



## HEMINGWAY'S TWENTIETH-CENTURY MEDIEVALISM

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*The University of Arizona*

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HEMINGWAY'S TWENTIETH-CENTURY MEDIEVALISM

by

Robert Melton Hogge

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In the Graduate College

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

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## ABSTRACT

This study opposes the traditional argument that Ernest Hemingway uses settings in his major full-length fiction which primarily depict modern man's rootlessness. On the contrary, he carefully chooses settings, with Spain as the metaphorical center, which evoke a sense of the medieval past, a concept which I define and describe as "twentieth-century medievalism." Although it is argued that Hemingway is cosmopolitan in his choice of settings, he excludes those settings which are not fundamentally Roman Catholic. In addition to his careful choice of settings and his use of medieval motifs, Hemingway also establishes the love relationship between man and woman as a central symbol for twentieth-century wholeness and unity.

Once the concept of "twentieth-century medievalism" has been defined within Hemingway's major full-length fictional canon, the study then focuses on The Old Man and the Sea as the novel which consummately exemplifies how Hemingway's medievalism suggests microcosmic unity. An analysis of criticism written on The Old Man and the Sea shows the approaches to be highly eclectic and an important issue (whether the novel is a tragedy) to be unresolved.

This study shows how "twentieth-century medievalism" provides a unified fictional microcosm for the novel and serves as a backdrop from which Hemingway projects his uniquely medieval modern-world tragedy. The Old Man and the Sea, however, is not simply a tragedy but is an artistic novel which correlates time (complete twenty-four-hour periods) with four literary modes of expression: comedy, lyricism, the heroic, and tragedy. During the initial days, Santiago is gradually transformed from a common fisherman to a lyric questioner of life's meaning, then to an epic hero, and finally to a tragic protagonist who acts out his role in a carefully delineated Aristotelian tragedy. Throughout the novel, the comic sense reminds both Santiago and the reader that the fisherman's experience is ultimately a comedy of transformations.

The study concludes by relating the concept of artistic transformation to the emergence of the Hemingway myth and argues for a more sensible interpretation of the myth. Finally the study affirms that the intricacies of Hemingway's artistry have not been fully explored and offers the concept of "twentieth-century medievalism" as a technique to make more comprehensible Hemingway's romanticism.

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Ernest Hemingway has left a lasting impression on modern literature, not only for his stylistic contribution but also for his portrayal of heroism. In the creation of terse dialogue ("The Killers"), the use of concise descriptive passages to establish both theme and tone (the opening paragraph of "In Another Country"), and the development of fictional intensity modulated by a perceptive sense of irony (the climactic episode in "A Canary for One"), Hemingway's art, although widely imitated, has been seldom reproduced. Popularly, Hemingway is known more as a hero than as an artist. Those people who have never read Green Hills of Africa, "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," or "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" still think of Hemingway as a big-game hunter. Throughout his highly publicized life, he was also recognized as a boxer, a tennis player, a skier, a fisherman, an aficionado, and a heroic soldier. Being conspicuously in the news from his heroic 1918 wounding until his dramatic 1961 suicide, Hemingway the man often overshadowed the accomplished literary artist.

During Hemingway's life, many critics reacted vehemently against the public image of the artist's



personal heroism. In the 1930's, Clifton Fadiman attacked what he felt was the novelist's theatricality, describing him as an American Byron. Wyndham Lewis perceived an element of anti-intellectualism in Hemingway's thinly disguised fictional heroes. And Max Eastman pointed to the author's vacillation between realism and romanticism, a tendency which he felt produced a false sense of heroism as Hemingway idealized the bullfight.<sup>1</sup>

Of these and other critical positions, Philip Young's autobiographical and psychoanalytical approaches have had the most pervasive influence. In his analysis of In Our Time, Young developed his "trauma theory" which is based on his view of Nick Adams as an artistic projection of Hemingway, particularly in relation to the germinal World War I wounding. This traumatic experience, according to Young, then became a metaphor linking Hemingway with each of the novels' physically or psychically wounded male protagonists, a relationship suggesting that all wounded heroes are one multifaceted image of Hemingway or, in other words, what Young defines as "a progressive-hero

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1. "Ernest Hemingway: An American Byron." Rev. of Death in the Afternoon, by Ernest Hemingway. Nation, 136 (January 18, 1933), 63-64; "The Dumb Ox: A Study of Ernest Hemingway," Life & Letters, 10 (April 1934), 33-45; and "Bull in the Afternoon," in Ernest Hemingway: The Man and His Work, ed. John K. M. McCaffery (Cleveland: World, 1950), pp. 66-75.

concept."<sup>2</sup> Although Young's thesis shows probing insight, his approach has assumed too prominent a position in Hemingway criticism and has possibly diverted other critics from pursuing equally relevant assumptions about Hemingway's art.

However, some critics, instead of following the autobiographical method, prefer close analyses of the literary texts themselves. One such critic is Malcolm Cowley whose 1944 study of the major fiction traced symbolic and thematic relationships which linked Hemingway with the nineteenth-century authors Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville, "the haunted and nocturnal writers, the men who dealt in images that were symbols of an inner world." Cowley's critical essay not only identified symbolic layers of meaning within the fiction but also argued against the commonly held notion that Hemingway is a primitivist. Instead of seeing Hemingway as an artist who rejects all social and literary accouterments, Cowley emphasizes Hemingway's sophisticated use of legends, sacraments, and rituals to symbolize man's subconscious hopes and fears.<sup>3</sup> In another important way, Cowley's analysis helped free Hemingway's art from its

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2. Ernest Hemingway: A Reconsideration (University Park: Pennsylvania State U. P., 1960), pp. 44, 75, 147, 158.

3. Introd., The Viking Portable Library: Hemingway (New York: Viking, 1944), pp. vii, xxii.

fixed position within the Theodore Dreiser-Jack London naturalistic tradition, suggesting the possibility of other areas yet to be explored.

Anticipating Cowley's study was James Joyce who also alluded to untapped realms in Hemingway's fiction when he said: "There is much more behind Hemingway's form than people know."<sup>4</sup> Just what that artistic design is, Joyce does not say; however, when his statement is read in light of Hemingway's "iceberg theory of literature,"<sup>5</sup> one suspects that Hemingway's seemingly straightforward method of presenting his fictional world along with his relatively traditional handling of point of view (except for To Have and Have Not) might be deceptively simple. Underneath the apparently easy-to-comprehend fictional surface are provocative artistic patterns and multiple levels of meaning. In an evaluation of the hidden part of this fictional iceberg, Carlos Baker identified what he called "a substructure of symbolic meanings"<sup>6</sup> which he felt Hemingway uses both structurally and

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4. Anthony Burgess, Ernest Hemingway and His World (Norwich, Eng.: Jarrold, 1978), p. 39.

5. George Plimpton, "An Interview with Ernest Hemingway," in Hemingway and His Critics: An International Anthology, ed. Carlos Baker (New York: Hill and Wang, 1961), p. 34.

6. Hemingway: The Writer as Artist, 4th ed. (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton U. P., 1972), p. xiv.

thematically to enrich his fiction. Baker's rigidly applied "mountain-plain symbolism" in A Farewell to Arms reveals how precarious a symbolic approach can be, yet his analysis still illuminates one of Hemingway's basic dramatic techniques: the thematic importance of individual or contrasting settings.

Although individual settings contribute immeasurably to the theme of each work of fiction, how Hemingway uses setting metaphorically to link several works of fiction has usually been slighted in criticism. It is true that Hemingway's fictional settings represent, for the most part, the actual places where the author resided or visited: the Midwestern America of "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife," the 1918 Italian front of "Now I Lay Me," the Paris racetrack of "My Old Man," the Madrid bullring of "The Undefeated," the war-torn Spain of The Fifth Column, the African safari of "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," and the Cuban Gulf Stream of The Old Man and the Sea. Yet Hemingway's use of fictional backdrops suggests much more than a simple transcription of autobiographical experiences. Hemingway uses a potpourri of geographically diverse backgrounds in his fiction. From this seemingly eclectic use of setting has emerged an almost unchallenged critical position: Because much of the fiction depicts transient Americans vacationing in the Switzerland of "An

Alpine Idyll," driving across the Italy of "Che Ti Dice La Patria?" staying in the hotel of "Cat in the Rain," and lounging in the Parisian bar of "The Sea Change," the cumulative effect of these impermanent settings symbolizes modern man's rootlessness.

Militating against this all-too-dominant assumption that Hemingway chooses settings simply to suggest man's transience are, however, selective patterns which metaphorically evoke a sense of tradition, unity, and stability. In the Nick Adams stories, for example, Hemingway's settings establish an American-European dialectic. Although Nick leaves America on two separate occasions for European experiences, he also returns from both journeys, first to an America as a healing influence in "Big Two-Hearted River" and then to a genealogically restorative milieu in "Fathers and Sons."

An even more important pattern of interrelated settings emerges in the major full-length fiction. For each of his six major novels, Hemingway carefully selects settings of metaphorical importance: The Sun Also Rises, A Farewell to Arms, To Have and Have Not, For Whom the Bell Tolls, Across the River and Into the Trees, and The Old Man and the Sea. Although two of these novels are directly concerned with events relating to World War II, Hemingway does not choose to set these novels within the

Far East or Protestant Europe even though he was personally acquainted with both of these areas and could have most assuredly used them as backdrops. Instead, he selects a specifically limited group of Southern European and American-related geographical locations because he wished to create, through a metaphorical evocation of medievalism, the appearance of a unified fictional microcosm. In published letters and interviews, Hemingway did not discuss, in any depth, the Middle Ages, but he does use medieval motifs both thematically and metaphorically in the novels. Specifically Hemingway relies on The Cult of the Virgin motif (an approach which is similar to Henry Adams' perception of the Virgin as a mediievally unifying force), the evocation of The Song of Roland, the symbolism relating to Roman Catholic wholeness, the bullfight ritual, and other motifs which suggest a figurative return to the Middle Ages for unifying values and structures. Although the bullfight had its origins in a pre-medieval period, this ritual is associated predominantly with the Middle Ages just as the doctrines of "the four elements, astrological and numerological superstitions, the notion of the goddess Fortuna, and miscellaneous Platonic and neo-Platonic concepts having to do with the triad, the nine orders of angels, and the great chain of being"

actually originated in late Greek thought but now are considered decidedly medieval.<sup>7</sup>

By juxtaposing medieval motifs with the physical realities of the twentieth century, Hemingway creates what I have termed "twentieth-century medievalism," a concept which implies a synthesis of characterization, time, place, and action to create both the metaphysical and aesthetic illusion of medieval unity within the modern world. In A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, Mark Twain uses medievalism differently when he literally transposes his modern-day protagonist back to an actual medieval period, thereby juxtaposing two diverse systems of thought to test the values of each. Hemingway's twentieth-century medievalism, however, is not a literal return to the medieval past but a figurative restoration of medieval values and structures to the modern world. The Hemingway protagonist is firmly entrenched in the twentieth century, but the novelist superimposes an artistic medievalism upon the fictional microcosm to create the illusion of a geographically limited but metaphysically unified modern world.

One of the important implications of twentieth-century medievalism is that this theory establishes a

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7. Robert W. Ackerman, Backgrounds to Medieval English Literature (New York: Random House, 1966), p. 104.

unified cosmos from which modern tragedy can be projected. In fact, his novels radiate not only the tragic sense but also the tragic mode. Early in this century, however, a critical debate developed in which Joseph Wood Krutch argued that it is impossible to write twentieth-century tragedies because man has somehow lost his dignity; science has stripped the modern world of meaning and value; and the universe itself has become either farcical or pathetic, but not tragic. To demonstrate his thesis, Krutch compared Shakespeare's Hamlet and Ibsen's Ghosts, demonstrating that when modern society becomes too sophisticated, nobility ceases to exist.<sup>8</sup> In his novels, however, Hemingway refutes Krutch's thesis by delineating a unified fictional microcosm which reflects both tragic situations and characters capable of tragic grandeur.

Before analyzing the novels, it is important to differentiate between the tragic sense and the tragic mode. The tragic sense relates to the author's preoccupation with violence, harsh reality, and imminent death; the tragic mode, on the other hand, is a literary technique which pits a certain type of hero against natural or man-made forces to demonstrate not only his heroism but also his relentless pursuit of an action which will lead

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8. The Modern Temper: A Study and a Confession (New York: Harcourt, 1956), pp. 80, 88.



to his ultimate destruction. Although the tragic sense permeates the novels, the tragic mode does not always emerge as clearly. Speaking of The Sun Also Rises, Hemingway defines it as "a damn tragedy with the earth abiding forever as the hero."<sup>9</sup> With A Farewell to Arms, according to Carlos Baker, Hemingway became "one of the very few great tragic writers in twentieth-century fiction."<sup>10</sup> To Have and Have Not, with its pervasive focus on death, uses specific elements of classical tragedy.<sup>11</sup> Baker argues that For Whom the Bell Tolls is "a tragic epic" and "a study in doom," emphasizing that the unexpected snowfall, Pablo's defection, and the annihilation of El Sordo and his followers reveal a recognizable "pattern of tragedy" in the novel.<sup>12</sup> Joseph Warren Beach feels that Across the River and Into the Trees fails to achieve an Aristotelian level of intensity because the novel evokes pathos rather

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9. Carlos Baker, Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story (New York: Scribner's, 1969), p. 179.

10. Hemingway: The Writer as Artist, p. 98.

11. Gerry Brenner, "To Have and Have Not as Classical Tragedy: Reconsidering Hemingway's Neglected Novel," in Hemingway in Our Time, eds. Richard Astro and Jackson J. Benson (Corvallis: Oregon State U. P., 1974), p. 68, n. 11.

12. Hemingway: The Writer as Artist, pp. 250, 254.

than tragedy.<sup>13</sup> In The Old Man and the Sea, Philip Young sees that Santiago's personal tragedy is "something like Greek tragedy" and "is Christian tragedy as well."<sup>14</sup> Although Hemingway's six novels exemplify the tragic sense, only two are written primarily in the Aristotelian tragic mode: To Have and Have Not and The Old Man and the Sea. These novels focus on disparate aspects of American tragedy, showing where modern tragedy is set and what types of protagonists it must have.

In Chapter Two, after defining and analyzing twentieth-century medievalism and its importance as a backdrop for American tragedy, I will then focus specifically on The Old Man and the Sea to illustrate how Hemingway structures the illusion of Aristotelian tragedy within the modern world. Since an important continuing debate focuses on whether this novel is, in fact, a tragedy, the purpose of Chapter Three will be to explore the criticism of The Old Man and the Sea and to demonstrate that this voluminous but eclectic criticism needs to be synthesized. Although this mediievally evocative novel is an Aristotelian tragedy, it is also an epic, a lyric song, and a comic art novel as well.

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13. "How Do You Like It Now, Gentlemen?" in Hemingway and His Critics: An International Anthology, pp. 231-32.

14. Ernest Hemingway, rev. ed. (Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota P., 1965), p. 23.

Moving from an analysis of critical theories in Chapter Three, I will present, in Chapter Four, a detailed explication of how the novel actually functions artistically as a multifaceted work of art. From the novel's twentieth-century medieval base, Hemingway develops each of the four literary modes in relation to specific periods of time. Using associations, imagery, and structural techniques, Hemingway transforms Santiago from a common fisherman first to a lyric questioner of life's meaning, then to an epic hero, and finally to a tragic hero who plays his momentary role in a modern Aristotelian drama (with its unities of time, place, and action) before being once again reduced almost to his original stature. The novel itself, in both subject and manner, is a highly romantic treatment of a series of realistic character vignettes, written by a novelist who uses highly structured aesthetic patterns to prepare the groundwork for the illusion of modern-day tragedy.

After analyzing The Old Man and the Sea, I will, in Chapter Five, not only summarize but also comment on the emergence of the Hemingway myth and its relevance to Hemingway's artistry. Although his World War I heroism is a recorded fact, Hemingway and his literary associates used that incident to create a myth which helped both to popularize his fiction and to conceal the author's identity

as a man. Through a purposeful blurring of reality and illusion, Hemingway projected contradictory images of himself so that he could actually become an art object.

In addition to artistically transforming his own life, Hemingway openly participated in the critical warfare of his era. Even though this participation might be initially viewed as a defensive tactic used by an insecure artist, it was more than likely a carefully conceived ploy to spur critical reactions to his fiction. Many of his remarks at first seem highly obtuse, but they may actually be intended to elicit further critical attention. Hemingway once discussed the theory of talking as a means of testing ideas: "The fun of talk is to explore, but much of it and all that is irresponsible should not be written. Once written you have to stand by it. You may have said it to see whether you believed it or not."<sup>15</sup> Hemingway's comment is provocative but must be carefully qualified because he evidently was pleased with the written inaccuracies of Malcolm Cowley's "A Portrait of Mister Papa," errors which he had helped supply. Then, like certain Romantic poets, Hemingway purposefully expanded the personal myth with A. E. Hotchner, sensing that the latter would assuredly transfer those exaggerated anecdotes

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15. Plimpton, in Hemingway and His Critics: An International Anthology, p. 24.

into print. The confusing relationship of the Hemingway myth and the fictional canon may never be completely resolved even if Hemingway's letters and other personal documents are eventually published because these documents might also have been written to conceal rather than to reveal Hemingway's real-world identity. With Hemingway the man, it is difficult to separate the actual from the fictional since the truth about the man resides more in the heroic illusion he projects than in his biographical reality. Ultimately the use of illusion, both in life and in art, is central to anyone's study of Ernest Hemingway. Of his many illusions, one of his most important is twentieth-century medievalism.

## CHAPTER TWO: HEMINGWAY'S TWENTIETH-CENTURY MEDIEVALISM

Because the Middle Ages covers approximately a millennium of western European history, any attempt to provide an exhaustive definition of the term medievalism would have to take into account its multifaceted historical and literary qualities. Within the politically developing Holy Roman Empire, medievalism encompasses the Ptolemaic universe as the predominant cosmology, feudalism as an important social concept, manorialism as an emerging legal and judicial system, and Roman Catholicism as a continually enlarging sphere of influence. More than any other single factor, Roman Catholicism unites the medieval world, channels the energies of the European peoples, and gives them a higher interpretation of the meaning of life.

Medievalism can be seen, however, not only as a series of historical occurrences but also as a literary model as well. Throughout the Middle Ages, storytelling, legends, and songs soon idealize history into art: as an epic foreshadowing of the medieval synthesis, Beowulf integrates Germanic heroism with Christian motifs; The Song of Roland and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight elevate knighthood and chivalry; The Dream of the Rood, Piers

Plowman, and The Pearl portray diverse religious experiences; and the Holy Grail story Christianizes the romance, thereby transforming the Arthurian cycle into a spiritual quest.

Writers after the Middle Ages have often used medieval motifs to add resonance to their works of art. T. S. Eliot adapts the Holy Grail legend in The Waste Land, and William Faulkner uses images of knighthood in A Fable. Hemingway too employs medieval motifs and allusions throughout his fiction. Robert Cohn of The Sun Also Rises is compared ironically to a chivalric knight: "He stood waiting, his face sallow, his hands fairly low, proudly and firmly waiting for the assault, ready to do battle for his lady love."<sup>1</sup> In For Whom the Bell Tolls, Robert Jordan analyzes the Spanish idol worship of the Virgin Mary and then says of Spain: "This is the only country that the reformation never reached."<sup>2</sup> Santiago of The Old Man and the Sea seems to be a well-integrated member of a great chain of being. During "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place," the old waiter mocks the medievally

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1. The Sun Also Rises (New York: Scribner's, 1926), p. 184. Future references will be cited parenthetically as SAR.

2. For Whom the Bell Tolls (New York: Scribner's, 1940), p. 355. Future references will be cited parenthetically as FWBT.

developed Our Father and Hail Mary prayers with his meta-physical nada: "Our nada who art in nada, nada be thy name thy kingdom nada thy will be nada in nada as it is in nada." Continuing this process of substitution, the waiter says: "Hail nothing full of nothing, nothing is with thee."<sup>3</sup> Throughout "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot," Hemingway parodies the romantic-love tradition: Hubert writes long and valueless love poetry while his wife Cornelia sleeps with her girlfriend "in the big mediaeval bed" (First 49, p. 262). And in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," Hemingway puns with medieval motifs. As Harry approaches death, his wife pleads with him not to destroy already achieved values:

"I mean do you have to take away everything? Do you have to kill your horse, and your wife and burn your saddle and your armour?"

"Yes," he said. "Your damned money was my armour. My Swift and my Armour." (First 49, p. 156)

In a review of Hemingway's major fiction, even the critic Ivan Kashkeen employs a medieval image of knighthood to describe a metaphorical similarity among Hemingway's heroes: "Though doomed the heroes continue their fight,

3. The Fifth Column and the First Forty-Nine Stories (New York: Scribner's, 1938), p. 481. Future references will be cited parenthetically as First 49.



and attain a tragic beauty and repose, facing the unavoidable bravely and in full armour."<sup>4</sup>

Although critics have noticed Hemingway's use of medieval motifs and allusions, they have not shown how medievalism functions metaphorically throughout Hemingway's major full-length fiction. From The Sun Also Rises to The Old Man and the Sea, Hemingway focuses on medieval concepts: the Roman Catholic Church as a symbol of unity and order; the ideal of chivalry with its concepts of honor and brotherhood; and the literary traditions of Romantic and Courtly Love. These motifs, however, have more than just an enriching thematic influence because they function in a broader sense to infuse the novels with an appearance of microcosmic unity and wholeness, a phenomenon which I envision as "twentieth-century medievalism." This expression, although paradoxically yoking two disparate and apparently irreconcilable world views, figuratively suggests that an artistically delineated pluralistic twentieth century can be perceived monistically. Although the novels are set within the allegedly fragmented value system of the twentieth century, Hemingway's particular choice of settings allows him to project, with Spain as

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4. "Ernest Hemingway: A Tragedy of Craftsmanship," in Ernest Hemingway: The Man and His Work, p. 82.

its metaphorical center, the aura of medieval unity within the modern world.

The feeling of medieval unity can be experienced in Hemingway's choice of fictional settings. But in analyzing these diverse settings, the autobiographical and psychoanalytical critics have not focused on medievalism but have instead minutely traced the overt correspondences between the fictional backdrops and the actual places Hemingway knew, implying that the author merely transcribed his romanticized experiences into fiction: the Madrid hotel of The Fifth Column, the Pamplona fiesta of The Sun Also Rises, and the Fossalta wounding of A Farewell to Arms. Since Hemingway's fiction also focuses, to a great extent, on war and the societal disruptions that it causes, Philip Young sees metaphysical implications in Hemingway's choice of wartime settings:

Hemingway's world is one in which things do not grow and bear fruit, but explode, break, decompose, or are eaten away. It is saved from total misery by visions of endurance, competence, and courage, by what happiness the body can give when it is not in pain, by interludes of love that cannot outlast the furlough, by a pleasure in the countries one can visit, or fish and hunt in, and the cafés one can sit in, and by very little else.<sup>5</sup>

In this passage, Young correlates Hemingway's fictional

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5. Ernest Hemingway, p. 44.

world with The Waste Land imagery of the post-World War I modern world.

From Young's analysis of Hemingway's themes and settings has developed a dominant critical position: the novelist's cosmopolitan use of setting functions as a metaphor to portray twentieth-century rootlessness. Hemingway's protagonists are often in foreign countries riding on trains, watching bullfights, skiing in the Alps, sleeping in hotels, and constantly on the move from one location to the next. Consequently, individual settings have apparently only a temporary importance as when Philip Rawlings, in the Madrid hotel of The Fifth Column, eventually repudiates Dorothy Bridges, nostalgic image of home and stability. Also the troubled Harold Krebs, returning temporarily to the post-World War I Midwestern American town of "Soldier's Home," emotionally and spiritually rejects the values of his mother's orthodox Protestantism. Examining these and other rootless Hemingway protagonists, John Graham postulates that the essence of Hemingway's art is its suggestion of life's impermanency--that places are to be used but not possessed by the characters.<sup>6</sup>

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6. "Ernest Hemingway: The Meaning of Style," in Ernest Hemingway: A Collection of Criticism, ed. Arthur Waldhorn (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973), p. 18.

Although Hemingway does use some settings to convey feelings of rootlessness, there are other neglected but equally important patterns in his fictional canon. One particular collection of short fiction suggests that Hemingway's protagonist experiences deeply felt national and family ties. In the Nick Adams stories, the chronological movement from one setting to another shows not only Nick's physical and emotional maturing but also a patterned returning to American roots. Nick Adams, on two separate occasions, moves from America to Europe and then back again to America. Beginning in the Northern woods and in other Midwestern American settings, stories such as "Indian Camp" and "Ten Indians" describe various aspects of Nick's childhood and adolescence, emphasizing his gradual initiation to manhood. Then in "Night Before Landing," Nick crosses the Atlantic to participate in the Great War; his subsequent wounding becomes the central thematic metaphor in this first European experience. Several stories ("Now I Lay Me" and "A Way You'll Never Be") vividly describe the trauma of this wounding. After Nick has physically recuperated, he returns to America for the ritualistic therapy of camping and fishing in "Big Two-Hearted River." The remaining stories in the collection recapitulate the same cyclical movement as Nick journeys once again to the aesthetic Paris of "On Writing"

and the European vacation land of "Cross-Country Snow." Although this second European journey is both creative and invigorating, Nick, nonetheless, returns to the America of "Fathers and Sons," a story fraught with bitter memories but, at the same time, one that moves toward a three-generation family reconciliation as a once-broken family chain begins to restore itself.

An even more important use of settings occurs within Hemingway's six novels. Before defining how these settings establish a metaphorical base upon which Hemingway constructs his major full-length fiction, it is first necessary to recognize that the author excluded two culturally and theologically diverse geographical locations as settings for this fiction. During 1941, Hemingway and his wife Martha visited the Far East. In addition to observing general conditions within China, Hemingway visited the Seventh War Zone Headquarters at Shaokwan where, in that part of China, Chiang Kai-shek's regulars (the Army of the Kuomintang) were actively waging war against the Japanese. Although Hemingway was greatly impressed with the efficiency and dedication of the Chinese regulars, they do not appear in his fiction. While Hemingway was in Hong Kong, he also met General Morris Abraham Cohen, a British expatriate who had gone to China in the 1920's to serve as Sun Yat-sen's bodyguard. Cohen

eventually became Chief of Police in Canton until it fell to the Japanese in 1938. Hemingway was quite impressed with Cohen's "worldliness and insider's knowledge" and even spoke "half-seriously of writing a book about him."<sup>7</sup> Yet no fiction emerged depicting Cohen's experiences in China.

An even more surprising exclusion of settings relates to Hemingway's 1944 World War II experiences in Europe. During that year, Hemingway lived in London and endured the German buzz bomb attacks; he participated in the D-Day crossing, arriving at Omaha Beach on June 6, 1944; he flew with the Royal Air Force; and he was a war correspondent in Germany, witnessing the offensive at Hürtgen Forest and researching what later became known as The Battle of the Bulge.<sup>8</sup> Even though the European theater of World War II figures predominantly in two of his novels, Hemingway curiously excludes England and Germany as settings for these novels, preferring instead the Spanish Civil War setting of For Whom the Bell Tolls and one officer's lyrical Italian interlude in Across the River and Into the Trees. In his choice of settings for the six novels, Hemingway turns away from Far Eastern

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7. Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story, pp. 360-61.

8. Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story, pp. 387-400, 402-29, 433-41.

and Protestant European backdrops in favor of decidedly Roman Catholic environments. By focusing on these homogeneous settings, Hemingway suggests that unity and meaning still can be both perceived and delineated in the fictional microcosm.

Stressing a Roman Catholic milieu in the novels from The Sun Also Rises through The Old Man and the Sea, Hemingway creates an impression of permanency, tradition, and unity. These Catholic backdrops, of course, are intimately related to events or experiences in Hemingway's life, but his choice of settings has much more than just an autobiographical interest. Although religious themes and symbolism permeate his works, Hemingway once said that "he did not wish to be known as a Catholic writer."<sup>9</sup> At the same time, he, as an American author, paradoxically writes about an area of the world whose attitudes and ideas are diametrically opposed to mainstream Protestant American values.

Perhaps Hemingway's emphasis on the Catholic milieu resulted, in part, from the ideas suggested by F. Scott Fitzgerald in his influential review of In Our Time. In that analysis, Fitzgerald compliments Hemingway for departing from typical American settings and themes.

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9. Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story, p. 185.

According to Fitzgerald, American writers, adhering to the tradition established by Washington Irving, had lost artistic impact because they were preoccupied with over-used American backdrops such as those which focused on the American farmer or on a major American city.<sup>10</sup> Fitzgerald's plea for originality in both theme and setting had, to a great degree, been answered by In Our Time, but Hemingway refined even further this concept of newness as he developed a culturally homogenous group of settings for his novels.

Hemingway's particular choice of settings is meant to cast a medieval aura over his fictional world. Within his fictive medieval world, Roman Catholicism stands as a symbol of unity and tradition. Through Catholicism, Hemingway metaphorically departs from the twentieth-century Protestant American world of technological complexity and social pluralism. In "Wine of Wyoming," Madame Fontan discusses this American-European religious disparity, analyzing first of all the United States: "Ici il y a trop de churches. En France il y a seulement les catholiques et les protestants--et très peu de protestants. Mais ici rien que de churches. Quand j'étais venu ici je disais, oh, my God, what are all the churches?" (First 49, p. 554).

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10. "How to Waste Material, A Note on My Generation," Bookman, 63 (May 1926), 262, 264.



For Madame Fontan, the multitudes of differing American religions are inferior to the unified Roman Catholic point of view represented in France. The narrative perspective in the story also nostalgically favors the French position.

An emphasis on religion, regardless of setting, has always been an important part of Hemingway's fiction. Within the short stories, Hemingway examines many different religious themes: Nick Adams' reverence for the woods in "The Last Good Country"; a boy's overly zealous self-mutilation on Christmas in "God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen"; Peroxide's mystical feelings for her boxer Steve Ketchel in "The Light of the World"; the narrator's inability to marry Luz because of time-consuming religious formalities in "A Very Short Story"; the old waiter's nada prayers in "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place"; the nun's humorous blending of the Virgin Mary and Notre Dame University in "The Gambler, the Nun, and the Radio"; and the painful union of a physician husband and his ailing Christian Scientist wife in "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife." One of the most powerfully delineated religious vignettes in the short fiction occurs in In Our Time:

While the bombardment was knocking the trench to pieces at Fossalta, he lay very flat and sweated and prayed oh jesus christ get me out of here. Dear jesus please get me out. Christ please please please christ. If you'll only keep me from getting

killed I'll do anything you say. I believe in you and I'll tell every one in the world that you are the only one that matters. Please please dear Jesus. The shelling moved further up the line. We went to work on the trench and in the morning the sun came up and the day was hot and muggy and cheerful and quiet. The next night back at Mestre he did not tell the girl he went upstairs with at the Villa Rossa about Jesus. And he never told anybody. (First 49, p. 241)

With this miniature, Hemingway not only ironically exposes the narrator's situational spirituality but also, more importantly, relates the religious theme vividly to the settings: the trench at Fossalta and the Villa Rossa at Mestre.

This relation of theme to setting is of primary importance in Hemingway's novels. As Maxwell Geismar points out, Hemingway's almost total abandonment of the American scene in favor of a highly selective European setting suggests a spiritual expedition with "persistent impulses toward Catholicism."<sup>11</sup> Even a cursory knowledge of the novel's religious themes, however, is sufficient to demonstrate that Hemingway both rejected and accepted certain aspects of Roman Catholicism. In The Sun Also Rises, Bill Gorton condemns Church pilgrims who monopolize the dining car while others are excluded. Using this episode as a launching point, Bill then satirizes William

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11. "Ernest Hemingway: You Could Always Come Back," in Ernest Hemingway: The Man and His Work, pp. 154, 175.

Jennings Bryan's religious narrowness and belaboring of trivial theological issues (SAR, pp. 86-8, 125-28). Although Brett Ashley nervously stiffens in church and feels that she is "damned bad for a religious atmosphere" (SAR, p. 216), Jake Barnes appears devout as he visits cathedrals throughout France and Spain, not simply for their artistic beauty but for prayer and self-examination. The anti-Catholic satire in A Farewell to Arms, particularly with its emphasis on priest baiting, is quite pointed. Rinaldi, one of the baiters, also criticizes Pauline doctrine and Catholic dogma.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, the novel highlights positive religious values, especially the priest's Abruzzi as a place where "a man may love God" (FTA, p. 76). Frederic Henry's initial failure to go to the Abruzzi is later offset metaphorically when he and Catherine Barkley depart for their "Abruzzi" in Switzerland.

To Have and Have Not is the one novel which does not at first seem to be overtly related to religious themes. However, since Harry Morgan is depicted as a social outcast, his assumed pirate image implicitly denies an orthodox value system while, at the same time, his

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12. A Farewell to Arms (New York: Scribner's, 1929), pp. 181-85. Future references will be cited parenthetically as FTA.

manliness and vitality radiate a religious form of energy. Spiritual conflicts are also evident in For Whom the Bell Tolls. Militating against what Anselmo calls God's abandonment of Spain (FWBT, p. 41) are El Sordo's religiously courageous but final battle, Robert Jordan's unwavering accomplishment of his military objective, and, most importantly, Robert and Maria's symbolical love relationship. A similar love pattern exists in Across the River and Into the Trees. Although Hemingway satirizes the Church's theological positions relating both to divorce and the issue of re-marriage, Richard Cantwell and Renata still achieve a religiously transcendent union. And in The Old Man and the Sea, even though Santiago is unable to recite Catholic prayers and analyze deep theological issues, he, nevertheless, represents something profoundly religious when he undergoes and emerges from his trials with the marlin and the sharks.

Religious dichotomies permeate Hemingway's fiction, but the use of Roman Catholicism is far more important metaphorically than it is theologically. Except for the short play "Today is Friday," Hemingway's fiction is anchored firmly within the twentieth century, yet the novels' Catholic settings suggest an earlier time frame. For Whom the Bell Tolls (with its epic machinery, matador motifs, and primitive hierarchical structure within the

Spanish Civil War setting) implies a return to the past. So too is the emphasis in The Old Man and the Sea. Sailing his rustic skiff and using the most simple fishing equipment, Santiago notices an airplane flying above him. This technological reminder of the twentieth century, however, is soon forgotten as Hemingway describes Santiago's world, a cosmos of brotherhood reminiscent of a great chain of being.

Throughout the novels, Hemingway's return to the past is fundamentally medieval. In The Sun Also Rises, the modern-day brotherhood of Jake Barnes and Bill Gorton at Roncesvalles elicits a comparison with the medieval friendship of Roland and Oliver in The Song of Roland. Additionally, the actions of Brett Ashley suggest the medieval Court of Love tradition as she gathers around her the wounded knight (Jake Barnes), the false knight (Robert Cohn), and the true knight (Pedro Romero). A medieval emphasis also appears in A Farewell to Arms when the priest invites Frederic Henry both literally and metaphorically to return to a medieval Abruzzi as a healing influence against the realities of a war-torn modern world. Although Frederic defaults on the priest's initial invitation and pursues instead twentieth-century pleasures, he metaphorically yearns for the Abruzzi and later temporarily achieves it. The medieval pattern, however, emerges most

poignantly in the Virgin Mary symbolism: Harry Morgan of To Have and Have Not, Robert Jordan of For Whom the Bell Tolls, and Richard Cantwell of Across the River and Into the Trees pursue their ideal women in quests reminiscent of The Cult of the Virgin motif.

The use of these and other medieval elements has not been adequately emphasized in Hemingway criticism. Since Hemingway often selects primitive settings, rituals of life and death, barbaric violence, and a repudiation of twentieth-century technological values, many critics feel that the author is a primitivist. Lawrence R. Broer, for example, believes that Hemingway is attracted to the Spanish people because they are "enticingly primitive" and are somehow free from the taint and modernization of twentieth-century life.<sup>13</sup> In moving away from technological America, Hemingway's novels do focus on relatively primitive or highly traditional settings. Consequently, Clifton Fadiman asserts that Hemingway reverts to primitive and brutal scenes in his fiction because these environments contain no traces of the modern society which has somehow cheated him.<sup>14</sup> Fadiman's argument (that Hemingway

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13. Hemingway's Spanish Tragedy (University, Alabama: U. of Alabama P., 1973), p. vi.

14. "Ernest Hemingway: An American Byron," Nation, p. 63.

seeks a viable alternative for the negative aspects of modernism) is a good one, but he incorrectly argues that the alternative is primitivism.

Throughout his fiction, Hemingway delineates brutal scenes, but senseless brutality is treated satirically, as in the shooting of Cayetano Ruiz in "The Gambler, the Nun, and the Radio"; the insensitive slaying of Comrade Wilkinson, mistaken for Philip Rawlings, in The Fifth Column; and the Turkish officer's sadistic militarism in "On the Quai at Smyrna." If primitivism also implies a repudiation of the acquisitions of civilization in favor of pre-civilized values, to say that Hemingway's novels celebrate these pristine characteristics is untenable. In a curiously circular statement, Richard Lehan affirms: Hemingway rejected all traditions, literary and historical, ~~in an attempt to return to fundamentals--to the~~ essential cycle of life and death in its purest forms, such as one can experience on the big-game hunt or in the bull-ring."<sup>15</sup> Even though Hemingway depicts fundamental cycles of life and death (with emphasis on highly individualized masculine sports), his use of those activities is not a rejection of historical and literary traditions, but an

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15. "Hemingway Among the Moderns," in Hemingway in Our Time, p. 194.

artistic search for medieval rituals and patterns which can restore a sense of order and rationality to the modern world.

An important study arguing against the position that Hemingway is a primitivist was written in 1944 by Malcolm Cowley, who points out that Hemingway, rather than rejecting all cultural ties, embraces particular customs, rituals, and sacraments as a means of survival and safety in the twentieth century.<sup>16</sup> Though not a primitivist, Hemingway does reach back into the medieval past for saving rituals and themes. His artistic search for medieval value begins metaphorically with his acceptance of Spain as a cultural and spiritual home. In "The Dangerous Summer, Part I," the final work published during his lifetime, Hemingway affirms: Spain is "the country that I loved more than any other except my own."<sup>17</sup> Years earlier in 1937 when Hemingway was preparing the documentary film The Spanish Earth, Fitzgerald remarked that Hemingway's attitude toward the film, the country, and its people was almost religious.<sup>18</sup>

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16. Introd., The Viking Portable Library: Hemingway, p. xviii.

17. Life, 49 (September 5, 1960), 78.

18. Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story, p. 316.



The most conspicuous example of his love for Spain is his fascination for the ceremonial ritual of the bullfight, a medieval rite which is important both metaphysically and aesthetically. In his description of the human characteristics associated with the bullfight, the narrator in Death in the Afternoon tells the Old Lady about the word pundonor, a Spanish term which means "honor, probity, courage, self-respect and pride in one word."<sup>19</sup> As the consummate artist, the great matador typifies pundonor, risking everything, including his life, to achieve through his artistry the godlike aura and projection of immortality. After analyzing this concept of pundonor, John Griffith says: "One feels Hemingway adding, Would that the world were Spanish."<sup>20</sup> If the real world is not Spanish, Hemingway's fictional microcosm is predominantly so in an Aristotelian manner: the novels have their beginning (The Sun Also Rises), middle (For Whom the Bell Tolls), and ending (The Old Man and the Sea) in a Spanish perception of the world.

As he projects Spain in his novels, Hemingway's view is medieval. The Sun Also Rises is medieval with its

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19. Death in the Afternoon (New York: Scribner's, 1932), p. 91.

20. "Rectitude in Hemingway's Fiction: How Rite Makes Right," in Hemingway in Our Time, p. 160.

literal and metaphorical movements from modern France to traditional Spain. Also the novel emphasizes Brett Ashley as the courtly queen bee and focuses on the Spanish heroism of the matador Pedro Romero. In For Whom the Bell Tolls, Pablo's clearly defined guerrilla society reminds one of a medieval hierarchical structure with Pilar as a modern Blanche of Castille filling the leadership void caused by the faltering Pablo. The Old Man and the Sea also seems medieval with its selection of a Cuban hero rather than an American protagonist and its departure from twentieth-century technological values in favor of mediievally explicit ones.

Both the secular and religious value systems of Spain, the bullfight and Roman Catholicism, emerge from the medieval past. Stephen R. Phillips discusses the symbolism inherent in the bullfight ritual, arguing that Dionysus is often depicted as a bull, a symbol of generative force. In the dramatic ritual of the bullfight, the matador's control is pitted against the bull's passion; consequently, the planned death of the bull symbolizes the triumph of control over excess and of order over disorder.<sup>21</sup> Closely related to this secular drama are religious ceremonies. In addition to the ritual of

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21. "Hemingway and the Bullfight: The Archetypes of Tragedy," ArQ, 29 (Spring 1973), 38-40.

the Mass (which also creates the illusion of metaphysical order and meaning), Roman Catholicism is also significantly related to drama. As an early embodiment of religious values, medieval drama was first spawned by and then emerged from the Church.

To complement these medieval elements, Hemingway uses Roman Catholic settings and themes which are similar to Henry Adams' ideas expressed in The Education of Henry Adams and Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres. Although Hemingway does not overtly acknowledge Henry Adams' literary influence, George Monteiro has demonstrated how both In Our Time and The Nick Adams Stories contain various borrowings from Henry Adams' works: Nick's father is Dr. Henry Adams; Nick's Journey is an education: and "The Last Good Country" reveals Nick's wistful comments to his sister concerning European cathedrals he has read about but has not seen.<sup>22</sup>

But Hemingway's novels embody an even more significant relationship to Henry Adams' thoughts about medievalism. In The Education of Henry Adams, Adams contrasts American religious diversity with medieval European unity. As he examines the cathedrals of medieval France (specifically in Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres), he sees

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22. "The Education of Ernest Hemingway," JAmS, 8 (April 1974), 91-9.

that each was created to embody either a masculine or a feminine concept of power. When he then compares the volume of medieval art with the paucity of all other creative epochs, Adams concludes that the influence of the Virgin Mary is primarily responsible for the Middle Ages' phenomenal artistry. Adams sees the Virgin's influence as not only religious but also sexual. As a mystically productive figure, the Virgin, symbol of transcendence, is an accessible channel unifying medieval art with the infinite.

Conversely, Adams envisions American art, except for Walt Whitman's poetry, as essentially sexless because it is based on the Protestant ethic which merges sex with sin. Speaking of American art, Adams argues: "An American Virgin would never dare command; an American Venus would never dare exist."<sup>23</sup> An interesting way to approach Hemingway's novels, however, is to see them as an artistic response to Adams' theories about medievalism, especially Hemingway's portrayal of religiously transcendent sexuality as an emblem of metaphysical unity. Hemingway's novels are filled with sexuality; however, this emphasis is not simply to repudiate stultifying Victorian mores but primarily to affirm the aesthetic value of Mariolatrous

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23. The Education of Henry Adams (New York: Modern Library, 1931), pp. 384-85.

love. Some of Hemingway's female characters have the Virgin's name: Marie Morgan of To Have and Have Not and Maria of For Whom the Bell Tolls. Two others (Catherine Barkley of A Farewell to Arms and Renata of Across the River and Into the Trees), though not directly named after the Virgin, still represent the unifying power of religiously sexual love.

Metaphorically, Hemingway's depiction of masculinity, femininity, and the transcendent unity achieved within the sexual relationship can be related to Henry Adams' theories of medieval power and unity. Leslie Fiedler affirms that the sexual act is the symbolic center of Hemingway's art, but he incorrectly argues that there are no fully developed female characters in Hemingway's fiction, and that Hemingway is comfortable only when dealing with men without women.<sup>24</sup> Evidently Hemingway's female characters often embody types: Margot Macomber of "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" as the destructive bitch; Dorothy Bridges of The Fifth Column as the nostalgic vision of home and stability; and Maria of For Whom the Bell Tolls as man's idealized sexual fantasy. But some of Hemingway's female characters do not fit

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24. "Men Without Women," in Hemingway: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Robert P. Weeks (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962), pp. 86-8.

within these easy stereotypes: Liz Coates of "Up in Michigan" reveals a wistful individuality; Brett Ashley of The Sun Also Rises is too richly developed to be stereotyped mainly as a destructive bitch; and Pilar of For Whom the Bell Tolls is provocatively complex. Although Hemingway often idealizes his female characters, they and the process of idealization are important metaphorical complements to his delineation of a specific type of male. In the novels, many of his masculine characters reflect the medieval idea of God as pure act. With some of his female characters, Hemingway seeks progressively for the image of the Virgin Mary as a power source, an ideal, and a unifier for his male characters. The sexual union then metaphorically represents the fusion of godlike man and ideal woman.

Man as the embodiment of pure action is a dominant motif in Hemingway's fiction. Even though Wyndham Lewis' dumb-ox theory is fundamentally a repudiation of that type of male character, the emergence of the Hemingway myth is primarily an affirmation of it. Hemingway's acting masculine characters closely personify Henry Adams' medieval Christian God. Although the medieval point of view makes a distinction between God the Father and God the Son (envisioning the Father as pure essence or thought and the Son as creator or actor), Henry Adams chooses to see the

medieval God primarily in terms of the Son. So, for example, when he relates his medieval God to a living man, Henry Adams states that Theodore Roosevelt has "the singular primitive quality that belongs to ultimate matter--the quality that medieval theology assigned to God--he was pure act."<sup>25</sup>

Hemingway's most action-oriented masculine characters embody a similar concept of God. While the author portrays this medieval concept with varying degrees of intensity, Pedro Romero of The Sun Also Rises, Harry Morgan of To Have and Have Not, El Sordo of For Whom the Bell Tolls, and Santiago of The Old Man and the Sea personify this medieval metaphor. Pedro Romero represents the best qualities of the matador: he works in the bull's territory; he lets the animal's horns pass by him as closely as possible; he handles the bull aesthetically in an intensely tragic ritual; he risks his own life without complaining about the physical punishment he has already received from Robert Cohn; and he kills the bull cleanly and with great finesse. Harry Morgan also has masculine vitality: he assumes the pirate image, struggles against overwhelming odds, kills his antagonists, and stoically endures his own mortal wound. Similarly El Sordo

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25. The Education of Henry Adams, p. 417.

struggles against his fate: he epically battles a better-equipped military contingent and dies only when overcome by the mechanistic superiority of Fascist airplanes. And Santiago reveals both epic and tragic qualities: he performs superhuman feats of endurance to demonstrate how closely he resembles the medieval image of God as actor.

Inextricably related to the godlike man of action is the idealized female. In The Sun Also Rises, the evocation of The Song of Roland not only establishes the medieval man-of-action theme but also focuses on the ultimate saving power of the feminine ideal. When Roland nears death, he pleads: "Holy Mary, help me!"<sup>26</sup> So too does the male Hemingway protagonist seek oneness and salvation through his female counterpart. Many men in The Sun Also Rises pursue Brett Ashley as she conducts her medieval Court of Love. In A Farewell to Arms, Frederic Henry achieves oneness with Catherine Barkley, his idealized woman. Increasingly, the final novels portray female characters who, in name and in essence, reflect attributes of the Virgin Mary. Harry Morgan, in To Have and Have Not, returns from his adventures at sea to his wife Marie who exemplifies the Virgin's rejuvenating power of sexuality and matronliness. In For Whom the Bell Tolls,

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26. The Song of Roland, trans. Jessie Crosland (New York: Cooper Square Pub., 1967), p. 80.



Robert Jordan unites with Maria who, although previously raped by the Catholic-supported Fascists, now represents the Virgin's unifying influence. Richard Cantwell, in Across the River and Into the Trees, equates Renata, symbol of rebirth, with the Queen of Heaven.<sup>27</sup> And in The Old Man and the Sea, Santiago thinks about three feminine forces: the memory of his deceased wife; an awareness of the Virgin of Cobre as part of his religious heritage; and, most importantly, his perception of the Gulf Stream as a feminine power. In this final novel, la mar represents an important aspect of Henry Adams' medievalism: Nature is both female and essential as opposed to the hero who is both male but ultimately superfluous.<sup>28</sup>

Metaphorically, the sexual union of acting man and ideal woman allows Hemingway to project a sense of medieval oneness on the modern-world fictional microcosm. With the repeated motif of the male-female synthesis, Hemingway suggests the union of God and the Virgin. According to Thomas Aquinas, Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary mystically become one through the power of love.<sup>29</sup>

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27. Across the River and Into the Trees (New York: Scribner's, 1950), p. 83.

28. Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1905), p. 198.

29. The Education of Henry Adams, p. 428.

In The Sun Also Rises, this union is a degraded reflection of the adulterous courtly love tradition. Innumerable males seek unity through Brett Ashley but are all thwarted because she is so inextricably related to the destroyed values of the post-World War I era. On the other hand, the Frederic-Catherine union in A Farewell to Arms (though Catherine has her fears) is so religiously intense that Frederic says to her: "We're the same one" (FTA, p. 320). In To Have and Have Not, Hemingway effectively contrasts the disintegrative quality of the Richard and Dorothy Gordon marriage with the sexual vitality and unity of the Harry and Marie Morgan relationship. The religious aura of sexual transcendence is also evident in For Whom the Bell Tolls when Robert Jordan and Maria feel the earth move (FWBT, p. 160). Their achievement of oneness is so secure that Robert Jordan later tells her: "As long as there is one of us there is both of us" (FWBT, p. 463). Even death cannot sever the reality of their unity. Richard Cantwell and Renata, in Across the River and Into the Trees, also repeatedly use the sexual act to blend their identities and achieve a sense of oneness. And in The Old Man and the Sea, Santiago, through his climactic venture with the marlin, attains a momentary but consummate oneness with the feminine sea.

Before focusing specifically on The Old Man and the Sea, I would like to restate the importance of twentieth-century medievalism as an aesthetic pattern in Hemingway's novels. Through a careful use of geographical setting, medieval allusions, and symbolic motifs related to Henry Adams' thought, Hemingway metaphorically establishes medievalism throughout his novels. From this medieval base, Hemingway implies metaphysically that unity and meaning are possible, in a selectively delineated sense, within an otherwise highly impermanent twentieth-century fictional microcosm.

CHAPTER THREE: AN ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS  
OF CRITICISM IN THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA

Critics lavishly welcomed the 1952 publication of The Old Man and the Sea which appeared first in Life magazine and shortly thereafter in a Scribner's edition. After the initial praise, however, subsequent evaluation of this piece of fiction has been both volatile and highly eclectic. Those who oppose the novel do so for a variety of reasons. Philip Rahv believes that it is a fishing anecdote rather than a novel.<sup>1</sup> Dwight Macdonald suggests that Hemingway parodies himself by using "a slack, fake-biblical style."<sup>2</sup> John W. Aldridge sees the story of Santiago as a decidedly minor work written in a style which is "oddly colorless and flat."<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, these same issues of length and style are used by other critics to praise the novel. Sheldon Norman Grebstein defines it as a nouvelle which is "as economical as a

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1. Image and Idea: Twenty Essays on Literary Themes, rev. ed. (New York: New Directions, 1957), pp. 192-95.

2. Against the American Grain (New York: Random House, 1962), p. 178.

3. "About Ernest Hemingway." Rev. of The Old Man and the Sea, by Ernest Hemingway. VQR, 29 (Spring 1953), 312.

short story yet with something of a novel's magnitude of action."<sup>4</sup> In another analysis of length, Anthony Burgess states that this piece of fiction is "unquestionably a small masterpiece."<sup>5</sup> William Faulkner is even more emphatic in his terse praise of The Old Man and the Sea: "His best."<sup>6</sup> Looking at this continually enlarging yet somehow unsatisfying body of criticism, R. W. B. Lewis doubts if the novel can stand the great amount of critical weight already heaped upon it.<sup>7</sup> Since critics have commented profusely on the novel's style, imagery, symbolism, structure, and characterization, current criticism must not merely add a minor variation to this ever-growing list but should offer a substantially new approach which synthesizes what has been written while simultaneously exploring more fertile realms. To establish this different perspective, I must first of all discuss how the novel is placed within an unusual literary tradition and then how it functions therein as a work of art.

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4. Hemingway's Craft (Carbondale: Southern Illinois U. P., 1973), p. 22.

5. Burgess, p. 101.

6. Rev. of The Old Man and the Sea, by Ernest Hemingway. Shenandoah, 3 (Autumn 1952), 55.

7. "Eccentrics' Pilgrimage." Rev. of The Old Man and the Sea, by Ernest Hemingway. HudR, 6 (Spring 1953), 146.

As critics have attempted to categorize The Old Man and the Sea, too much emphasis has been given to the work's American characteristics. Claire Rosenfield believes that the novel lies within the American folk-tale tradition with its rites of passage, the protagonist's confrontation with a large indigenous animal, and its other folk motifs.<sup>8</sup> Although many folk-tale elements do appear in the novel, one must be careful not to overemphasize the American qualities because Santiago's world is definitely not American. Like Rosenfield, Frederic I. Carpenter sees the novel in relation to an American tradition--the American Adam myth with its emphasis on primitivism.<sup>9</sup> Even though there are decidedly primitive elements within the novel, these attributes do not constitute primitivism; on the contrary, the novel's primitive milieu is more closely medieval than primitive in nature. Another critic who notices American parallels in the novel is Melvin Backman who argues that the Santiago-Manolin association reflects other fictional American male companionships: Huckleberry Finn and Jim, Natty Bumppo and

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8. "New World, Old Myths," in Twentieth Century Interpretations of The Old Man and the Sea: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Katherine T. Jobes (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1968), pp. 42, 48.

9. "'The American Myth': Paradise (To Be) Regained," PMLA, 74 (December 1959), 606.

Chingachgook, and Ishmael and Queequeg.<sup>10</sup> While these critics have illuminated the novel's relationship to American themes and patterns, the tendency to view the novel as typically American is ultimately misleading because this work has a predominantly Spanish flavor. Santiago's heritage, mores, and value system are an integral part of a fictional world which is different from those American experiences suggested by Rosenfield, Carpenter, and Backman.

In its emphasis on a Spanish world view, The Old Man and the Sea is not unique in Hemingway's fiction. Repeatedly Hemingway has selected the Spanish scene because it represents something much larger for him than simply a fictional backdrop. By using highly primitive Spanish environments, he imaginatively recaptures the medieval past and projects its essence upon an otherwise highly diffuse technological society. As Hemingway moves from The Sun Also Rises to For Whom the Bell Tolls and finally to The Old Man and the Sea, the constant emphasis on particular Spanish values creates a high degree of artistic resonance, leading him to say: "The book which I wished to be the crowning work of my life was

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10. "Hemingway: The Matador and the Crucified," in Ernest Hemingway: Critiques of Four Major Novels, ed. Carlos Baker (New York: Scribner's, 1962), p. 143.

The Old Man and the Sea."<sup>11</sup> In a letter to Wallace Meyer of Scribner's, Hemingway also wrote that his final novel "was the best he had ever done in his life. It could well stand as an epilogue to all his writing and to all he had learned, or tried to learn, while writing and trying to live."<sup>12</sup> What Hemingway is trying to portray in this final novel, it seems to me, is the reality of microcosmic unity as depicted in a highly selected Spanish medievalism.

In reviewing Hemingway's fictional canon, several critics have already pointed to medieval motifs functioning as unifying elements within the novels. Both in theme and in myth, Jackson J. Benson relates Jake Barnes, the sexually maimed Fisher King in the fragmented society of The Sun Also Rises, to Santiago, the Fisherman whose life force and love permeate the world of The Old Man and the Sea.<sup>13</sup> Melvin Backman demonstrates another unifying theme within the novels: the motifs of the matador (the controlled power to administer death ritualistically) and the crucified (the power to endure death poignantly and

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11. "A Man's Credo," Playboy, 10 (January 1963), 124.

12. Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story, p. 499.

13. Hemingway: The Writer's Art of Self-Defense (Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota P., 1969), p. 153.



heroically), motifs which are perfectly fused and amplified within The Old Man and the Sea.<sup>14</sup> Within Backman's scheme are the metaphors for what I have termed Hemingway's twentieth-century medievalism: the matador as a secular projection of Spanish medieval masculinity, and the crucified as a religious conceptualization of the symbolic power and unifying nature of medieval Roman Catholicism. By blending these secular and religious materials, Hemingway, through Santiago, consummately affirms medieval oneness.

Discussing Hemingway's use of medieval themes and values in The Old Man and the Sea, Clinton S. Burhans, Jr., suggests that the novel embraces a previous value system because Hemingway does not evolve new moral values but reaffirms the basic values of courage, humility, and love.<sup>15</sup> These values are also embodied within highly traditional patterns which, according to Jackson J. Benson, are vividly medieval:

As a saint should, Santiago lives and moves within a medieval world of sorts, with a clearly defined chain of being. The continuous allegorical use of animals may even remind us of a bestiary. Santiago's world is to a large extent Aristotelian,

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14. "Hemingway: The Matador and the Crucified," in Ernest Hemingway: Critiques of Four Major Novels, p. 135.

15. "The Old Man and the Sea: Hemingway's Tragic Vision of Man," in Twentieth Century Interpretations of The Old Man and the Sea, p. 80.

in that it is one of order and degree, of careful assigned natures and proper spheres, of balance and counterbalance.<sup>16</sup>

Further evidence of Benson's description of medieval elements exists in what Katherine T. Jobes envisions as "interlocking imagery,"<sup>17</sup> a structural design of repeated words, grammatical patterns, and images. Of these images, the most vivid are the dreams of lions on the beach, the memory of arm wrestling a Negro from Cienfuegos, the vision of the marlin's spear (both as baseball bat and as rapier), and Santiago's portrayal of Jesus Christ's experiences with the cross. Throughout the novel then (in allusion, setting, theme, and imagery) is an all-encompassing medievalism.

When one recognizes that The Old Man and the Sea lies within a Spanish medieval literary tradition rather than within an American one, it is then possible to analyze more effectively how the novel functions as a work of art. Fundamentally, critics have focused too much on what the novel means instead of how and why Hemingway constructed the novel as he did. In their preoccupation with Hemingway's meaning, critics have seen the novel as a fable, a parable, or an allegory. Harvey Breit describes The Old Man

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16. Benson, p. 180.

17. Introd., Twentieth Century Interpretations of The Old Man and the Sea, p. 3.

and the Sea as a fable with universal meanings.<sup>18</sup> In a similar vein, Charles R. Anderson says that the novel is a "romantic fable."<sup>19</sup> Carlos Baker believes that the work is a parable of stoic individualism.<sup>20</sup> Working from Baker's statement, Joseph M. Flora argues that The Old Man and the Sea is "a parable of practical Christianity" as opposed to orthodox theology.<sup>21</sup> Because Hemingway's novel contains Christian numerology and symbolism, Joseph Waldmeir believes that the novel's celebration of the religion of man allegorically provides a non-orthodox yet highly religious commentary on the rest of Hemingway's fictional canon.<sup>22</sup>

Of these diverse attempts to assess Hemingway's meaning, the allegorical approach has received the most critical attention. If the novel is an allegory, however,

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18. "Hemingway's 'Old Man.'" Rev. of The Old Man and the Sea, by Ernest Hemingway. Nation, 175 (September 6, 1952), 194.

19. "Hemingway's Other Style," in Ernest Hemingway: Critiques of Four Major Novels, p. 46.

20. "Introduction: Citizen of the World," in Hemingway and His Critics: An International Anthology, p. 10.

21. "Biblical Allusion in 'The Old Man and the Sea,'" SSF, 10 (Spring 1973), 146.

22. "Confiteor Hominem: Ernest Hemingway's Religion of Man," PMASAL, 42 (1956), 349-56.

then the exact correspondences are difficult to identify. When Hemingway was asked if he used symbolism in the novel, he responded: "No good book has ever been written that has in it symbols arrived at beforehand and stuck in."<sup>23</sup> On another occasion, Hemingway again asserted that there wasn't any symbolism in the novel: "Sea equaled sea, old man was old man, the boy was a boy, the marlin was itself, and the sharks were no better and no worse than other sharks."<sup>24</sup> Since Hemingway so emphatically denied the use of symbolism, his comments, rather than quieting the symbolical and allegorical searches, have merely intensified them.

As the critics have examined the novel both for symbolism and for allegory, many schools of thought developed, ranging from Ivan Kashkeen's more open-ended approach (that the novel is a hazy allegory)<sup>25</sup> to Carlos Baker's theory that The Old Man and the Sea symbolically resembled the story of King Lear and his shark-hearted

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23. "An American Storyteller," Time, December 13, 1954, p. 72.

24. Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story, p. 505.

25. "Alive in the Midst of Death: Ernest Hemingway," in Hemingway and His Critics: An International Anthology, pp. 171-73.

daughters.<sup>26</sup> Supporting Kashkeen, Earl Rovit argues for an open-ended allegorical interpretation: "This novella is probably Hemingway's most evocative construction, tense and clean on the surface, but suggesting myriad layers of meaning just out of reach in the murky levels fathoms beneath."<sup>27</sup> What Kashkeen and Rovit are advocating correlates quite well with Hemingway's iceberg theory of literature. Believing that an author can leave much of what he knows out of a novel (the excluded materials contributing to the fiction's density), Hemingway states: "The Old Man and the Sea could have been over a thousand pages long and had every character in the village in it and all the processes of how they made their living, were born, educated, bore children, etc. That is done excellently and well by other writers."<sup>28</sup>

Although Hemingway repeatedly argued for an open-ended interpretation for his novel, he also wrote a major address that spurred renewed interest in a more rigidly

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26. "The Marvel Who Must Die." Rev. of The Old Man and the Sea, by Ernest Hemingway. SatR, 35 (September 6, 1952), 10-11.

27. Ernest Hemingway (New York: Twayne, 1963), p. 87.

28. Plimpton, "An Interview with Ernest Hemingway," in Hemingway and His Critics: An International Anthology, p. 34.

conceived allegorical interpretation. Alluding to Santiago in the Nobel Prize speech, Hemingway said of the art of writing: "It is because we have had such great writers in the past that a writer is driven far out past where he can go, out to where no one can help him."<sup>29</sup> From Hemingway's public statement, André Maurois had no difficulty in making allegorical correspondences between Santiago and Hemingway, the marlin and the novel, and the sharks and the critics.<sup>30</sup> Although this interpretation once gained some critical attention, the inaccuracy of making such rigid correspondences was subsequently pointed out by W. M. Frohock who argued persuasively that critics do not destroy a genuine work of art.<sup>31</sup> And, of course, if one element in the alleged allegorical structure can be attacked so easily, the validity of the other correspondences is immediately brought into question.

What Hemingway is saying in The Old Man and the Sea (the meaning of his fable, parable, or allegory) is inextricably related to the more important issue of how

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29. Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story, p. 529.

30. "Ernest Hemingway," in Hemingway and His Critics: An International Anthology, p. 48.

31. "Mr. Hemingway's Truly Tragic Bones." Rev. of The Old Man and the Sea, by Ernest Hemingway. SWR, 38 (Winter 1953), 77.

he stylistically portrays his meaning. When he won the Nobel Prize in 1954 because of his powerful writing style, critics wishing to repudiate Hemingway's achievement immediately sought to identify weaknesses in his style. In a written debate with Philip Young, Leon Edel argued that Hemingway had not created a style but merely an artificial illusion of a style based upon an unsubstantial and shallow fictional world of superficial action.<sup>32</sup> Philip Young countered Edel's argument by acknowledging that hunting and fishing are indeed superficial activities, but they are used as a means of saying more important things about life. Speaking directly about The Old Man and the Sea, Young stated: "In a later book a man again goes fishing, and his story is a means of saying things about life in any time--true and rather stirring things, thought many people, including the prize committee and me."<sup>33</sup> The Young-Edel debate, however, did not resolve the issue of the effectiveness (or even the actuality) of Hemingway's style but merely focused critical attention more closely on how Hemingway's style in The Old Man and

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32. "The Art of Evasion," in Hemingway: A Collection of Critical Essays, pp. 169-70.

33. "Hemingway: A Defense," in Hemingway: A Collection of Critical Essays, p. 173.

the Sea compares with the earlier styles, such as those in The Sun Also Rises and A Farewell to Arms.

When critics analyze the style of The Old Man and the Sea, they often argue that this novel is successful to the degree that it adheres to the principles of realism, because Hemingway initially gained his reputation as a realist communicating facts directly to his reading audience. According to M. H. Abrams, a realist is one who renders his subject seriously "without too patently shaping it."<sup>34</sup> Because the realist prefers common and ordinary subject matter which he presents to give the illusion that actual life is being depicted, Hemingway's statement about his novel seems to indicate that he is working within this realistic tradition: "I tried to make a real old man, a real boy, a real sea and a real fish and real sharks. But if I made them good and true enough they would mean many things."<sup>35</sup> Yet Hemingway does more in this novel than simply work within the realistic tradition. Although the novel was probably developed from the anecdote related in "On the Blue Water: A Gulf

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34. A Glossary of Literary Terms, 3rd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p. 141.

35. "An American Storyteller," Time, p. 72.



Stream Letter,"<sup>36</sup> Hemingway has not simply transferred that event into fiction by amplifying the anecdote; on the contrary, he has added the land-sea structure, changed the story's depiction of time from two to three days at sea, artistically transformed the fisherman from a common man to one of heroic proportions, and elevated an anecdote of pathos into a novel of tragedy. Because of these intentional aesthetic transformations, one should not classify the novel within the same realistic tradition as that found in many of his earlier works.

Yet one of the most persistent charges brought against the novel relates to its departure from Hemingway's earlier realistic tradition. Robert P. Weeks deplores what he sees as the novel's inexactness and its romanticizing of natural objects to extort more feeling than one should expect to find therein. Weeks feels that a man such as Santiago could not stand up under such an ordeal, and that the whole story is "a make-believe super-fish duelling a make-believe super-fisherman."<sup>37</sup> Although Weeks acknowledges that the novel contains elements of romanticism, he, nevertheless, judges The Old Man and the

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36. By-Line: Ernest Hemingway, ed. William White (New York: Scribner's, 1967), pp. 239-40.

37. "Fakery in The Old Man and the Sea," CE, 24 (December 1962), pp. 188-92.

Sea harshly because it deviates from the expected realistic tradition. Ironically, critics sometimes condemn Hemingway for what they perceive as a repetitiveness in theme throughout his fictional canon, yet they, at the same time, insist that he perpetuate the same realistic style of writing.

But in The Old Man and the Sea, Hemingway clearly departs from his earlier "realistic" style of writing. To appreciate fully the nature of this piece of fiction, one must understand that it is an artistic novel which toys with aesthetic illusions and transformations. Discussing this novel, Hemingway said: "I have had to read it now over 200 times and every time it does something to me. It's as though I had gotten finally what I had been working for all my life."<sup>38</sup> The critical tendency has been to view this statement rhetorically rather than aesthetically. Harvey Breit, for example, argues that the novel is crafted more for its meaning than for its art.<sup>39</sup> But Hemingway, in his novel, is doing more than examining the nature of life, the essence of being, or the qualities of heroism. Manolo of "The Undefeated" has

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38. "Clean and Straight." Rev. of The Old Man and the Sea, by Ernest Hemingway. Time, September 8, 1952, p. 114.

39. "Hemingway's 'Old Man,'" Nation, p. 194.

already demonstrated characteristics of stoic endurance; Anselmo of For Whom the Bell Tolls has already personified the Spanish warmth of practicing Christianity; and Pedro Romero of The Sun Also Rises has already exemplified Spanish heroism. What newness Hemingway has brought to The Old Man and the Sea, therefore, is not thematic but primarily aesthetic.

The novel is a carefully crafted piece of art which, in a series of days, presents different methods of portraying modes of literary expression. Many critics, however, rebel against what they perceive to be Hemingway's self-conscious artistry. Throughout the novel, Hemingway uses numerous Medieval, Classical, and Biblical motifs. Jackson J. Benson argues that "such associations serve artfully to contrive an aura of sanctity and importance around the novel that transcends the importance earned by the merits of the work itself and as such constitutes an emotional trick which the reader has every right to resent."<sup>40</sup> Philip Toynbee goes even further in his condemnation of the novel's artistry, saying that it is a stuffed literary work: "You either believe or you do not believe that the book is meretricious from beginning to end, that the archaic false simplicities of its

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40. Benson, p. 182.

style are insufferable, that the sentimentality is flagrant and outrageous and that the myth is tediously enforced."<sup>41</sup> And even Philip Young, if he were to re-write Ernest Hemingway: A Reconsideration, would now tone down his praise for the novel because he feels that the allegory overwhelms the novel's actual merit.<sup>42</sup> These negative reactions, however, are caused, to a great extent, by the critical tendency to analyze the individual elements of comedy, lyricism, heroism, and tragedy without showing how these forms of literary expression are synthesized within a coherent artistic scheme.

Of these various literary approaches, Hemingway's comedy is usually perceived as a moderating influence. For example, Jackson J. Benson senses a comic element underlying Santiago's high seriousness.<sup>43</sup> Comedy is particularly apparent in both the humor of Santiago's epic treatment of baseball and the irony of the tourists' ignorance of the skeleton's identity and significance. Robert N. Broadus also discusses the possibility that Hemingway was familiar in advance with the contemporaneously published Adventures in Fishing (1952) in which

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41. "Hemingway." Rev. of Hemingway and His Critics, ed. Carlos Baker. Encounter, 17 (October 1961), 87.

42. Ernest Hemingway: A Reconsideration, p. 274.

43. Benson, p. 172.

Zane Grey relates an anecdote about purchasing a yacht and then going eighty-three days without catching a fish. It is therefore possible that Santiago's eighty-four fishless days are fraught not only with serious religious symbolism but also with humorous overtones as Santiago betters Grey's fishlessness by one additional day.<sup>44</sup>

While comedy allows an extra dimension of perceptivity to be added to the novel, its lyricism permits Santiago to explore more intensely the perplexing questions of life. An early reviewer of the novel calls it "a poem of action."<sup>45</sup> Nemi D'Agostino says that it has "the rhythm and language of a decadent poème en prose."<sup>46</sup> And Linda Wagner defines it as a "lyric novel."<sup>47</sup> With his adept handling of a third-person limited point of view, Hemingway structures lyrical emotion within an objective framework. Artistically, he moves from an external depiction of Santiago to a highly subjective probing of the fisherman's experience and then back again to an objective vantage point.

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44. "The New Record Set by Hemingway's Old Man," N&Q, 10 (April 1963), 152-53.

45. "Clean and Straight," Time, p. 114.

46. "The Later Hemingway," in Hemingway: A Collection of Critical Essays, p. 159.

47. "The Poem of Santiago and Manolin," MFS, 19 (Winter 1973-74), 518.

Santiago's lyrical questioning of life's meaning is further intensified when Hemingway depicts the fisherman in heroic terms. Gilbert Highet sees in the novel "an epic pattern."<sup>48</sup> Leo Gurko feels that the novel is a Christian parable raised to an epic pitch.<sup>49</sup> Earl Rovit argues that Santiago is a quest hero.<sup>50</sup> And Philip Young affirms that Hemingway's greatest artistic accomplishment within the novel is demonstrating that a simple man such as Santiago can be depicted heroically.<sup>51</sup>

If Hemingway can transform Santiago into an epic hero, then it is easy to see how this exalted protagonist could participate in an Aristotelian tragedy. Robert Gorham Davis calls the novel a "fishing adventure which is tragic, or as close to tragedy as fishing may be."<sup>52</sup> Malcolm Cowley affirms that the work is "classical in spirit," especially in its delineation of Santiago's

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48. "New Books: Some New, Some Perennial." Rev. of The Old Man and the Sea, by Ernest Hemingway. Harper's, 205 (October 1952), 102.

49. Ernest Hemingway and the Pursuit of Heroism (New York: Crowell, 1968), p. 48.

50. Rovit, pp. 88-9.

51. Ernest Hemingway, p. 23.

52. "The Story of a Tragic Fisherman." Rev. of The Old Man and the Sea, by Ernest Hemingway, NYTBR, September 7, 1952, p. 1.

hubris.<sup>53</sup> Philip Young theorizes that the novel is related in spirit to Greek tragedy.<sup>54</sup> And Carlos Baker says that The Old Man and the Sea follows architectonically a tragic pattern.<sup>55</sup>

Although comic, lyric, heroic, and tragic elements have been identified within The Old Man and the Sea, critics have basically attempted to highlight one particular literary mode of expression without focusing enough on the synthesis of these elements and why all four modes exist within this specific novel. J. Donald Adams comes the closest to an analysis of the novel's artistic identity when he says that the work is a tragic story probing "back to literature's roots in epic and folksong."<sup>56</sup> But The Old Man and the Sea is more than a blending of tragic, epic, and lyric motifs. The novel is ultimately a comedy of artistic transformations and illusions. Before demonstrating the full range of Hemingway's comedy, however, it is necessary to discuss the

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53. "Hemingway's Novel Has the Rich Simplicity of a Classic." Rev. of The Old Man and the Sea, by Ernest Hemingway. New York Herald Tribune Book Review, 29 (September 7, 1952), 1.

54. Ernest Hemingway: A Reconsideration, p. 129.

55. "The Marvel Who Must Die," SatR, p. 10.

56. "Speaking of Books." Rev. of The Old Man and the Sea, by Ernest Hemingway. NYTBR, September 21, 1952, p. 2.

element of tragedy, the most hotly debated issue in criticism of the novel.

In reading The Old Man and the Sea, one senses that Hemingway is consciously striving to portray the essence of tragedy. Although Hemingway's novel is essentially "an American tragedy," it is more accurately a tragedy based upon Spanish value systems. That The Old Man and the Sea is actually a tragedy, however, is still being questioned. As the criticism has polarized, Katherine T. Jobes sees the argument as primarily one of critical perspective: those opposed to the novel as tragedy, such as Leslie Fiedler, who represents the Partisan Review temper which favors literary experimentation and radical politics; and those seeing the novel as tragedy, such as Cleanth Brooks, who embodies the humanistic-transcendental tradition.<sup>57</sup>

Those critics who do not see the novel as a tragedy take this position primarily because they feel that Santiago lacks the essential characteristics of a tragic hero. Earl Rovit believes that Santiago's equanimity prevents the novel from moving into "the realm of great tragic poetry."<sup>58</sup> Although Katherine T. Jobes

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57. Introd., Twentieth Century Interpretations of The Old Man and the Sea, p. 13.

58. Rovit, p. 90.



points out that the novel has been compared with Oedipus at Colonus, she feels that The Old Man and the Sea lacks the play's depth because it does not deal as poignantly with psychological struggles, particularly the problems of evil and temptation.<sup>59</sup> Richard B. Hovey also states that the novel is not a tragedy because Santiago does not set out with pride; he does not rebelliously challenge the nature of things; and he develops no fresh awareness of his own nature.<sup>60</sup> According to these critics, The Old Man and the Sea can be dismissed as a tragedy because Santiago is faultily characterized.

Those critics who affirm that the novel is a tragedy, however, discuss not only characterization but also Aristotelian parallels and structural designs. Keiichi Harada presents one of the fullest explanations of the novel as tragedy. In addition to the previously mentioned ideas of Robert Gorham Davis, Malcolm Cowley, Philip Young, and Carlos Baker, Harada discusses Santiago's anagnorisis and the protagonist's discovery of personal heroism through an affinity in pain with the heroic Joe DiMaggio; Harada also sees a Nemesis in the sharks'

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59. Introd., Twentieth Century Interpretations of The Old Man and the Sea, p. 17.

60. "'The Old Man and the Sea': A New Hemingway Hero," Discourse, 9 (Summer 1966), 289.

symbolic pursuit of Santiago, which is similar to the Furies' hunting of Orestes.<sup>61</sup> Linda Wagner also highlights some of the novel's tragic motifs. Although she acknowledges a Classic limitation of characters and the resolution of a single action which results in a catharsis, she then falters when she admits that many of the Aristotelian motifs are only approximations: the novel's nearly single setting and its violation of the unity of time with Santiago's three-day experience at sea.<sup>62</sup> A careful examination of the novel, however, will show that the inconsistencies mentioned by Linda Wagner do not, in reality, violate the tenets of Aristotelian tragedy.

In addition to characterization and Aristotelian parallels, there are structural patterns which suggest tragedy. W. M. Frohock sees in Santiago's series of increasingly difficult struggles a tragic pattern which consecutively intensifies until the audience becomes convinced that the fisherman's opponents ultimately are invincible.<sup>63</sup> Using a more specific approach, Sheldon

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61. "The Marlin and the Shark: A Note on The Old Man and the Sea," in Hemingway and His Critics: An International Anthology, pp. 272-75.

62. "The Poem of Santiago and Manolin," MFS, p. 528.

63. "Mr. Hemingway's Truly Tragic Bones," SWR, pp. 74-5.

Norman Grebstein equates the novel with a three-act drama: the initial act depicts Santiago's potential for tragic stature along with a delineation of the values to be tested; the second act encompasses the central part of the text from the marlin's taking of the bait to Santiago's killing of the marlin; and the third act includes Santiago's return, the destruction of the marlin by the sharks, and the protagonist's reconciliation with the boy.<sup>64</sup>

Although the novel is definitely dramatically structured, I disagree with Grebstein in the perception of that structure. I feel that both the introductory and concluding scenes on land are not parts of the actual tragedy but serve primarily as a frame technique to establish a sense of normality and value, a foil for the transformations that Santiago will experience at sea. Before Santiago begins his quest, Hemingway introduces the concept of aesthetic illusion. In the subsequent scenes at sea, Hemingway, using time as a structuring device, begins the artistic process of transforming Santiago first into a lyric questioner, then an epic hero, and finally a tragic hero. At the center of the

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64. "Hemingway's Craft in *The Old Man and the Sea*," in *The Fifties: Fiction, Poetry, Drama*, ed. Warren French (DeLand, Fla.: Everett/Edwards, 1970), pp. 42-3.

novel, the now exalted Santiago participates, within a clearly defined twenty-four-hour period, in an Aristotelian tragedy. When the tragedy ends, Santiago returns not only to land but also to a sense of normality once more.

From an analysis of criticism written on The Old Man and the Sea, it is evident that the novel has not been seen completely in terms of its artistic design, which is a carefully structured synthesis of comic, lyric, heroic, and tragic modes of literary expression. As an important backdrop for this novel, Hemingway establishes what I have termed "twentieth-century medievalism," so that he can build from a unified fictional microcosm and project tragedy more effectively within the modern world.

CHAPTER FOUR: STRUCTURE AND  
TRANSFORMATION IN THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA

Hemingway, in The Old Man and the Sea, uses a particular setting and character type to suggest a medi-  
evally unified fictional microcosm. Unlike his other  
novels, this Gulf-Stream saga totally excludes people  
from the United States as central characters. Except for  
the fleetingly delineated tourists at the end of the  
novel<sup>1</sup> and the unseen passengers in the airplane which  
flies over Santiago's head "on its course to Miami"  
(OMATS, p. 78), American protagonists of the stature of  
Jake Barnes, Frederic Henry, Harry Morgan, Robert Jordan,  
or Richard Cantwell are conspicuously missing. In their  
place are the Spanish-American protagonist and his  
neophyte Manolin. Santiago is a synthesis of values from  
a Spanish tradition established earlier by characters  
such as Pedro Romero, Anselmo, and El Sordo. With a mata-  
dor's pride, a Christian martyr's saintliness, an epic  
hero's endurance, and a tragic protagonist's grandeur, San-  
tiago typifies the best in a Spanish medieval value system.

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1. The Old Man and the Sea (New York: Scribner's, 1952), pp. 139-40. Future references will be cited parenthetically as OMATS within the text.

Extending throughout the novel is also a medieval sense of harmony and brotherhood. Pier Francesco Paolini feels that the novel projects "a profoundly religious sense, a feeling of the harmony in nature."<sup>2</sup> Within this microcosm, Santiago plays a central role while emanating a sense of brotherhood for all things both animate and inanimate. According to Beongcheon Yu, "Santiago's acceptance of self in the scheme of things is the same spirit that permeated the medieval guild of artisans."<sup>3</sup> As a fisherman who is dependent upon the natural world for his survival, Santiago feels a kinship for the large turtles whose hearts beat for hours after they have been butchered: "But the old man thought, I have such a heart too and my feet and hands are like theirs" (OMATS, pp. 40-1). His empathy for the turtles not only reflects the fisherman's sense of oneness with individual creatures of the sea but also prefigures the butchering that he himself will ultimately experience. Additionally Santiago feels an affinity for the sun, the moon, the stars, and the femininely perceived la mar. But his most intense

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2. "The Hemingway of the Major Works," in Hemingway and His Critics: An International Anthology, p. 140.

3. "The Still Center of Hemingway's World," in Ernest Hemingway: Five Decades of Criticism, ed. Linda Welshimer Wagner (East Lansing: Michigan State U. P., 1974), p. 121.

feelings of brotherhood are for the marlin: "He is my brother" (OMATS, p. 65). The second night after hooking the marlin, Santiago says of the craft of fishing: "It is enough to live on the sea and kill our true brothers" (OMATS, p. 83).

Because Santiago expresses strong feelings of brotherly love for a marlin he subsequently kills, several critics have seen in that relationship a parallel with the story of Cain and Abel. Arvin R. Wells describes the protagonist's nature before his apotheosis: "Before the old fisherman is himself identified by obvious allusion with the crucified Christ, he is identified with Cain and with the crucifiers of Christ."<sup>4</sup> In his analysis of Santiago's tragic stature, Sheldon Norman Grebstein emphasizes the protagonist's essential goodness: "Yet it must be shown that Santiago is a flawed mortal, one of the race of Cain, born to kill his brothers and to suffer."<sup>5</sup> The symbolic fratricide in The Old Man and the Sea might at first suggest a parallel with the story of Cain and Abel, but that interpretation is tonally incorrect. Santiago exhibits none of Cain's bitterness, resentment,

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4. "A Ritual of Transfiguration: The Old Man and the Sea," in Twentieth Century Interpretations of The Old Man and the Sea, p. 59.

5. "Hemingway's Craft in The Old Man and the Sea," in The Fifties: Fiction, Poetry, Drama, p. 47.

indifference, or anger. On the contrary, the fisherman intimately loves, respects, and admires his noble quarry. Consequently, the relationship between Santiago and the marlin more nearly suggests Aristotelian tragedy in which a protagonist kills a brother whom he loves.

But The Old Man and Sea is much more than a modern tragedy. After establishing a tragic feeling in the opening section of the novel, Hemingway then focuses on various literary modes of expression throughout the novel, developing Aristotelian tragedy only within one specific twenty-four-hour period of time. The tragic sense permeates the novel with its emphasis on Santiago's eighty-four luckless days of fishing (OMATS, p. 9), his age, poverty, and aloneness. Santiago's one meaningful human contact is a symbolic father-son relationship with Manolin. Leaving the boy, Santiago goes alone to sea, hooks and kills a giant marlin, battles sharks which strip him of his prize, and then returns to Cuba with only the marlin's skeleton as evidence of his heroic struggle. The novel, however, is much more than a tragic tale about one man's ability to endure pain and suffering. The Old Man and the Sea is a highly structured novel which,



in relation to Lawrence Sargent Hall's system,<sup>6</sup> develops one of the literary modes of expression during each of the novel's days. The incomplete first and fifth days on land function together as one unit, a framing technique which sets in proper perspective Hemingway's comedy of transformations. The other three days, the days of the actual quest at sea, are each complete twenty-four-hour periods with the second day highlighting Santiago's lyricism, the third day focusing on heroism, and the fourth day projecting an Aristotelian tragedy.

Working from this land-water-land pattern, Hemingway, in the novel's first and fifth days, structures an aesthetic comedy of transformations. Although the dominant tone of the novel appears to be tragic, the comic mode is most persuasively articulated in the novel's opening section. In an initial scene, Hemingway uses numerology to portray the comedy of dealing with a closed system. After discussing Santiago's eighty-four fishless days, Manolin implies that in three more days a former pattern could repeat itself: "But remember how you went eighty-seven days without fish and then we caught big ones every day for three weeks" (OMATS, p. 10). Somewhat later, the two talk about participating in a lottery,

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6. A Grammar of Literary Criticism: Essays in Definition of Vocabulary, Concepts, and Aims (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. 1.

Santiago suggesting that they choose eighty-five as the lucky number. When Manolin asks him why they do not choose the eighty-seven of his great record, Santiago responds: "It could not happen twice" (OMATS, p. 19). Yet the same cycle does repeat itself, with a particularly tragic twist when Santiago catches his biggest marlin ever, only to have it stripped clean by the sharks.

Within this structurally closed system, Hemingway, during the novel's first day, explores the relationship between reality and illusion. When Santiago and Manolin discuss Santiago's forthcoming fishing venture, the conversation deals with shared illusions. Santiago says that he will have both fish and rice for dinner and requests that the boy take the cast net to get bait for him. Yet the narrator says: "There was no cast net and the boy remembered when they had sold it. But they went through this fiction every day. There was no pot of yellow rice and fish and the boy knew this too" (OMATS, p. 17). Bickford Sylvester believes that their daily ritual of game playing and imaginings serves "as a bulwark against the loss of resolution threatened by the poverty of their lives," asserting that this fiction of hope helps them attain resolution even when the game is already lost.<sup>7</sup>

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7. "'They Went Through this Fiction Every Day': Informed Illusion in *The Old Man and the Sea*," MFS, 12 (Winter 1966-67), 473-74.

While the initial game playing with Manolin allows Santiago to retain his pride, this gaming also prefigures the central game that will soon be played at sea.

Although the nature of his world is often harsh, Santiago, through games, enters a medieval world of sorts, in which both he and the reader perceive a structure of meaning and value. Jackson J. Benson describes how this game competition, the ritual and its participants, contributes to a sense of microcosmic wholeness:

Game competition has rich metaphorical possibilities which were undoubtedly attractive to a moralist with a tendency to view life through sensation: the game creates a small, independent world, with its own sharply defined structure of physical consequences, its own laws, its own tribal customs and rituals, its own hierarchy of participants, its own set of conflicts and emotions, and its own set of rewards and punishments.<sup>8</sup>

The game motif is particularly important in The Old Man and the Sea. Within this closed system which is much simpler than the life lived outside the ritual, Santiago and Manolin, by means of shared illusions, create a center of meaning for their world; and Santiago, when he competes at sea, does so as a full participant in a tightly knit gaming ritual.

Within this comic framework of closed structure, shared illusions, and games, the novel's first day also

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8. Benson, p. 74.

prefigures three other literary modes of expression: lyricism, heroism, and tragedy. The novel's lyricism relates to the narrative probing of Santiago's consciousness. In the protagonist's search for meaning, Hemingway uses both memory and associational techniques. While drinking with Manolin, Santiago thinks "of many years ago" (OMATS, p. 12). His memory functions primarily to evoke youthful scenes of personal heroism while associational techniques at first relate to current scenes of heroism. Santiago discusses baseball with Manolin, emphasizing Joe DiMaggio's heroic grandeur. When Manolin suggests that the Yankees have other good players, Santiago responds: "Naturally. But he makes the difference" (OMATS, p. 23). Similarly, the novel's lyricism reflects one man's poignant search for meaning and self-actualization, proving indeed that the right individual makes the difference.

During the first day on land, Santiago also foreshadows his own modern-day heroism. In an early passage, the narrator describes Santiago: "Everything about him was old except his eyes and they were the same color as the sea and were cheerful and undefeated" (OMATS, p. 10). This passage about Santiago's indomitability also prefigures the fisherman's physical and spiritual kinship with the sea. In one of Manolin's reminiscences, Santiago

is further elevated as a hero. Describing an event that they shared when the boy was five years old, Manolin remembers how Santiago brought into the boat a much-too-active fish. When Manolin then finds himself thrown into the bow, he feels "the whole boat shiver" and hears Santiago "clubbing him like chopping a tree down and the sweet blood smell all over me" (OMATS, p. 13). In this highly suggestive passage, Manolin is initiated in a blood ritual reminiscent of Ike McCaslin's in "The Bear," but, more importantly, Manolin remembers Santiago's epic strength, perceiving him as a nautical Paul Bunyan. Manolin's exaltation of Santiago continues: "There are many good fishermen and some great ones. But there is only you" (OMATS, p. 25). Santiago appreciatively receives the compliment and then responds: "I hope no fish will come along so great that he will prove us wrong" (OMATS, p. 25). Working from the remembered strength of his former heroism and keeping his present-day hope still undaunted, Santiago makes an epic boast to Manolin: "How would you like to see me bring one in that dressed out over a thousand pounds?" (OMATS, p. 17). Santiago's subsequent experiences at sea will demonstrate how he evolves heroically to fulfill this boast, along with its tragic consequences.

Closely related to the issue of heroism in the novel's prelude is the concept of tragedy. Santiago discusses his recurring dream, a youthful remembrance of seeing lions on an African beach. Speaking to Manolin, Santiago says: "When I was your age I was before the mast on a square rigged ship that ran to Africa and I have seen lions on the beaches in the evening" (OMATS, p. 24). The recurring memory of the lions appears not only in this opening section but also in the final scene of the novel. Exhausted, Santiago sleeps, and the narrator comments: "The old man was dreaming about the lions" (OMATS, p. 140). Initially the lions are symbols of both youthfulness and kingly bearing, motifs which will be developed more fully in relation to Santiago's second day at sea.

But equally important, lions also suggest pride. What Santiago sees on the beach is a pride of lions. Punning with this image, Hemingway concretely reinforces the abstract concept of pride as a major theme in the novel. When the novel opens, Santiago's pride in his former fishing accomplishments gives him the courage to continue in his struggle to earn a living at his craft. The tragic concept of pride, however, is barely explored at this time. Before leaving on his quest, a journey which will finally transform him into a tragic hero, Santiago muses about his current dreams: "He no longer

dreamed of storms, nor women, nor of great occurrences, nor of great fish, nor fights, nor contests of strength, nor of his wife. He only dreamed of places now and of the lions on the beach" (OMATS, p. 27). Although Santiago's dreams do not appear to reflect epic or tragic potential, the seed for such concepts is planted with Hemingway's persistent use of the lion image. Along with this concrete image and pun, the actual flaw of hubris is introduced early in the novel when Santiago in a conversation with the boy announces his intention to go far out (OMATS, p. 14), a decision which ultimately brings tragic consequences.

Although the novel moves clearly toward an Aristotelian tragedy, Santiago will not be transformed into a tragic protagonist until the novel's fourth day. During the novel's second day (the first day of the sea quest), Santiago's experience is predominantly lyrical. He is described as an expert fisherman. In the early morning, Santiago launches far out to sea away from the smell of land. While rowing, he notices the dark terns flying above the sea. Seeing the birds causes him to reflect upon the question of survival on a beautiful but cruel sea: "Why did they make birds so delicate and fine as these sea swallows when the ocean can be so cruel?" (OMATS, p. 32). Though emphasized during the second day,

Santiago's lyric questioning of life's meaning will continue throughout the novel, culminating, after he kills the marlin, in his exploration of the concept of sin, particularly its relation to his calling as a fisherman. During the second day, however, Santiago muses intently on the relationship of luck to personal skill: "Only I have no luck any more. But who knows? Maybe today. Every day is a new day. It is better to be lucky. But I would rather be exact. Then when luck comes you are ready" (OMATS, pp. 35-6).

Even though he questions the justice of some of life's harsher realities, he, nevertheless, is well integrated within a unified cosmos and speaks of his kinship for all things both animate and inanimate. Of particular importance is his lyric perception of the marlin as his brother: "Then he began to pity the great fish that he had hooked" (OMATS, p. 53). Santiago not only empathizes with the fish but also reflects on the choices which led to the marlin's entrapment: "His choice had been to stay in the deep dark water far out beyond all snares and traps and treacheries. My choice was to go there to find him beyond all people" (OMATS, p. 55). From among all of these thought processes, however, one oft-repeated expression is of central thematic importance. After he hooks the marlin, Santiago utters this recurrent lyrical motif:



"I wish I had the boy" (OMATS, p. 49). Santiago's cry is not only a literal cry for companionship and assistance but also a symbolical cry for his own youthful vitality and strength.

Santiago's plea for transcendent strength will be heard during the third day (the second day at sea) when he evolves heroically. As the hooked marlin continues to pull the skiff farther out to sea, Santiago wishes for the boy but then realizes that he does not have Manolin and must therefore exert his own heroism: "You have only yourself . . ." (OMATS, p. 57). Calling upon his inner strength, Santiago issues an epic boast to the marlin: "I love you and respect you very much. But I will kill you dead before this day ends" (OMATS, p. 60). Even though his boast will not be literally fulfilled that day, Santiago will have achieved an epic aura at the end of the day which will enable him subsequently to kill his gigantic antagonist. During this second day at sea, Santiago specifically affirms his indomitability: "But you can stay with him forever" (OMATS, p. 64). His assertion is significantly put to the test when the marlin surfaces for the first time:

The line rose slowly and steadily and then the surface of the ocean bulged ahead of the boat and the fish came out. He came out unendingly and water poured from his sides. He was bright in the sun and his head and back were dark purple

and in the sun the stripes on his sides showed wide and a bright lavender. His sword was as long as a baseball bat and tapered like a rapier and he rose his full length from the water and then re-entered it, smoothly, like a diver and the old man saw the great scythe-blade of his tail go under and the line commenced to race out. (OMATS, p. 69)

In this first glimpse of his antagonist, Santiago perceives the marlin's tremendous size and royal grandeur. Although Santiago continues his lyrical musings, his thoughts now predominantly focus on his own strength and on the marlin's epic size, prefiguring the fisherman's soon-to-be-achieved epic grandeur.

Along with the marlin's gigantic size is a symbolic suggestion of the fish's royal nature. The colors purple and lavender are constantly used to describe the marlin as though it were dressed in royal apparel. Although Joseph Wood Krutch argues that there is a comic incongruity when an author dresses modern characters in robes which outwardly symbolize an inner nobility,<sup>9</sup> there is no comedy in Hemingway's description of the marlin's royal bearing. Using "interlocking imagery" in his delineation of the marlin's sword, Hemingway blends the fish's epic and royal natures: the sword is seen both as a baseball bat which evokes DiMaggio's heroism and as a rapier which suggests royalty. In one intense vision of

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9. Krutch, p. 91.

the marlin, Santiago himself rises in epic stature because he is successfully competing against such a worthy and noble antagonist. When the fish resumes pulling the skiff, Santiago wonders why the fish jumped. He concludes: "He jumped almost as though to show me how big he was" (OMATS, p. 70). Santiago too would like to show the marlin what type of a man he is, but if he did, the fish would see his cramped hand, symbol of mortal frailty. Santiago therefore reasons: "Let him think I am more man than I am and I will be so" (OMATS, p. 71).

At this point, Hemingway uses two major associational techniques in his further exaltation of Santiago. Before the sun sets, Santiago thinks about the Big Leagues, perceiving baseball not only in the Spanish terminology of the Gran [sic] Ligas but also with an epic aura when DiMaggio's bone spur becomes an espuela de hueso. Santiago, with his Spanish-medieval heroism, tries to emulate as closely as possible the great DiMaggio, himself a son of Catholic-Italian parents: "But I must have confidence and I must be worthy of the great DiMaggio who does all things perfectly even with the pain of the bone spur in his heel" (OMATS, p. 75).

After associating Santiago with DiMaggio, Hemingway then consummates Santiago's epic transformation when the fisherman remembers an incident from his youth: arm

wrestling a Negro from Cienfuegos in a tavern at Casa-blanca. Although his opponent was reputedly the strongest man on the docks, Santiago defeats him in a twenty-four-hour match that started Sunday morning and ended Monday morning. From that epic victory, Santiago became known as El Campeón and easily beat the Negro in a return match. After demonstrating a similar superiority over all other opponents, Santiago reflected: "He decided that he could beat anyone if he wanted to badly enough and he decided that it was bad for his right hand for fishing" (OMATS, p. 78). By having Santiago remember this twenty-four-hour heroic incident, Hemingway makes credible, within a similar time frame, Santiago's transformation into an epic personage with the capacity to endure in his struggle with the marlin.

In order to embody the level of heroism necessary to become a believable opponent for such an epic-sized antagonist, Santiago must be aesthetically transformed from a common fisherman to a superman. Leo Gurko, however, opposes what he calls Hemingway's excessive tendency to relate Santiago to Jesus Christ, Joe DiMaggio, lions on the beach, and the Negro from Cienfuegos, arguing that these forced connections inflate Santiago "beyond his

natural frame."<sup>10</sup> Although Hemingway exalts Santiago by means of these associations, the transformation itself is both necessary and credible because of Santiago's past accomplishments and his proven ability to endure more than normal levels of pain. When Santiago achieves a believable level of epic grandeur, he can then participate effectively in an Aristotelian tragedy conducted during his final day at sea. Arvin R. Wells discusses one aspect of this artistic transformation, calling it "a ritual of transfiguration" which allows Santiago to move from simple physical pain to a transcendent state associated first with his heroic ideal DiMaggio and then with the crucified Christ.<sup>11</sup> That Hemingway consciously enlarges his protagonist is a crucial step which must precede the actual Aristotelian tragedy.

With Santiago exalted as a hero, he is now ready on the fourth day (his last day at sea) to become a tragic protagonist. During this final twenty-four-hour conflict with the marlin, Hemingway establishes an Aristotelian tragedy with its unities of time, place, and action. This drama also has a definite beginning, middle, and end.

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10. Ernest Hemingway and the Pursuit of Heroism, p. 235.

11. "A Ritual of Transfiguration: The Old Man and the Sea," in Twentieth Century Interpretations of The Old Man and the Sea, pp. 56, 59.

It begins in medias res early in the morning before sunrise when the fish lurches, pulling Santiago to his face in the skiff. Then with ever-increasing intensity, the marlin jumps more than a dozen times and strains the line almost to the breaking point. After this dramatic beginning, there is a somewhat diminished but sustained tension in the tragedy's middle part while the fish circles and is eventually brought to his death alongside the skiff. The end of the tragedy focuses on the consequences of killing the marlin too far out. To enhance the personal reality of the struggle, Hemingway relates the fish's destruction to Santiago's: When the Mako shark hits the marlin, "it was as though he himself were hit" (OMATS, p. 113).

From this point to the end of his journey, Santiago is associated with Jesus Christ's Passion. In addition to the religious implications of his name, Santiago is symbolically crucified. After his struggle with the Mako shark, the Galanos arrive: "'Ay,' he said aloud. There is no translation for this word and perhaps it is just a noise such as a man might make, involuntarily, feeling the nail go through his hands and into the wood" (OMATS, p. 118). After repeated contests with a seemingly never-ending number of sharks which eventually strip the marlin clean, Santiago finally reaches Cuba, carries the mast of

his boat up the hill to his cabin in imitation of Christ's ascent on Calvary (OMATS, pp. 133-34), and then goes to bed and sleeps in an attitude of crucifixion "face down on the newspapers with his arms out straight and the palms of his hands up" (OMATS, p. 134). These passages relating to Santiago's elevation as a Christ figure have often been taken out of context and emphasized, but if these images are seen in relation to the tragic drama of which they are a consummating part, then their value is not simply to depict Santiago's saintliness but (more importantly) to suggest, particularly to the Spanish-oriented religious mind, the transcendent intensity of the protagonist's tragic experience.

Within the novel's twenty-four-hour Aristotelian tragic structure, Santiago performs his role as a tragic hero. Although Santiago began the novel as a common fisherman dressed in rags, Hemingway (in the introductory scenes) has gradually transformed him until the fisherman now projects the royal nobility of one worthy enough to confront the epic-sized marlin on equal terms. Robert P. Weeks notices this epic transformation: "Here is Aristotle's dictum turned upside down: we are moved not by the fall of a great man but by the elevation to heroism of

what we had taken to be a little man."<sup>12</sup> As Weeks argues, Santiago is transformed from a little man into a hero, but that transformation does not supplant or reverse Aristotle's dictum. Quite the contrary, Santiago's early elevation to heroic stature now permits him to enter the tragedy as "a great man" and to function therein as a tragic hero.

Because he is a tragic hero, Santiago must not be eminently good or bad. While Santiago is most often delineated as a highly sympathetic character, he also has the tragic flaw of hubris, his purposeful desire to go out too far. By intentionally putting himself in that position, he deceives the marlin into accepting the bait. Once he hooks the fish, Santiago's singleminded pursuit of the marlin sets in motion a chain of events which ultimately bring about his destruction.

The tragedy's action involves not only a tragic hero and a noble antagonist but also a perceived blood relationship as well. Aristotle argues that tragic emotions can be evoked most poignantly when the struggle is between those who have familial ties, as in a

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12. Introd., Hemingway: A Collection of Critical Essays, p. 13.



fratricide.<sup>13</sup> In a climactic scene just before harpooning the marlin, Santiago speaks to the royal fish: "Never have I seen a greater, or more beautiful, or a calmer or more noble thing than you, brother" (OMATS, p. 102). Throughout the novel, Santiago talks about his brotherhood with the marlin. Since he feels this blood relationship so intently, the actual killing of the marlin creates the Aristotelian illusion of a protagonist killing his brother, such as in the Polynices-Eteocles confrontation which sets in motion the plot and enhances the thematic conflict in Sophocles' Antigone. The poignancy of the marlin's "death in the afternoon" also evokes the aesthetic beauty of a perfectly executed bullfight finale, focusing once again on the novel's medievalism:

Then the fish came alive, with his death in him, and rose high out of the water showing all his great length and width and all his power and his beauty. He seemed to hang in the air above the old man in the skiff. Then he fell into the water with a crash that sent spray over the old man and over all of the skiff. (OMATS, p. 104)

The killing of the marlin, the aesthetic high point of the novel, is not, however, the tragedy's turning point. After killing the marlin, Santiago continues to exhibit pride: "But I think the great DiMaggio would be

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13. "Poetics," in Critical Theory Since Plato, ed. Hazard Adams (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), p. 56.

proud of me today" (OMATS, p. 107). He also begins to compute how much money the marlin's flesh will bring. While he pridefully contemplates his achievement, the tragedy's peripeteia is achieved one hour later with the coming of the Mako shark. Earl Rovit remarks that the "Mako shark is presented on the same king-sized level as the marlin and the Man-Fishing. . . ." <sup>14</sup> Unlike the scavengers which will follow, the gigantic Mako shark has human characteristics. This shark has teeth which are "shaped like a man's fingers when they are crisped like claws" (OMATS, p. 111). The teeth are not only man-like but also reminiscent of Santiago's cramped left hand. When he has killed the Mako shark, Santiago, though understanding what future sharks will undoubtedly do to the marlin, persists because of his indomitable nature. Reflecting on his own tragic singlemindedness, Santiago affirms: "A man can be destroyed but not defeated" (OMATS, p. 114). Although Santiago reaffirms his manliness, he also experiences an anagnorisis as he reflects on the nature of sin: "You did not kill the fish only to keep alive and to sell for food, he thought. You killed him for pride and because you are a fisherman" (OMATS, p. 116).

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14. Rovit, p. 91.

At this climactic high point of the tragic drama, Hemingway introduces comic relief to moderate the drama's intensity. After killing the Mako shark, Santiago states: "I wish it had been a dream now and that I had never hooked the fish and was alone in bed on the newspapers" (OMATS, p. 114). On the novel's final day, Santiago, in partial fulfillment of this wish, will wake from his bed painfully conscious that the experience with the marlin was not a dream, yet, at the same time, the reader is aware of the dramatic irony. Because the story itself is a work of fiction, the entire action of the novel has also been in reality an aesthetic illusion or a dream. Following the killing of the Mako shark, Santiago philosophizes on that contest, relating it to the issue of sin versus self-defense. Concluding that he has killed the Mako shark well and cleanly, Santiago affirms: "Fishing kills me exactly as it keeps me alive. The boy keeps me alive, he thought. I must not deceive myself too much" (OMATS, p. 117). In this perceptive analysis of his actual existence, Santiago momentarily breaks the illusion of Aristotelian tragedy.

After these comic episodes, Santiago returns to the tragic struggle with the sharks. The Mako shark's human-like confrontation is the first in a series of subsequently dehumanized encounters. With the intensity of

Furies, shovel-nosed sharks pursue the skiff to complete the marlin's mutilation, causing Santiago to cry: "Fish that you were. I am sorry that I went too far out. I ruined us both. But we have killed many sharks, you and I, and ruined many others. How many did you ever kill, old fish? You do not have that spear on your head for nothing" (OMATS, p. 127). Santiago has achieved a recognition of how his flaw has destroyed both himself and the marlin, but his memory of past successes and his heroic vision assuage the present tragedy. Sailing with his stripped trophy, Santiago returns to Cuba while being apotheosized as a crucified Christ, an action which effects a tragic catharsis.

Moving from this tragic drama, Hemingway uses the final or fifth day as a normalizing and moderating influence. In a return to a land-based framing technique, Hemingway appears to have broken the illusion of Santiago's epic and tragic grandeur, yet the presence of the gigantic skeleton and the actuality of the fisherman's line-burned hands focus once again on the fisherman's achievement. The high point of this concluding scene is the episode of the tourists who do not comprehend either the true identity of the skeleton or its significance. With this anecdote, Hemingway not only elevates Santiago once more but also demonstrates how important the individual

perspective is in the perception of heroism and tragedy. The essence, therefore, of The Old Man and the Sea is that Hemingway takes a common fisherman and aesthetically transforms him into a personage capable of demonstrating both heroism and tragedy within the modern world.

Although Santiago's transformation might appear to be simply an illusion, the novel actually brings to light Santiago's inner nature when heroism, tragic grandeur, and saintliness are made both real and concrete. Then in the concluding scene, Hemingway once again recapitulates the four literary modes of expression. Santiago's lyric dream of lions on the beach evokes again both the comic and tragic implications of pride, while Manolin's presence suggests the likeliness of a cyclical perpetuation of Santiago's heroism.

In The Old Man and the Sea, Hemingway integrates comic, lyric, heroic, and tragic modes of expression within specific time frames. Using twentieth-century medievalism as a backdrop, Hemingway shows that the modern world is capable of projecting both heroism and tragedy. In his 1954 Nobel Prize speech, Hemingway said: "Things may not be immediately discernible in what a man writes, and in this sometimes he is fortunate; but eventually they are quite clear and by these and the degree of alchemy

that he possesses he will endure or be forgotten."<sup>15</sup>

Hemingway's correlation of time with literary modes of expression is an important part of the alchemy which makes The Old Man and the Sea an intriguing and enduring work of art.

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15. Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story, p. 528.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Both English and American authors have extensively used medieval motifs in their poetry and prose fiction. In addition to the works already discussed (T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land, Mark Twain's A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, and William Faulkner's A Fable), many other literary creations rely on medieval elements. In Idylls of the King, Alfred Lord Tennyson shapes The Matter of Britain into an epic structure to trace the tragic dissolution of Arthur's chivalric order. Later Edwin Arlington Robinson writes his Arthurian trilogy (Merlin, Lancelot, and Tristram), long narrative poems which intellectually vivify these same Arthurian legends. In prose fiction, James Branch Cabell creates Jurgen, one of a series of novels delineating a poet's romantic quest in the medieval country of Poictesme. Both F. Scott Fitzgerald in The Great Gatsby and Bernard Malamud in The Natural use the quest motif for artistic resonance. And William Faulkner develops the concept of manorialism with Thomas Sutpen's empire building in Absalom, Absalom!. But of all these uses of medievalism, Ernest Hemingway's is the most intriguing because he chooses medieval values,

structures, and motifs to reclaim what would otherwise be for him an almost irredeemable twentieth-century world.

In his major full-length fiction, Hemingway projects a unified microcosm which culminates in the masterful artistry of The Old Man and the Sea. This highly crafted novel is an art form that, in Richard Gilman's terms, is not a historical document itself but ". . . appears to lend itself to history by possessing a history of its own."<sup>1</sup> Established in his earlier novels and perfected in The Old Man and the Sea, this particular artistic version of history embodies what I have termed "twentieth-century medievalism," wherein Hemingway creates the illusion that events and characters in his modern-world settings somehow seem to break free from this technological world to embrace the values espoused during the Middle Ages: the perception of self as a well-integrated member of a coherently planned universe, particularly through masculine effort in the gaming rituals of the bullfight and other intensely climactic individual sports; the achievement of a male-female synthesis (with its religious symbolism and analogies) through the traditions of romantic and courtly love; and the concept

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1. The Confusion of Realms (New York: Random House, 1963), p. 157.



of Roman Catholic unity, an all-encompassing metaphor for microcosmic wholeness. As Gilman would argue, Hemingway's artistic repudiation of certain elements within the twentieth century, along with an acceptance of specific medieval values for his fictional world, frees the artist from a particular history, allowing him to synthesize diverse themes and to invent a fictional microcosm that has not existed before.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, The Old Man and the Sea yokes together medievalism and modernism, thereby creating a fundamentally new fictional microcosm.

From this unified twentieth-century medieval base, Hemingway constructs a fictional canon which reflects and amplifies his own personal heroism. After he was early acknowledged for his personal war-time heroism, Hemingway then selectively transferred his romanticized and idealized image into fiction. As in the case of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt, the Hemingway myth had its origin in a factual occurrence. On July 8, 1918, Hemingway became the first American to be wounded on the Italian front during World War I. Immediately after being wounded, Hemingway performed a heroic act by carrying another injured person to safety. Therefore, years before Hemingway had published any major

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2. Gilman, pp. 158-59.

fiction, he had already dramatized himself and was now ready to project that image into fiction. Richard Poirier, in his comparison of Ernest Hemingway and Norman Mailer, emphasizes Hemingway's performing artistry. Working from Mailer's statement that an artist's first work is to shape his own personality before it appears in fiction, Poirier then states:

Hemingway is a writer who has done this shaping with such authority, has given such accent and prominence to the "first art work" which is himself that he can count on getting the kind of attention for subsequent art works--for his books, that is--that Mailer would like for his own.<sup>3</sup>

Hemingway used the aura of his wartime heroism to engender both public and critical interest in his first important fiction: In Our Time, The Sun Also Rises, and A Farewell to Arms. Of the three, the publication of The Sun Also Rises was the most fully planned to mold both public and critical opinion. In 1922 when John Peale Bishop first met Hemingway in Paris, the critic could then say of Hemingway that there was no emerging legend, but Hemingway, like Lord Byron, was subtly dictating emotions to the contemporary youth who had been in school during World War I and who were infatuated with Hemingway's personal heroism. Bishop said of this generation: "It

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3. The Performing Self (New York: Oxford U. P., 1971), pp. 103-04.

was they who accepted the Hemingway legend and by their acceptance gave it a reality it had not had."<sup>4</sup> The public embracing of the myth, however, was carefully orchestrated. Two years after Bishop's appraisal (and still two years before the publication of The Sun Also Rises), Malcolm Cowley said that "the myth of the Lost Generation" had already been fabricated by Hemingway's friends who had been contributing influential essays to the transatlantic review.<sup>5</sup> This creation of a carefully planned historical consciousness which an artist helps formulate is in the Byronic tradition with F. Scott Fitzgerald's "Jazz Age" as another example.

Hemingway and his associates expressed a particular aspect of post-war disillusionment and established the philosophical groundwork for The Sun Also Rises. Then Hemingway made concrete those assumptions. Once the novel had been published, the performing artist exerted an even stronger popular influence: "The Hemingway male--tough, battered, stoic, laconic, making a style out of despair--began to appear in the better-class bars."<sup>6</sup>

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4. "Homage to Hemingway," NR, 89 (November 11, 1936), 39.

5. Exile's Return: A Narrative of Ideas (New York: Norton, 1934), p. 107.

6. Burgess, p. 49.

Because the image of the Hemingway male became thoroughly entrenched in the public's consciousness, the novel molded contemporary behavior and speech patterns.

It was the publication of A Farewell to Arms, however, which solidified the emerging myth. According to Philip Young, Hemingway, through the use of masks, developed both his heroic and public personas which synergetically produced the mythical or legendary Hemingway.<sup>7</sup> With a decidedly critical tone, Anthony Burgess presents an analysis of Hemingway's personal transformation:

He had to turn himself into a Homeric myth, which meant posing and lying, treating life as fiction, and while some of his lies are transparent (like the one about sleeping with Mata Hari) it is difficult to sort out the self-made legend from a reality less glamorous, though still glamorous enough. We know Hemingway the man not from letters and diaries but from tales told by himself in bars, on shipboard, on safari, tales in their turn retailed by others, reminiscences which truckle to the legend and are--growing all the time less reliable as their subject recedes into history--still coming in.<sup>8</sup>

Simultaneously, as Michael S. Reynolds points out, early reviews of A Farewell to Arms focus on the already firmly established misconceptions relating to Hemingway as an artist: "He was anti-intellectual; he had learned too much from Gertrude Stein; he was an autobiographic writer;

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7. Ernest Hemingway: A Reconsideration, pp. 147-48.

8. Burgess, p. 5.

he wrote well naturally, but did not understand the process; he was unread. . . ."9 As the critics promulgated "the dumb-ox theory," so too did Hemingway the artist transform the man, producing in his place the Hemingway myth which, as an art object, supplanted the purely mortal personage.

Hemingway's artistic transformation of his own personality was also publicized by his literary associates and reflected in the musings of his fictional protagonists. John Peale Bishop narrated an anecdote which illustrates a significant truth about the performing Hemingway:

The story that Ezra Pound told me in the taxicab was that Ernest Hemingway, at nineteen, had been dead and brought to life again. He had lain four days under the débris of the trench, which is one day longer underground than Lazarus. I do not doubt Pound's word, but I have never asked Hemingway to substantiate the story and it is not in his writings, as almost everything else from his youth is. Even if it should not conform to fact, it would still be true.<sup>10</sup>

Complementing Bishop's artistic truth about Hemingway are fictional examples which also comment on the transformation of reality. Jake Barnes expresses an aesthetic theory which suggests that the artist's perception easily

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9. Hemingway's First War: The Making of A Farewell to Arms (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton U. P., 1976), p. 82.

10. "The Missing All," in Ernest Hemingway: The Man and His Work, p. 302.

blurs distinctions between real and fictional realms of experience. Jake, after a drinking party in Pamplona, reads Turgenieff's "A Sportsman's Sketches": "I knew that now, reading it in the oversensitized state of my mind after much too much brandy, I would remember it somewhere, and afterward it would seem as though it had really happened to me. I would always have it" (SAR, p. 154).

The issue of what reality should be instead of what it actually is figures predominantly in A Farewell to Arms. After being wounded, Frederic Henry went to the Ospedale Maggiore for x-rays, and the doctor asked him how many Austrians he had killed: "I had not killed any but I was anxious to please--and I said I had killed plenty" (FTA, p. 101).

One of Hemingway's most debated activities, his participation in the critical arguments relating to himself and his fiction, could be viewed as another attempt to blur the distinctions between fiction and reality, to project contradictory images of himself, and to stimulate further criticism of his fiction. His smashing of a vase in reaction to reading Wyndham Lewis's "dumb-ox theory," his scuffling with Max Eastman over the issues of bullfighting and manliness, his caustic rebuttal of Clifton Fadiman's assertion that Hemingway had worn out

his themes and should go on to something else, and his seemingly vehement opposition to the publication of Philip Young's critical study may at first appear to be the obtuse reactions of a highly defensive author. Might these actions be, however, carefully staged to focus critical attention on himself and his work? I disagree with Carlos Baker when he says of Hemingway that it was "plainly a strategic error on his part to project himself so fiercely into the literary warfare of that period."<sup>11</sup> If, as Richard Poirier argues, an artist is a performer who first of all shapes his own personality and then fictionalizes it, the conscious attempt of an artist such as Hemingway to keep himself continually in the news is not a strategic error but is a successful ploy to focus attention on himself and his work.

Much of the criticism that emerged from the Hemingway-critics debates now is either irrelevant or inaccurate, but from those confrontations also came thoughtful and probing analyses of his work. Malcolm Cowley, Philip Young, Carlos Baker and Charles Fenton helped establish a critical base which has been subsequently amplified and qualified by the second-generation critical approaches of Jackson J. Benson, Sheldon Norman

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11. Hemingway: The Writer as Artist, p. 46.

Grebstein, and Delbert E. Wylder. When the legal restrictions are removed relating to the scholarly use of the author's letters, manuscripts, and other documents, textual criticism, a major but relatively untouched area in Hemingway criticism, can then be pursued more intently. With access to these presently restricted materials, scholars will ultimately be able to probe in greater detail many of the mysteries that still cling to Hemingway the man and the artist.



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