ideas about death. Having concerned himself with how death looks to a living man, he naturally was interested in how life appears to a dying man. Thus the two works are an ideal way in which to end a study of the theme of death in Hemingway. It is possible to trace out a gradual change in the typical protagonist's attitude toward death: for Nick Adams it was something one feared and rebelled against, for Fredrick Henry it was something you discovered and hated, and for Robert Jordan it was something you knew about and sublimated to your duty. In "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" and Across the River and into the Trees death has moved so close to the heroes that the usual Hemingway situation of the man facing death alone has been stripped down to its absolute essentials.

As the generic Hemingway protagonist grew older, the emphasis/

emphasis on the present moment became less and less important and the past became more and more precious: the time scheme of the Nick Adams stories is roughly twelve years, of A Farewell to Arms about a year, of For Whom the Bell Tolls three days, and of Across the River and into the Trees only two days. As the scope of the present action grew narrower and narrower in Hemingway's fiction, his stories began to extend farther and farther back into the past; the Hemingway protagonist began to substitute recollection for action, sensing in his past the reasons for his present situation and the means of shaping his future. And concurrently with a fore-shortening of the present came an increasing awareness of death, the amount of time remaining between the hero and his end having become less and less. Under such compressed conditions an awareness of death could easily become an obsession with it.

Such was once the case with Harry, the writer who lies dying of gangrene in the shadow of Mount Kilimanjaro. Having gone on safari in Africa with his wife Helen in order to "... work the fat off his soul",⁽¹⁾ he neglects a scratch on his knee, ignores it when it becomes infected, with the result that now two weeks later he is "rotted half-way up the thigh."⁽²⁾ Up until the gangrene set in and he realized/

(1) First 49, p. 158.

(2) Ibid. p. 165.

realized he was going to die, death had been his great obsession but now a curious lassitude has come over him and "... it meant nothing in itself."⁽¹⁾ Instead Harry is only filled with regret at his lost opportunities, at all the things he has seen but now will never write about:

"So now it was all over, he thought. So now he would never have a chance to finish it... Since the gangrene had started in his right leg he had felt no pain and with the pain the horror had gone and all he felt was a great tiredness and anger that this was the end of it. For this, that now was coming, he had very little curiosity."⁽²⁾

Structurally the story is organized on two levels - that of the present action, which consists mainly of his conversations with his wife, and, secondly, that of Harry's recollections of the past. In the contrast between the past and the present lies the meaning of Harry's life, a meaning which is brought home to him by the clarity of insight his approaching death provides. While there is no real action in the book - Harry's immobile position on the cot effectively prevents that - this is not to say that there is no dramatic conflict in the story.

First of all there is the conflict between Harry and Helen, his third wife. In his mind she has come to represent all the forces that have destroyed his artistic integrity, although/

(1) First 49, p. 152.

(2) Ibid. p. 152.

although he knows this is not really true: "He had destroyed his talent himself. Why should he blame this woman because she kept him well?"⁽¹⁾ Rather than drawing the couple closer together, Harry's approaching death reveals the fundamental inadequacies of their relationship, for this is not the love as the greatest good of A Farewell to Arms or the love as mysterious union of For Whom the Bell Tolls, but an avaricious, self-seeking perversion of that value. Although Helen's feelings are close to being those of an honest love, they are based on selfish motives: she originally "took him up" because she was bored by her lovers, afraid of being alone, and in need of the company of someone she respected. Her pursuit of Harry was that of a rich woman who was determined to have what she wanted: "The steps by which she had acquired him and in the way in which she had finally fallen in love with him were all a part of a regular progression in which she had built herself a new life..."⁽²⁾ The original impulse of her interest in Harry was thus purely selfish and acquisitive, and even now that she really loves Harry this original impulse is still reflected in her regarding him as a "proud possession".⁽³⁾

While/

(1) First 49, p. 158.

(2) Ibid. p. 160.

(3) Ibid. p. 158.

While some sort of honest love is at work in Helen's feelings for Harry, he himself has become completely cynical about love. "Love is a dunghill," he says to her, "and I'm the cock that gets on it to crow."⁽¹⁾ Once "real love" had existed for Harry, but always he had quarreled with those he loved so that in the end what they had had together was gone: "He had loved too much, demanded too much, and he wore it all out."⁽²⁾ As a result of this failure of sensibility he became a sort of literary gigolo, and he comments sardonically on the remarkable coincidence that every woman he fell in love with had more money than the one before. What amuses him now is the ironic fact that only with Helen whom he does not love is he "... able to give her more for her money than when he had really loved."⁽³⁾

In such a relationship all that remains is sex ("the good destruction"⁽⁴⁾) and now that is no longer possible, quarreling, which is the only kind of communication that they have. In spite of Helen's admiration and respect for Harry/

(1) First 49, p. 155.

(2) Ibid. p. 162.

(3) Ibid. p. 159.

(4) Ibid. p. 161.

Harry she is completely lacking in any understanding of his nature. "You're the most complete man I've ever known",⁽¹⁾ she tells Harry. Tortured by the knowledge of all he has lost and how incomplete his life has been, Harry can only reply, "Christ, how little a woman knows."⁽²⁾ Rather than being a comfort and a help to Harry, Helen is an irritant to him, a constant reminder of the love he once had and destroyed. Her bland clichés such as "You can't die if you don't give up"⁽³⁾ only reveal her basic unawareness of Harry's situation and prod him into lashing out at her verbally. "We quarrel and that makes the time pass," he tells her,⁽⁴⁾ and, when he has hurt her to the point of tears, tries to explain why he has done it: "Do you think it's fun to do this? It's trying to kill to keep alive, I imagine."⁽⁵⁾ The idea of killing to keep alive is usually a healthy concept in Hemingway's fiction, especially that of hunting or fishing, but here it has become a sadistic mental torture of another who cannot defend herself.

But what torments Harry in his dying moments, far more/

(1) First 49, p. 172.

(2) Ibid. p. 172.

(3) Ibid. p. 151.

(4) Ibid. p. 151.

(5) Ibid. p. 156.

more than the conflict between himself and his wife, is the conflict that exists in his mind as a result of his memories of his past life, of the good life he led before he allowed himself to be corrupted. It is this sense of what might have been, of lost opportunities and of the squandering of his talent that hurts Harry the most now that his life is nearly over. As a writer Harry had a great belief in writing as a worthwhile profession and a clearly defined idea of the role of the writer: "He had seen the world change; not just the events... he had seen the subtler changes and he could remember how the people were at different times. He had been in it and he had watched it and it was his duty to write of it; but now he never would."⁽¹⁾ And rather than using what talents he had to tell the truth as he saw it, he had destroyed that talent "... by not using it, by betrayals of himself and what he believed in"; instead of using it he had "traded on it", selling "vitality in one form or another all his life."⁽²⁾

Harry's memories, which he now bitterly regrets not having written about, range from his early childhood, to his/

(1) First 49, p. 164.

(2) Ibid. p. 158.

his experiences in World War I, to his coverage of the Greco-Turkish war as a journalist, and to his initial career as a writer in Paris. While the actions of the present man, with his lack of grace, his messy behaviour, and general failure of conduct are alien to the behaviour pattern of the usual Hemingway protagonist, Harry's recollections of the times before he was corrupted are familiar, containing all the distinguishing characteristics of the Hemingway hero. There is the delight in all the pleasures of sensuous experience; skiing with its "noiseless rush the speed made as you dropped down like a bird", drinking and the "cherry-pit taste of good kirsch", sex, and the sights and sounds of Paris by day and night. ⁽¹⁾ Also present are the darker experiences similar to those of Nick Adams and the rest, experiences which have wounded Harry and which continually threaten to break his control: "the things that he could never think of" that he saw in the Greco-Turkish war that were so bad "he could not talk about it or stand to have it mentioned." ⁽²⁾ The memories Harry has of himself are a revealing index of the degree to which he has been corrupted, for the picture we get/

(1) First 49, p. 155.

(2) Ibid. p. 164.

get from them is of a man living by a code of conduct and cherishing his sense of integrity, while the picture we have of him at the present moment is that of a man who lost all these qualities in his failure to reject the temptations of the world.

Death provides Harry with an education, although it is too late for him to profit by its lessons. It is an education not accomplished by shock, by a sudden blinding realization of mortality as the flesh is violated, but instead it is an education by a "natural" death, a death which is not violent and externally caused as is usually the case, but rather a death that is the result of a slow internal process of decay. In the two weeks it has taken Harry to die he has come to see, and bitterly regret, the errors he has made, to recognize the inner moral corruption that corresponds to his physical one: "He had had his life and it was over", ⁽¹⁾ over long before this moment, but it has taken death to make Harry realize this. In his awareness of his approaching death and of all that he has missed Harry exhibits a crude form of grace: "Now if this was how it ended, and he knew it was, he must not turn like some snake biting itself because its back was broken... If/

(1) First 49, p. 157.

If he lived by a lie he could try to die by it." (1)

Like the rebel heretic cited by Joseph Wood Krutch, Harry tries to "persist to the end", even though it is only in his lies to his wife and to himself.

Just as Harry rebukes himself for being cruel to Helen and resolves to treat her better, it occurs to him that he is going to die: "It came with a rush; not as a rush of water nor of wind; but of a sudden evil-smelling emptiness..." (2) It is one thing to know you are going to die; it is another actually to experience the sensation. The death comes again, not as a rush but as a puff, "as of a wind that makes a candle flicker and the flame go tall." (3) With death as close as this Harry adopts an attitude of weary acceptance, and in his decision not to "care for death" he echoes the Shakespearian quotation which meant so much to Robert Wilson in "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber": "'By my troth I care not; a man can die but once.'" (4) However, all the healthy vitality that marked Wilson's attitude is missing from Harry's. His recognition that "... this was how you died,/"

(1) First 49, p. 158.

(2) Ibid. p. 162.

(3) Ibid. p. 165.

(4) Ibid. p. 131.

died, in whis pers that you did not hear..." (1) leads him to resolve that dying was one experience that he would not "spoil". What keeps Harry from making his death any more "messy" than it already is is pure luck, the fact that he has no pain at the end:

"One thing he had always dreaded was the pain. He could stand pain as well as any man, until it went on too long, and wore him out, but here he had something that had hurt frightfully and just when he felt it breaking him the pain had stopped." (2)

And he recalls in this connection the death of one of his brother officers in the war who, wounded in a horrible and painful way, had broken completely, begging everyone to shoot him.

Harry is spared the ignominy of breaking under the pressure of his pain not as a result of his "fine performance" but by a stroke of luck which, unlike Robert Jordan's similar piece of luck, he does not deserve. Usually not breaking under the pressure of pain is due to the strength and validity of one's code, but in Harry's case it is just a matter of luck and therefore is of little value. Although he does not triumph over the flesh by an act of will as Robert Jordan does, Harry does achieve a/

(1) First 49, p. 165.

(2) Ibid. p. 171.

a kind of moral stature at the end, the stature of a man who has the honesty to admit defeat and to admit that that defeat was a result of a failure of the will on his part.

And so it is fitting that "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" ends on a note of false triumph. For a moment it appears that Harry has escaped death, that the plane has arrived to take him to the hospital in Nairobi, and all will be well, but the reality of that scene dissolves into the haze of a dream as Harry sees in front of the plane "... as wide as all the world, great, high, and unbelievably white, the square top of Kilimanjaro", ⁽¹⁾ that same Kilimanjaro where "... close to the western summit (called the House of God) there is the dried and frozen carcass of a leopard. No one ⁽²⁾ has explained what the leopard was seeking at that altitude." But what Harry in his dream and the leopard in real life both were seeking was immortality, the desire to escape the flesh and achieve permanence either in a frozen posture in front of the House of God or in a work of art.

Such a triumph is not available to Harry. His death, with its lack of control, its messiness, and its bitterness has made a fitting and final comment on the life that has preceded it. The ending of Harry's life reveals that this is/

(1) First 49, p. 174.

(2) Ibid. p. 150.

is not a "good" death that we have witnessed, not the final celebration of grace under pressure during the final moment of truth, but a "bad" death, the death of a man who knew the "rules", who had the code, and who betrayed it for the easier life. While he was aware of the need for the code, he did not have enough pundonor to maintain it in the face of temptation. Harry is saved from total ignominy only by the insight death provides him, insight which forces him to admit he has been corrupted.

Hemingway has movingly depicted a man who has not only been physically defeated, which is always the case in his fiction, but who has been destroyed spiritually as well; for once the flesh has triumphed over the will. We are left at the end of "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" not with a sense of transcendence, but instead an image of the corruption of the flesh that imprisons the will: "The dressings had all come down and she could not look at it." (1)

II

If "The Shows of Kilimanjaro" is an example of the "bad" death in Hemingway, the death which exhibits the antithesis of all those qualities he values most, then Across the River and/

(1) First 49, p. 175.

and into the Trees is a perfect example of the "good" death in which all the conditions for the perfect ending of life are fulfilled. Philip Young has pointed out that the tone of the novel is that of the answer given to the familiar question "What would you order if you were in the best restaurant in the world and could have anything you wanted free?"⁽¹⁾

Across the River and into the Trees contains all the necessary ingredients for the perfect death: the ideal heroine, the perfect foods and wines, the city of Venice, but in spite of all these ideal components Hemingway failed to merge them together into a unitary whole. As a failure in craftsmanship the novel becomes a telling parody of what is best in Hemingway's fiction, causing these elements to reveal themselves fully through their exaggeration. It is thus precisely because of its imperfections that Across the River and into the Trees provides such an excellent summary of the main characteristics of Hemingway's work; in seeking to depict the ideal way to die, Hemingway brought together all of the meaningful aspects of his previous work, but failed to weld them together into a dramatic unity as he had in the past./

(1) Ernest Hemingway, Philip Young
Rhinehart and Co., New York, 1952. p. 90.

past. The result is that the familiar Hemingway themes - the wound, the code, love, and death, tend to separate out from the action and as such can be easily identified and studied.

The basic situation of the novel is a familiar one in Hemingway's fiction: the wounded man facing at last the death he has seen so often in his life, his end made all the more poignant by the belated discovery of love. The characters of this familiar Hemingway drama are Colonel Richard Cantwell, U.S. Army, aged fifty-one and his love Renata, a "nearly nineteen" Italian countess, the place is Venice, the time late fall of the year 1946. Cantwell, stationed with the army in Trieste, goes to Venice to see Renata for two days before going duck hunting in the Veneto. In the course of these two days, they go to Harry's Bar to drink martinis made just the way the Colonel likes them, eat meals a gourmet would envy at the Hotel Gritti, and make perfect love in a gondola.

But it is not a happy visit, for hanging over the lovers is the knowledge that Cantwell's heart, weakened by two previous heart attacks, may be seized by a third and fatal attack at any moment. To ward off that possibility Cantwell takes tablets of mannitol hexanitrate, but he knows these are only palliatives, postponing the inevitable./

inevitable. "It's just a muscle", he explains to Renata, "Only it is the main muscle. It works as perfectly as a Rolex Oyster Perpetual. The trouble is you cannot send it to the Rolex representative when it goes wrong. When it stops, you do not know the time. You're dead."⁽¹⁾ That it is this muscle that has chosen to fail Cantwell is simply part of his bad luck; as he says, "I do not see why that one of all the muscles, should fail me."⁽²⁾ It is because of the failure of this particular muscle that he is forced to live a non-military, ordinary life, something the Hemingway hero never had to do before.

It is out of this basic situation what little action there is in the novel develops, for in common with "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" most of the events occur only in the main character's mind. Although the situation of facing death is common to all of Hemingway fiction, it differs in Across the River and into the Trees in one important respect: the death Cantwell faces is not the violent external sort forced upon him by an outside agent, but rather a deep, inner challenge which is of little bother to him physically; save for the two heart attacks he has Cantwell is in no pain, and his problem is not the physical/

(1) ARIT, p. 119.

(2) Ibid. p. 101.

physical one of resisting the pressures of the pains the flesh is heir to, but instead a mental one of achieving the proper attitude to this new kind of test. To do this he must first purify himself of the accumulated bitterness and cynicism of thirty years as a soldier. Cantwell has faced death many times, as the scars on his body bear testimony, but all of his past experiences with death and the things he has learned from them are of little use to him now: "Death has moved so incredibly close to him that all his capabilities are beside the point." (1)

This kind of death is still an "unreasonable" one in the sense that Cantwell is unprepared for it in this form. He is forced to come to terms with a death he knows nothing about. A soldier's death, received in the heat of battle, he could understand, or death received as a result of an error in judgement, or death received from an outside source, but this slow deadly failure of something he cannot see is beyond him:

"Death is a lot of s---, he thought. It comes to you in small fragments that hardly show where it has entered. It comes, sometimes atrociously... it can come with the great white-hot, clanging roar we have lived with. It comes in small cracking whispers that precede the noise of automatic weapons. It can come with the smoke-emitting arc of the grenade, or the sharp, cracking drop of the mortar.

.....
 It comes in bed to most people, I know, like
 love's/

(1) "Hemingway's Across the River and into the Trees", Horst Oppel Hemingway and His Critics, ed. Carlos Baker Hill and Wang, New York, 1961. p. 218.

love's opposite number. I have lived with it nearly (1) all my life and the dispensing of it has been my trade."

Cantwell's understanding of death, as this passage shows, is restricted to the sort of death that is violent and is a result of an outside agency, and for this death he is prepared. But he has no knowledge of how to deal with the death that comes in bed, as it does to most people.

Cantwell is thus an anomaly in Hemingway's fiction: he is dying a "natural" death, a death common to many other men who have also reached the age of fifty-one but who have never seen a battlefield or shot a duck. For the first time Hemingway has allowed his hero to reach middle-age and with unusual results. With the exception of Santiago in The Old Man and the Sea, Cantwell is the oldest protagonist in Hemingway's fiction.

Properly speaking the subject matter of Across the River and into the Trees is death, and everything in the novel is either a manifestation of it or can be related to it. The book opens with a now wholly familiar scene: the hero administering death to animals through the ritual of the hunt, killing in order to achieve a temporary feeling of immortality and mastery over death. In this case it is a duck hunt - "the best organized and best run duck shoot

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(1) ARIT, p. 184.

I have ever shot at" ⁽¹⁾ - and the Colonel is, as should be expected, an expert at it: "But, boy, you can still shoot," ⁽²⁾ he congratulates himself after a particularly difficult double. Although the Colonel's expertise does not extend to "... understanding duck talk through a burlap bag", ⁽³⁾ he does understand perfectly the feeling of satisfaction hunting gives him: "I have killed enough and I have shot as well or better than I can shoot." ⁽⁴⁾

The whole of Cantwell's two days in Venice is permeated with the atmosphere of impending death, established at the beginning by the motif of the hunt, and neither Cantwell or Renata can forget the fact for long, much as they would like to. As Cantwell approaches Venice in his car he tells us that "For a long time he had been thinking about all the fine places he would like to be buried and what parts of the earth he would like to be part of." ⁽⁵⁾ In spite of his resolution to keep "strictly controlled and un-thinking" ⁽⁶⁾ and his knowledge that "No horse named Morbid ever won a race" ⁽⁷⁾ he cannot keep his/

(1) ARIT, p. 233.

(2) Ibid. p. 232.

(3) Ibid. p. 247.

(4) Ibid. p. 242.

(5) Ibid. p. 32.

(6) Ibid. p. 20.

(7) Ibid. p. 67.

his mind off his approaching death. As for Renata, her situation is summed up in her question to Cantwell: "How would you like to be a girl nineteen years old in love with a man over fifty years old that you knew was going to die?"⁽¹⁾ The happiness that her love gives her is thus a constant reminder that the source of that love will soon die. The only consolation that she can draw from her situation is the bitter one that since Cantwell is going to die, "you can't leave me."⁽²⁾

The awareness Cantwell has of his impending death is greater than any other Hemingway hero has - even Robert Jordan could hope that there was at least a possibility that he might not die, but Cantwell's death is something which he cannot postpone or avoid. In spite of any action he might take, death cannot be averted. There is no use in going against the medical evidence, and when his fatal heart attack occurs, Cantwell acknowledges the inevitability of what has happened: "Three strikes is out... and they gave me four."⁽³⁾

Granted the knowledge of his imminent death and the impossibility of temporarily avoiding it, Cantwell simply/

(1) ARIT, p. 79.

(2) Ibid. p. 178.

(3) Ibid. p. 253.

simply accepts the situation as inevitable. "I guess the cards we draw are those we get," he thinks. "You wouldn't like to re-deal would you, dealer? No. They only deal to you once and then you pick them up and play."⁽¹⁾

Cantwell does not rebel against death as Nick Adams or Fredrick Henry did, nor does he try to find a reason for it and a meaning in it as Robert Jordan did; he simply accepts it, seeing the uselessness of trying to construct a metaphysic about it.

However, this acceptance is not simply a passive, non-productive attitude, for out of it arises what is the essential question to Cantwell: how should a man in his position die? The answer that Across the River and into the Trees provides is that a man should die with grace, maintaining to the very end those values which he has affirmed in life, making no concessions to the finality of his situation. It is for this reason that at the end of the novel Cantwell explicitly rejects the idea of a last minute religious conversion: "You going to run as a Christian? Maybe I will get Christian towards the end... Who wants to make a bet on that?"⁽¹⁾

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(1) ARET, p. 153.

(2) Ibid. p. 241.

In this novel Hemingway created a "boundary-situation" par excellence; in none of his other works do we find the pressure of death brought upon the hero with as much force and concentration as it is in Across the River and into the Trees. The result is a tremendous emphasis on the form of Cantwell's actions, on the grace which he displays under pressure. The ancient but well cared for motor boat that Cantwell takes to the Hotel Gritti symbolizes the same sort of grace that the Colonel exhibits: "Every move she makes", he thinks "is a triumph of the gallantry of the aging machine... the gallantry of worn-through rods that refuse to break."⁽¹⁾ And every action of the Colonel is endowed with the same sort of gallantry. In his behaviour in this rigidly defined situation Cantwell epitomizes all the virtues Hemingway values most: first of all, he "can bear anything"⁽²⁾ and can bear it without making demands on his friends or burdening them with the knowledge of his troubles; secondly, he is considerate and just in his dealings with people, even with those he does not like; most important of all, he has pundonor, a rigid sense of honour, of what is right and wrong which he will not violate or compromise. Cantwell refuses to ask the bartender at Harry's Bar for a small brooch/

(1) ARIT, p. 46.

(2) Ibid. p. 97.

brooch he has bought for Renata until the owner comes and he can pay him for it. "Is everything that rigid?", she asks. "With me, I guess", the Colonel answers. (1)

The answer to how Cantwell became the man that he is now is provided through his recollections of his past life. The prime determinant in his life and the one he values most is his wound, the time when he got hit "properly and good" for good because, as he says, "All the wounded were wounded for life" and carry the scars to prove it. It is because his wound has been so important a factor in his life that Cantwell only "... loved people... who had fought or been mutilated... only felt true tenderness and love for those who had been there and had received the castigation that everyone receives who goes there long enough." Only those who have been wounded have seen what life is really like, only they have had life stripped of everything except the essential question of "how to be?". It is for the wounded that Cantwell reserves his love, a love which because it is so selective is all the more intensive. "I love more than any son of the great bitch alive", as he puts it. His love for Renata falls outside this category, which applies only to men without women.

Nowhere/

- (1) ARIT, p. 221.
- (2) Ibid. p. 30.
- (3) Ibid. p. 202.
- (4) Ibid. p. 62.
- (5) Ibid. p. 62.

Nowhere is the importance and significance the wound has for Cantwell better revealed than by the incredible ceremony by which he celebrates his first one. Some weeks before the action of the novel begins he had gone to the river bank near Fossalta and determined by triangulation the exact spot where he was wounded some twenty years before in World War I. Then in "an act of piercing and transcendent identification"⁽¹⁾ Cantwell squats low and relieves himself on the spot where he was wounded in the knee. "A poor effort, but my own," he admits, and "to complete the monument" he buries a 10,000 lire note: "That is twenty years at five hundred lire a year for the Medaglia d'Argento al Valore Militare. The V.C. carries ten guineas, I believe. The D.S.C. is non-productive. The Silver Star is free."⁽²⁾ Philip Young has caught the meaning of this puzzling ceremony perfectly:

"In his effort to come the full circle before he is done, the hero does not end his journey at the place where first he lived, but at the place where he first died. Then in the most personal and fundamental way possible to man, he performs this primitive ceremonial, which is revelation as nothing else can ever be of his mingled disgust and reverence for that event of his life by which the whole may be known, and by which it was unalterably determined."⁽³⁾

For/

(1) Young, p. 92.

(2) ARIT, p. 19.

(3) Young, p. 93.

For Cantwell the wound he suffered was both a beginning and an end: it was the end of this belief in the transcendent idea of religion, for the wound's prime effect was a loss of his faith in immortality. "No one of his other wounds had ever done to him what the first big one did. I suppose it is just the loss of immortality, he thought. Well, in a way, that is quite a lot to lose."⁽¹⁾ The wound was also a beginning because it marked the start of a new life for him, a life based on the assertion of a code of conduct created out of the knowledge of mortality the wound had brought with it.

Because of the greater emphasis on the nearness of death and the subsequent need for grace under pressure, the code in Across the River and into the Trees achieves a position of primary importance. In Colonel Richard Cantwell we have the most fully articulated example of a man with the code, and it is important to note that in Across the River and into the Trees the code is being given a different and more intensive test than in the earlier works; indeed, the organizing principle of the book is the testing of the code. It is the kind of death that Cantwell/

(1) ARTP, p. 30-31.

Cantwell faces, a death from natural causes which has removed the possibility of dramatic action from his life, that is the cause of the different kind of testing the code is given.

Because of the nature of his situation in which death is imminent but unpredictable, Cantwell's last days are devoted to an enormous celebration of sensuous experience - the second bottle of Valpolicella beside the bed, the Roederer Brut '42, and the smooth feeling of Renata's emeralds. This celebration of sensuous experience has meant an absolute insistence on Cantwell's part that every detail of his last days be perfect. It is because of this insistence on perfection that the Colonel loses his temper so quickly and completely when something goes wrong, as when his guide spoils the duck hunt by scaring the birds. In Across the River and into the Trees the code is being tested through its being pared away at both ends, that is to say both its self-control and its self-sufficiency. (1) On the one hand the self-control of the Colonel's code is being tested through his absolute insistence on sensuous experience. Such an insistence makes him extremely vulnerable to chance, of something spoiling his enjoyment through no fault of his own, and when/

(1) I am indebted to Mr. Tom Coulson for this particular point.

when something does go wrong, it is most difficult for the Colonel to control his temper. On the other hand, the self-sufficiency of the code is being tested through Cantwell's need to talk about it with Renata, who is the deliberate agent of his confession. No longer is mere possession of the code enough to sustain him - he must now share it with another through confession.

In order to emphasize the importance of the code, Hemingway explicitly formulates its precepts for the first time in his fiction, embodying it in a definite order with a list of members, a leader, and a motto. Although the order itself, El Ordine Militar, Nobile y Espirituoso de los Caballeros de Brusadelli, is a partial burlesque of military organizations in general, named as it is after a profiteer from Milan "... who had, in the course of a dispute over property, accused his young wife... of having deprived him of his judgement through her extraordinary sexual demands", ⁽¹⁾ the intent behind it is a serious one: the recognition of a mode of behaviour in which certain values remain constant. The chief emphasis of the order is on form, the maintenance of the correct attitude no matter what threatens one's control and no matter/

(1) ARET, p. 50.

matter what the consequences. As the Colonel says,
"Better to die on our feet than live on our knees."⁽¹⁾

The possession of the code is quickly and easily recognizable in others by those who have it: all of them have been wounded in some way and all impart an unconscious grace to their actions; they are all "tough boys", to use Cantwell's phrase, men who will "make their play and then back it up."⁽²⁾ Simply from the honesty and candour of the boatman who takes him to the hotel Cantwell can tell that "this is a good old man",⁽³⁾ a fact which is confirmed by the fact he lost five of his brothers in the war. So also is Arnaldo a member of the order, the glass-eyed waiter with his consideration for Cantwell's need for perfection in sensuous experience.

But having been wounded or been in the war does not automatically mean one has the code, as can be seen clearly in the character of Ronald Jackson, the Colonel's driver. On spite of "... his combat infantryman badge, his Purple Heart, and the other things he wore",⁽⁴⁾ Jackson is in no sense ~~to say~~ a professional dedicated to his trade as Cantwell is to the "sad science" of war, but simply "a man placed, against his will, in uniform..."⁽⁵⁾ Such a lack of commitment/

(1) ARIT, p. 36.

(2) Ibid. p. 43.

(3) Ibid. p. 37.

(4) Ibid. p. 21

(5) Ibid. p. 21.

commitment can be seen in the "messiness" of his behaviour: when Cantwell tells him to drive off onto a side road, Jackson worries about what will happen to the car. "Do you always suffer so much any time you go off a highway on to a secondary road?",⁽¹⁾ Cantwell wants to know. As a man without the proper values who spends his spare time in bed reading comic books instead of enjoying Venice, Jackson is an irritant to Cantwell: "I'm tired of seeing you because you worry and don't have fun",⁽²⁾ he tells him. Jackson is a normal, ordinary person, what the Gran Maestro calls "one of those san Americans",⁽³⁾ and it is this extremely ordinary quality about Jackson which irritates Cantwell because it points up and emphasizes his extraordinary situation. While Cantwell is treasuring every last moment of sensuous experience, Jackson squanders his time sleeping and reading. It is for this reason that the Colonel often loses control of his temper when with Jackson.

In Across the River and into the Trees as with the other Hemingway novels the highest value of the world it depicts is that of love, and it is also the means of transcending that world. Like love in A Farewell to Arms it/

- (1) ARIT, p. 23.
- (2) Ibid. p. 51.
- (3) Ibid. p. 51.

it has become in Cantwell's and Renata's minds a religious passion: Cantwell thinks she should run for "Queen of Heaven",⁽¹⁾ and Renata has dreams in which the wounded hand of Cantwell becomes the hand of Our Lord.⁽²⁾ Just as with Catherine Barkley, Renata exists only for her lover - "I wish to serve you," she tells him⁽³⁾ - and she identifies herself so closely with Cantwell that she wants to become one with him, although like Catherine she rejects the idea of marriage. And as in For Whom the Bell Tolls love is seen as a mysterious union celebrated by sexual intercourse: when the Colonel and Renata make love in a gondola, he feels as though "... he was assisting, or had made an act of presence, at the only mystery he believed in except the occasional bravery of man."⁽⁴⁾ And lastly in common with almost all of Hemingway's fiction love in Across the River and into the Trees is a means of escape, a relationship which keeps one from thinking about the darkness which lurks outside. Just as Fredrick Henry feels he is "not made to think" but just "eat and drink and sleep with Catherine"⁽⁵⁾ so is Cantwell also determined "to have a/

(1) ARIT, p. 72.

(2) Ibid. p. 73.

(3) Ibid. p. 123.

(4) Ibid. p. 131.

(5) AFTA, p. 242.

a fine time" by "not thinking about anything at all" and devoting himself completely to Renata. ⁽¹⁾ At the end of Cantwell's life his relationship with Renata has become the most important thing to him, and the effort to maintain it is one of the prime means he has of forgetting for a moment the nada which he faces.

However, there is more to Across the River and into the Trees than a static catalogue of the usual Hemingway concerns, for there is also a clearly discernible pattern of development to the action, an action which as is usually the case in Hemingway takes the form of a kind of education. Although Cantwell knows his death is imminent, he is not yet in the proper frame of mind to receive it. Thirty years of war - his sale métier as he calls it - have left an accumulated residue of bitterness and cynicism in him. He has seen too many horrible things - a dead soldier in the road who has been run over so many times that he has been flattened, a cat eating the roasted flesh of a German soldier burned by white phosphorus - not to be in need of some kind of purification.

The Colonel himself recognizes the need he has of some kind of purging of his bad memories and his resentments. "I try always to be just, but I am brusque and I am brutal and/

(1) ARIT, p. 71.

and it is not that I have erected the defence against brown-nosing my superiors and brown-nosing the world. I should be a better man with less wild boar blood in the small time which remains," the Colonel warns himself. (1) But while Cantwell recognizes this need to be a "better man", he is unable to achieve such a goal by himself, and it is Renata with her love for the Colonel who is the chief agent in his education. It is she who instinctively sees the need for Cantwell to talk about his past experiences and by talking about them get rid of them, exercise them from his mind so as to be able to accept death with grace.

From the very beginning of Cantwell's two day visit to Venice Renata gently prods him into telling her about the things which haunt him. "Won't you tell me about your (three mistakes)? I would like to share in your sad trade," she tells him shortly after he has arrived. (2) When the Colonel refuses to do so ("No", the Colonel said, "and that was the end of that." (3)), for the time being Renata accepts the situation gracefully. However, she persists in her efforts to get the Colonel to talk about the war, returning/

(1) ARIT, p. 57.

(2) Ibid. p. 81.

(3) Ibid. p. 81.

returning to it again and again as something not only necessary for the Colonel's mental well-being but also as something she needs for her own education. At dinner the first evening she wants to know more about "the sad science of war" because "I would like to share it with you."⁽¹⁾ Although Cantwell brusquely tells her "Nobody shares this trade with anyone",⁽²⁾ he does begin to talk about it.

"Making things clear is my main trade," the Colonel says,⁽³⁾ and he is unable to resist Renata's claim that she needs to hear about the war for her education. But as his desire to "make things clear" leads him deeper and deeper into his memories of the war, what begins as Renata's education becomes his. As he begins to tell her about the Allied invasion of Normandy all of a sudden he "... was not lecturing; he was confessing."⁽⁴⁾ The barriers once removed, all of the repressed bitterness begins to emerge; "... tell me true until you are purged of it," Renata urges,⁽⁵⁾ and Cantwell complies. The bitterness that he reveals shows Renata how correct she was in her original surmise that he needed to be purged, and she recognizes the therapeutic value of Cantwell's reminiscences:

"'Don't/

- (1) ARIT, p. 107.
- (2) Ibid. p. 114.
- (3) Ibid. p.
- (4) Ibid. p. 186.
- (5) Ibid. p. 188.

"Don't you see your need to tell me things to purge your bitterness?', she asks Cantwell.

'I know I tell them to you.'

'Don't you know I want you to die with the grace of a happy death?'" (1)

It is this concept of "the grace of a happy death" that is the organizing principle of the action in Across the River and into the Trees. With death so close, all that remains for the Colonel to do in his last moments is to impart the all important virtue of grace to his death; in dying well he will have proved that he has lived well. In a sense, then, all of the novel's action is a process of preparation for the process of decay.

It is in the very explicitness of its purpose that Across the River and into the Trees differs significantly from the rest of Hemingway's novels. The "grace of a happy death" is the governing principle behind the actions of almost all of his characters, but it was never before mentioned as it is here. This becomes all the more unusual when one remembers Hemingway's constant warnings that to talk about an experience or a value was in some way to "lose" it. In Across the River and into the Trees it has somehow become permissible to talk about things that before one never mentioned, for in talking about them you now/

(1) ARIT, p. 200.

now lose only the bad parts and retain all the good. Indeed there is a compulsive drive on the part of the Colonel to communicate with those around him not to be found in any other Hemingway protagonist. He also has a need for an intense personal relationship in which he communicates with the loved one to a degree not seen before. In its explicitness, its emphasis on communication, and its need for confession, Across the River and into the Trees marks the first qualification of the code made by Hemingway in twenty-five years. Although Colonel Cantwell is recognizably the typical Hemingway protagonist, he is the Hemingway protagonist grown older, and it has meant a modification in his code of conduct.

But in what sense can Cantwell's death, or in fact any death, ever be happy? It can be happy only in so far as it sums up the meaning of the life that has preceded it, vindicating the values by which that life was led. It is the assertion of bravery in the face of death that underlies any conception of victory in death, for "... in a society where there is basic disagreement as to the right way to live, there can hardly be agreement as to the right way to die..."⁽¹⁾ In Across the River and into the Trees it is the Colonel's bravery, and more especially the love he and Renata/

(1) Collected Plays of Arthur Miller
Cresset Press, London, 1958. p. 33-34.

Renata have for each other, which makes his death a happy one; love not only purifies him of bitterness, it also allows Cantwell to die valued by another and thus to live on in her memory. At the same time it is love that accounts for the tragic sense of loss at the end of the novel - loving and leaving are a very tough trade in which people are bound to get hurt.⁽¹⁾ The novel is another demonstration of Hemingway's remark that when two people love each other there is never a happy ending. When Cantwell asks the inevitable question of Renata "What happens to people that love each other?", she gives him the only answer possible in the Hemingway world: "I suppose they have whatever they have and they are more fortunate than others. Than one of them gets the emptiness for ever."⁽²⁾ "Don't you feel better to be loved?", Renata asks,⁽³⁾ and the Colonel can only say yes, for it makes him feel protected against a hostile world. Being loved he can go to his death with grace, the value of himself confirmed by the love another has for him.

When Richard Cantwell leaves his beloved Venice for the last time, he orders his driver to turn down onto "the old road he knew so well", that sunken road by the willow-lined/

(1) ARIT, p. 223.

(2) Ibid. p. 226.

(3) Ibid. p. 110.

lined canal where he first received the castigation to which the flesh is heir. In this final gesture of Cantwell's the wheel of events in the life of the Hemingway protagonist has come full circle. Making sure all his obligations have been fulfilled, and that nothing is left to be done, Cantwell succumbs to the death for which the entire action of the novel has prepared him, succumbs to it after reciting the dying words of General Thomas J. Jackson: "No, no, let us cross over the river and rest under the shade of the trees"⁽¹⁾. And this metaphorical statement sums up the career of not only Richard Cantwell, but of Nick Adams, Jake Barnes, Fredrick Henry, and Robert Jordan as well. For the river which Cantwell has crossed and the trees under which he has finally come to rest have figured in one way or another in the lives of all of Hemingway's heroes: they are symbolic representations of the landscape in which the wound and its knowledge of death was first received. When Cantwell emphatically tells his driver "I know where I'm going"⁽²⁾, it is indeed true. This is not the road to Trieste, but a more important one, for it was down this same willow-lined road that Nick Adams marched in 1917 and remembered afterwards in/

(1) ARIT, p. 253.

(2) Ibid. p. 252.

in his dreams: "... outside of Fossalta there was a low house painted yellow with willows all around it and a low stable and there was a canal." (1) And the Colonel's final resting place reminds us of that other road that Fredrick Henry walked on his way back from the hospital, and of those other trees under which Robert Jordan came to rest. Cantwell is returning to that place where he and all the others first found death and were different for it ever after. In Cantwell's ritualistic ending we see once again that celebration of the theme of death in life that the works of Ernest Hemingway continually rehearse.

(1) First 49, p. 506.

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