

THE STILL POINT CONCEPT  
IN  
FOUR MAJOR NOVELS OF  
ERNEST HEMINGWAY

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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IN  
FOUR MAJOR NOVELS OF  
ERNEST HEMINGWAY

by

Edward Ross Carpenter

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts,  
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E. R. C.

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T.S. Eliot once said that 'human kind / Cannot bear very much reality,'<sup>1</sup> and much of his writings was an attempt to portray what this reality was. He wrote frequently about the 'still point of the turning world'<sup>2</sup> where the 'real' dance was, as if he wanted to portray in verse the "real reality", to get at the inner core of being where time and movement stood still, and where one was conscious of only the most intense moments of awareness. Hemingway, too, it will be shown, was preoccupied with this special brand of reality, and because of this it is not difficult to place him as being truly contemporary, not only in the sense that he has been called an unquestionable member of the lost American generation who had sought refuge on the European continent from their hard brittle literary environment at home, but because he consistently and successfully attempted to grasp in his writings what Yeats termed the 'moment of incarnation,' Virginia Woolf 'the moment of being,' Eliot the 'moment of moments,' and James 'the suddenly determined absolute of perception.' This, in a sense, is what makes Hemingway truly contemporary, for the majority of great twentieth century writers, with the possible exception of James Joyce, have been concerned with this particular concept in one way or another. Since the purpose of this paper

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<sup>1</sup>T.S. Eliot, Four Quartets, Faber and Faber, London, 1959, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

is to trace as far as possible in Hemingway's four major novels his vision of the world and his handling of the 'still moment,' Chapter 1 will be devoted mainly to a short appraisal of the 'still point concept' as it was handled by other writers both before and during Hemingway's literary career, in order to set the term in perspective and to establish a base from which the remainder of the paper will grow to encompass Hemingway's own handling of the concept. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 will concentrate chiefly on the harsh chaotic world which Hemingway portrayed in some of his short stories, The Sun Also Rises, and A Farewell to Arms. The remaining chapters will include a direct discussion of his handling of the 'still moment' in For Whom the Bell Tolls, and The Old Man and the Sea, as a means of coming to terms with an increasingly senseless world.

CHAPTER ONE

IN PERSPECTIVE -

The hint half guessed, the gift half  
understood, is Incarnation.  
Here the impossible union  
Of spheres of existence is actual,  
Here the past and future  
Are conquered, and reconciled,  
Where action were otherwise movement  
Of that which is only moved  
And has in it no source of movement-  
Driven by daemonic, chthonic  
Powers.

(T.S. Eliot, Four Quartets)

For centuries now, ever since man became aware of his dualistic nature - of self and selflessness, of the inner and outer consciousness - he has been faced with a dichotomy of desires; the desire to enhance his own individuality and to develop it, and the desire to merge it with something greater and more pervasive outside himself. Frequently, this has resulted in an attempt to harmonize his personality with nature and with other individuals, to lose his personality altogether into a far greater outside force, or to withdraw himself entirely into himself. The problem is not new to the twentieth century, although twentieth century poets and novelists have been overwhelmingly preoccupied with the idea. In much of John Donne's love poetry we are not unaware of an attempt by the poet to fuse himself with another being, so that out of a seemingly divine relationship Donne is able to extract a kind of immortality. Quite often, there is a union of bodies, a seeming union of souls, emotion and mental concepts, so that, as Donne says, 'If our two loves be one or thou and I / Love so alike / Then none can slacken, none can die.'

Browning, too, attempted quite successfully to describe this peculiar kind of relationship in many of his poems, and especially in By the Fireside, where the speaker and his lover, as they sit by the fireside and recall past experiences on the Italian hillsides, become aware of a momentarily instantaneous togetherness, as if one were fused into the other.

Passions are supremely intense, thoughts can hardly be packed into this one 'narrow act', and fancies can hardly be fully expressed through the medium of language. Past and present merge, and for a brief moment time stands still. This is the infinite moment, captured briefly in a short, compact poem. The contemplation of nature by the two lovers (in this case, presumably Browning and his wife) engenders this new deeper relationship between the two; and that part of the individual personality, the inner self, is thus projected outwards to share in a larger, somewhat mystical force.

But twentieth century writers have been more concerned with the expression of this 'absolute moment' than writers of any other century, and the problem has been variously put. D. H. Lawrence has frequently defined the basic conflict as a split between the inner and outer consciousness, a desire at one time to fuse the self with a greater force outside, and at another time to withdraw and detach oneself from any significant community of being. He speaks of 'the love that makes me join and fuse toward a universal oneness' and 'the hate that makes me detach myself.'<sup>1</sup> Consequently, Lawrence reiterates again and again in his fiction the necessity to harmonize human relationships with the pulses and rhythms of nature, for only in such a harmony can these relationships embody the greatest significance and meaning.

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<sup>1</sup>Phoenix: The Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence, ed. by Edward MacDonal, pp. 678, 680, 694.

It is not difficult to posit reasons for the obvious twentieth century concern for the necessity to find some thread of belief around which one could define one's existence, dispose of the aloneness, and rebut the decadence in values and morals which the first half of the twentieth century had experienced. The first world war and the depression which followed, along with the catastrophic blow which contemporary science had already dealt to conventional religion, had changed man's faith in a purposively unified universe to general despair and distrust; hence, the bulk of 'wasteland' literature which has flooded the pages of literary journals and other scholarly publications. Ezra Pound referred to the Western World as an 'old bitch gone in the teeth' and Stephen Spender posed the same problem, though not so harshly as Pound perhaps, when he said that the contemporary writer has to contend with 'the experience of an all-prevading present, which is a world without belief.'<sup>2</sup> Much twentieth century literature, then, is an attempt to escape from and find an answer to the modern wasteland.

For T. S. Eliot this resulted in the 'still point' concept which is a potent theme running throughout most of his work and coming to a kind of head, as it were, in the Four Quartets. Set in a Christian framework, the still point, once it is attained, is equivalent to union with God, and

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<sup>2</sup>S. Spender, The Destructive Element: A Study of Modern Writers and Beliefs, p. 14.

takes a whole lifetime of spiritual preparation to be fully realized. Throughout one's lifetime one may experience momentary union with the still point. This happens sometimes in moments of great ecstasy when one is acutely alert; but such experiences, without the proper lifelong spiritual preparation, are fleeting, and the still point is therefore instantaneous and momentary. As the term suggests it is a point of complete stillness where opposites meet, movements cease, past and present fuse, time and eternity meet. This, according to Eliot, is where complete reality and being are attained.

This briefly is Eliot's concept of the still point, and though the concept itself is not new his handling of it is unique. Accordingly, one cannot expect to find in other writers the same manipulation of the term. Instead, what one should look for in other writers who are philosophically or religiously inclined - like Virginia Woolf, W. B. Yeats, Lawrence, Henry James, and Hemingway - is an attempt to set up a system or to identify themselves with a similar center, so as to achieve a design of personality and a suitable vision of the world like that which the still point embodies.

Hence, Yeats, because of the general decay of religious values and morals in Ireland and because of the obvious wantonness of the materially-inclined middle class, built a system depending heavily on myth, tradition, and history, which, together with some distinctive theories regarding art,

personality, and individual self-expression, gradually developed into what has come to be known as the distinctive 'Yeatsian vision.' His development of a system was his personal protest against an increasingly disjointed, chaotic world, and a personal solution to the problems of coherence and unity which the contemporary artist had to face. Yeats saw the problem clearly:

Somewhere about 1450, though later in some parts of Europe by a hundred years or so, and in some earlier, men attained a personality in great numbers, a Unity of Being, and became like a perfectly proportioned human body; and as men so fashioned held places of power.... their nations had it too, prince and ploughman sharing that thought and feeling .... Then the scattering came, the seeding of the poppy, bursting of the pea-pod, and for a short time personality seemed the stronger for it.<sup>3</sup>

This solid world picture did not last long, however, and society and the individual personality soon, under pressures of disintegration, became disjointed and fragmented. Again Yeats stated the problem clearly in his Autobiography.

Doubtless because fragments broke into even smaller fragments we saw one another in the light of bitter comedy, and in the arts, where now one technical element reigned and now another, generation hated generation, and accomplished beauty was snatched away when it had most engaged our affections. One thing I do not foresee, not having the courage of my own thought; the growing murderousness of the world.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>W. B. Yeats, Autobiographies: Reveries over Childhood and Youth, and the Trembling of the Veil, 1927, p. 359.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 238.

It was therefore necessary to battle this 'murderousness of the world' with a sound substitute, a system steeped firmly in tradition, ritual, and pattern, and involving a wide reliance on a greater outside force evoked through dreams and mysticism. Like Eliot, who greatly admired Yeats and saw him as one 'of those few whose history is the history of our own time, who are part of the consciousness of their age, which cannot be understood without them,'<sup>5</sup> Yeats was intensely concerned with grasping and presenting the still moment. He himself termed it the 'moment of incarnation', and it was the artist's task, among other things, to capture this transitory aesthetic moment in his art. Accordingly, some of his greatest poems like The Tower, Byzantium, and Sailing to Byzantium, are a direct attempt to portray this 'Unity of Being,' intense feeling, and heightened awareness which one experiences occasionally during one's lifetime. Such moments are hard to come by, and, because of their very nature, they are likewise difficult to portray in art; and it is not surprising that both Eliot and Yeats, in attempting to grasp and present such an intangible thing, are perhaps the two most difficult poets of the twentieth century. When a 'writer is driven far out past where he can go,'<sup>6</sup> it is reasonable to expect an elaborate use of symbol, irony, metaphor, and paradox, which usually result in a closely-knit, tightly-packed work of art.

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<sup>5</sup>J. Hone, W. B. Yeats: 1865-1939, p. 514.

<sup>6</sup>E. Hemingway's speech for the acceptance of the Nobel Prize; quoted by Carlos Baker in Hemingway: The Writer as Artist, p. 339.

However, poets alone do not hold the unique position of dealing with such a delicate, indefinite concept, for novelists too have been overwhelmingly preoccupied with the term and its ramifications. Viewing her age as one of doubt, conflict, and uncertainty, 'when we are not fast anchored where we are,'<sup>7</sup> and 'where the modern mind, wishing always to verify its emotions, has lost the power of accepting what it really is,'<sup>8</sup> Virginia Woolf sought an answer in novels written almost like poetry. 'Science and religion,' she felt, 'have between them destroyed belief,' and 'all bands of union seem broken;'<sup>9</sup> and her works, consequently, abound with questions: Who am I? What am I? What is truth? What is reality? Her writings, therefore, are essentially a quest, a study of reality as it is experienced in certain moments of perception. Her 'moment of reality' is metaphysically close to Eliot's ecstatic moment in that it demands acute mental and emotional awareness. She puts the problem thus:

What is meant by reality? It would seem to be something very erratic, very undependable—now to be found in a dusty road, now in a scrap of newspaper in the street, now in a daffodil in the sun. It lights up a group in a room and stamps some casual saying. It overwhelms one walking home beneath the stars and makes the silent world more real than the world of speech — and then there it is again in an omnibus in the uproar of Piccadilly. Sometimes, too, it seems to dwell in shapes too far away for us to discern what their nature is. But whatever it touches it fixes and makes permanent.

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<sup>7</sup>"The Narrow Bridge of Art," Granite and Rainbow, ed. Leonard Woolf, p. 11.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

That is what remains over when the skin of the day has been cast into the hedge; that is what is left of our past times and of our loves and hates. Now the writer, as I think, has the chance to live more than other people in the presence of this reality. It is his business to find it and collect it and communicate it to the rest of us.<sup>10</sup>

Much of her life was spent doing just that. She developed a scheme, a pattern, a vision of the world in which almost nothing except inanimate things had any real permanence or fixity. No-one, she believed, could really know another person fully and completely, for the human personality and character are constantly changing from moment to moment; and, because she recognized this, she deliberately made her characters vague and somewhat inscrutable in order that they might be difficult to really know or assess. In fact, Virginia Woolf has been criticized at times for creating characters who have a curious quality of weightlessness, as if there were no absolute traits by which one could delineate them. E. M. Forster once said that 'she could seldom so portray a character that it was remembered afterwards on its own account.'<sup>11</sup> But this is exactly what Virginia Woolf wishes to do in her fiction. She does not allow her characters to portray any definite form because she does not believe there is any definite form which one can take on for any length of time. Except inanimate things,

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<sup>10</sup>V. Woolf, A Room of One's Own, 1929, pp. 191-192.

<sup>11</sup>E. M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, p. 21.

everything partakes of a kind of Heraclitean flux, and, because of this, the personal self is always changing, merging with, and withdrawing from other personal selves to make it what it is at the moment. This is the central problem presented in The Waves, one of her most poetically written novels. Basically, the novel is an attempt to show that character cannot be adequately defined, that other people cannot really be known, and that it is impossible, even, for one to know oneself fully and completely. Six characters in the novel attempt to make something out of their relationships, to know themselves and others, and in doing this all of them center themselves around a past friend, Percival, who has since died in India. The most they can hope for, however, is partial knowledge about themselves and others, which comes only in moments of intense awareness, and there is no guarantee that this knowledge will be valid and reliable for future relationships.

The concept, that one can only know oneself or others at particular moments in life, is explicitly portrayed in To a Lighthouse when Mrs. Ramsey observes:

One after another, she, Lily, Augustus Carmichael, must feel, our apparitions, the things you know us by, are simply childish. Beneath it is all dark, it is all spreading, and it is unfathomably deep; but now and again we rise to the surface and that is what you know us by.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>v. Woolf, To The Lighthouse, p. 96.

Significantly, like Eliot, and to a lesser extent like Yeats, Virginia Woolf believed in the continuity of consciousness, as if the collective personality of humanity at the moment were the sum total of all that had gone before. Past and present are continuous, and what a writer is at the moment<sup>is</sup> determined largely by what has gone before. This is a pervasive theme of A Room of One's Own:

Without those forerunners (early female diarists and letter writers), Jane Austen and the Brontës and George Eliot could no more have written than Shakespeare could have written without Marlowe, or Marlowe without Chaucer, or Chaucer without those forgotten poets who paved the ways and tamed the natural savagery of the tongue. For masterpieces are not single and solitary births; they are the outcome of many years of thinking in common, of thinking by the body of people, so that the mass is behind the single voice.<sup>13</sup>

Like Eliot, and to a certain extent like Hemingway in The Green Hills of Africa, and For Whom the Bell Tolls, she believes that the past is eternally present.<sup>14</sup> This is what Bernard means in The Waves when he speaks of the 'eternal renewal, the incessant rise and fall and fall and rise again.'<sup>15</sup> Likewise, this is what Elinor means in The Years

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<sup>13</sup>v. Woolf, A Room of One's Own, p. 113.

<sup>14</sup>This concept is a pervasive theme running throughout For Whom the Bell Tolls, and comes up most forcefully in Robert Jordan's 'feelings' toward Maria, his 'seventy-two hour lover,' and in his thoughts about his past, especially his relationship with his father and grand-father. See also The Green Hills of Africa, pp. 149-150.

<sup>15</sup>v. Woolf, The Waves, p. 288.

when she asks the seeming ambiguous question: 'Does everything then come over again a little differently?'<sup>16</sup> The answer is yes.

However, what is really significant in nearly all of her writings is her handling of the absolute instant, or, what she called 'the moment of reality.' Unlike Eliot, who advocated that the moment could only be attained in a Christian religious framework and could only be kept after long spiritual preparation, Virginia Woolf believed, because of the transitory nature of the human personality and the general flux of all living things, that the moment could never be kept for any length of time. For her it was indeed a moment in the fullest sense of that word, and it could occur in any place at any time and for no apparent reason. It will be seen that for Hemingway, like Eliot, the attainment of the moment requires great preparation, though not the spiritual kind which Eliot prescribed. For Woolf there need not be any special preparation, but if one is to achieve understanding - if one is to obtain a glimpse of reality - he must be able to escape from self, and merge at least momentarily with other selves or with things in nature. In The Captain's Deathbed and Other Essays she describes what she calls the moment of 'shock' between the 'hour of midnight and dawn':

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<sup>16</sup>V. Woolf, The Years, p. 369.

Something definitely happens. The garden, the butterflies, the morning sounds, trees, apples, human voices have changed, emerged, stated themselves. As with a rod of light order has been imposed upon tumult; form upon chaos...<sup>17</sup>

Reality for her seems to be an abstract quality existing outside the self; and because of this it cannot be adequately defined. But by restricting it to a single moment she could best avoid making it a number of things and more easily describe when and where it occurred.

Try to recall the look of London seen very early, perhaps very young, from a cab window on the way to Victoria. Everywhere there is the same intensity, as if the moment instead of moving lay suddenly still and fixed the passers-by in their most transient aspects eternally. They do not know how important they have become. If they did, perhaps they would cease to buy newspapers and scrub doorsteps. But we who are about to leave them feel all the more moved that they should continue to do all these homely things on the brink of that precipice - our departure.<sup>18</sup>

In nearly all of her writings there is ample evidence of her deep concern for the depiction of the single important moment. Like Eliot, she suggests that the moment of intensity produces a kind of still point in the flux and flow of time. In Mrs. Dalloway Clarissa experiences such moments which are nearly always initiated by her contacts with women. Peter Walsh has his moments too, but they are initiated by the recollection of his meetings with Clarissa. For him they are moments

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<sup>17</sup>V. Woolf, The Captain's Deathbed and Other Essays, ed., Leonard Woolf, p. 169.

<sup>18</sup>The Moment and Other Essays, ed. Leonard Woolf, p. 230.

which almost 'took one's breath away...there coming to him by the pillar-box opposite the British Museum one of them, a moment, in which things come together; this ambulance; and life and death.'<sup>19</sup> Similar intense moments of reality are experienced by Mrs. Ramsey and Lily Briscoe in To a Lighthouse, by Orlando in Orlando, and to a lesser extent by Bernard in The Waves.

From this introductory then there emerges a basic line of thought - three points on which a number of writers seem to agree fairly consistently. Firstly, a number of writers recognize the increasingly chaotic state of the world and the need to substitute something for the community of personality which had been lost especially after the first world war. The mind of the modern man as Virginia Woolf puts it

is full of monstrous, hybrid, unmanageable emotions, That the age of the earth is 3,000,000,000 years; that human life lasts but a second; that the capacity of the human mind is nevertheless boundless; that life is infinitely beautiful yet repulsive; that one's fellow creatures are adorable yet disgusting; that science and religion between them have destroyed belief; that all bonds of union seem broken, yet some control must exist - it is this atmosphere of doubt and uncertainty that forces one to write; it is in this same atmosphere that writers have now to create.<sup>20</sup>

Under such conditions then, modern writers were forced, by the necessity to re-define reality and to link it to something greater than themselves, to search for new concepts

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<sup>19</sup>V. Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway, p. 230.

<sup>20</sup>V. Woolf, 'The Narrow Bridge of Art,' Op. Cit., p. 12.

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<sup>19</sup>v. Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway, p. 230.

<sup>20</sup>v. Woolf, 'The Narrow Bridge of Art,' Op. Cit., p. 12.

## CHAPTER TWO

### BATTLE WITH CHAOS

Our nada who art in nada, nada be  
thy name, thy kingdom nada, thy will  
be nada in nada as it is in nada.  
Give us this nada our daily nada  
and nada us our nada as we nada our  
nadas and nada us not into nada but  
deliver us from nada: hail nothing  
full of nothing, nothing is with thee.

(E. Hemingway, A Clean  
Well-Lighted Place).

In The Sun Also Rises Jake Barnes says that one must somehow come to grips with an extremely complicated world, even though it is difficult and perhaps impossible to cling to one sound philosophy which will hold true throughout one's lifetime. 'Enjoying living was learning to get your money's worth and knowing when you had it.' This, he says, 'seemed like a good philosophy,' but 'in five years it will seem just as silly as all the other fine philosophies I've had.'<sup>1</sup> Later he thinks that perhaps this was not completely true:

Perhaps as you went along you did learn something. I did not care what it was all about. All I wanted to know was how to live in it. Maybe if you found out how to live in it you learned from that what it was all about.<sup>2</sup>

'How to live in it,' or, broadly speaking, survival in a world which seems to be at war with an individual in nearly every conceivable way, is a pervasive theme in a number of Hemingway's novels. Because of this there have evolved among critics phrases and terms which have become clichés in the annals of literary criticism about Hemingway's art. Much has been written about the 'Hemingway Code', the 'Pragmatic Code', the 'hard-boiled hero'; the 'Hemingway type of man' has become nearly as popular as the writer himself, and there is no doubt that Hemingway considered

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<sup>1</sup>E. Hemingway, The Sun Also Rises, p. 153.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 153.

life to be a kind of arena in which men fought courageously and enduringly to survive. Life, in a way, was a perpetual struggle against a universe whose essential quality was one of irrational destruction, of violence without meaning, of isolation. Few of Hemingway's characters, if any, conform to the mores and values of 'normal society;' and it is just so because the world which he attempts to present is nearly always that of the emotionally wounded, the mentally troubled, as if happy domestic life were to be evaded at all costs. Even the outwardly 'calm life' of Oak Park, Hemingway's birthplace, offered its frightening moments of death, violence, and family strife, and for Hemingway they were moments which he would never forget.

The most important of these incidents are really the theme of In Our Time, a collection of fourteen stories which have been so fully and thoroughly treated by both Philip Young and Carlos Baker<sup>3</sup> that a casual summary will suffice here. The stories are mainly about violence and evil in contemporary life (as the title suggests), and to this the chief protagonist, Nick Adams, is initiated. 'Indian Camp' is fairly representative. What we have to remember here is Nick's reaction to pain, death, and violence. The story is about Nick's father, a doctor, who travels to an Indian village and delivers a baby by Caesarean section with a knife and an anesthetic. As if this

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<sup>3</sup>Both are authoritative critics on Hemingway.

were not enough for a young boy to witness, Nick is further shown a gruesome death. The Indian woman's husband, unable to bear the screams from his suffering wife, nearly severs his head with a razor.

"Take Nick out of the shanty, George," the doctor said.

There was no need of that. Nick, standing in the door of the kitchen, had a good view of the upper bunk where his father, the lamp in one hand, tipped the Indian's head back.<sup>4</sup>

This is 'Nick's initiation to pain, and to the violence of birth and death.'<sup>5</sup>

'A Soldier's Home,' is another story of In Our Time which gives a moving insight into the world which Hemingway wished to depict. Krebs returns home to an Alabama town of stability and fixed values after World War One. 'But the world they were in', he thinks, 'was not the world he was in.' Actually, the town had changed very little; only the girls, it seemed, were different, for they had grown up. What had really changed was Krebs himself. When his mother tells him that 'God has some work for everyone to do. There can be no idle hands in His Kingdom,' his answer is, significantly, 'I'm not in His Kingdom.'<sup>6</sup> Krebs, in fact, has seen much of this world which is not in His Kingdom. He has gone through a war which shattered men's beliefs, where

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<sup>4</sup>E. Hemingway, In Our Time, p. 20.

<sup>5</sup>P. Young, Op. Cit., p. 32.

<sup>6</sup>E. Hemingway, In Our Time, p. 98.

the conventional beliefs and morals hardly seemed fitting, from which men emerged as emotional and physical wrecks, and from which men sometimes did not emerge at all. The world for Krebs is a harsh place.

Hemingway, like Eliot and Woolf, believed that the world was basically unpleasant, and his art is, essentially, an elaborate record of defenses and ways of survival in a world which is always dangerous and destructive.

So much has been written about Hemingway's life that to write more would be merely repetitious. His gambling, fishing, hunting, drinking, and fighting are all well known; and yet there is one important incident in his life which has influenced both the man and his writing ever since. This occurred while he was an ambulance driver on the Italian front. Itching to fight, but rejected by the regular armed forces because of an eye injury, Hemingway had enlisted as an ambulance driver. However, after a few weeks in the combat zone he was mutilated by a stray shell, which was to leave scars not only on his body but on his mind and spirit as well. It was, in many ways, an absurd wound, one that had little to do with manly action or soldiering at all. For at the time he was wounded he had been engaged in an activity which, under the circumstances, was almost ludicrous. The 'hell-raising' Hemingway had been wounded, indeed nearly killed, while handing out chocolates to the Italian soldiers.

According to Hemingway's own confirmation, and, as he was later to write about it in A Farewell to Arms, and Across the River, and into the Trees, he would never forget the impact of that terrible experience. It was not so much the largeness of the wound that he encountered, or the severity of the pain; rather, it was the manner in which the wound was inflicted - a helpless, passive receiving of a catastrophic blow from a seemingly invisible piece of machinery dealing out death and destruction. Such a situation, where a man unknowingly received a final blow instead of giving one, threatened more than life. It threatened to eliminate forever one's manhood, to take away that very thing which Hemingway admired so much in man. Consequently, Hemingway's life and work were to be devoted to exploring and finding those areas of existence in which men could take the initiative from pain and death by surrounding them with form and ritual, and manly endurance.

There is, then, a definite conflict between man and the world, one which is not easily resolved. It is explicitly present in A Farewell to Arms:

If people bring so much courage to this world, the world has to kill them to break them, so of course it kills them. The world breaks everyone and afterwards many are strong at the broken places. But those that will not break it kills. It kills the very good and the very gentle and the very brave impartially. If you are none of these you can be sure it will kill you too, but there will be no special hurry.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>E. Hemingway, A Farewell to Arms, p. 219.

Implicit in this often-quoted statement is the concept of life as a game, a contest. 'The world breaks everyone and afterwards many are strong at the broken places. But those that will not break it kills.' This statement seems to imply that to live or to be strong one must necessarily be broken; the beauties of life are always more precious to one who has suffered. It also suggests that there are rules to guide the contest, although they may be difficult to follow and hard to learn. As Lieutenant Henry says -

You did not know what it was all about.  
 You never had time to learn. They threw  
 you in and told you the rules and the first  
 time they caught you off base they killed  
 you.<sup>8</sup>

Three years after the publication of A Farewell to Arms Hemingway described in Death in the Afternoon the important difference between the suertes<sup>9</sup> of the genuinely skilled bull-fighter and those who only pretended and tricked the spectator.

It is the difference between playing cards with an individual, who, giving no importance to the game and having no sum at stake, gives no attention to the rules and makes the game impossible and the one who having learned the rules, through having them forced upon him and through losing; and now having his fortune and life at stake,

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<sup>8</sup>A Farewell to Arms, Op. Cit., p. 219.

<sup>9</sup>In an explanatory glossary in Death in the Afternoon Hemingway defines suertes as "all predetermined manoeuvres in a bullfight; any move in a bullfight which has rules for its execution."

gives much importance to the game and to the rules, finding them forced upon him, and does his best with utmost seriousness. It is up to the bull-fighter to make the bull play and to enforce the rules. The bull has no desire to play, only to kill.<sup>10</sup>

From his earliest boyhood, and especially from 1918 when, as an ambulance driver for the Red Cross in Italy, he was severely wounded under mortar fire at Fossalta di Pieve, until the end of his life, Hemingway has shown a remarkable ability at playing the game for survival by following exactly, closely, and precisely, the rules which he himself laid down. The 'rules' and the 'game' have both received special attention from critics, and from such criticism there has developed the popular 'Hemingway hero' and the 'Hemingway code'. The latter is central to this thesis, for in the formulation of the code, which is basically Hemingway's way of meeting head-on a world which seeks to destroy the individual, he has incorporated into his work a particular use of the still point. A brief reevaluation of the code then is imperative.

We saw earlier in this paper how the passivity of the situation in which Hemingway received his wound on the Italian front convinced him once and for all of the necessity for one to take the initiative in times of peril and danger. For Hemingway, this was true in domestic life as well. Even in matters of love, the problem of initiative remains all

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<sup>10</sup>E. Hemingway, Death in the Afternoon, New York: Scribner, 1932, p. 147.

important. Women are 'good', it seems, only if they leave the initiative to the male, and 'bad' when they take the initiative and reduce the male to passivity and helplessness. Hence, Catherine in A Farewell to Arms is, as Rinaldi suggests, a 'sacred object', and Maria in For Whom the Bell Tolls is an ideal partner for Robert Jordan; both are 'good' because they never usurp the male role, never take the initiative and reduce the male to submissiveness. Hemingway's male lovers - Frederick Henry, Harry Morgan, Robert Jordan, Philip Rawlings, Richard Cantwell - are, in a way, genuinely interested in love and are moved at times by the tenderness and devotion which their lovers bestow on them, but they are all extremely sensitive to the outside forces such as time and death, war and separation, which can smother their happy affairs instantly. With the possible exception of Jake Barnes in The Sun Also Rises, who is not a lover like, say, Frederick Henry, they are much like the Major of "In Another Country", who warned that a man 'cannot marry...If he is to lose everything he should not put himself in a position to lose that. He should not place himself in a position to lose. He should find things he cannot lose.'<sup>11</sup>

Finding things one cannot lose is a difficult task even in the realm of empirical phenomena, but in the realm of the abstract, or the so-called metaphysical, the task is more difficult still. And precisely because of this, his

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<sup>11</sup>E. Hemingway, 'In Another Country', In Our Time, p. 69.

presentation of the code and the 'still point concept' cannot be found in its totality in any one of his works, but they are in a way a product of a lifetime of living, searching, and writing.

There is first of all the well known 'sportsman's code' about which so much adverse criticism has been written. It is simple and embraces the correct way in which the professional must operate, whether his area be gambling, soldiering, fishing, or bull-fighting. Things which the professional must not do are clearly outlined. The hunter shoots at game only when he is reasonably sure that he can kill cleanly and expertly. He does not shoot, for example, from moving vehicles. The truly good bullfighter is he who kills according to the rules by going in over the horns with his sword while at the same time facing the greatest possible danger. The soldier carries out orders as best he can even if they are stupid. Each man does what he must do according to the rules and to the best of his ability.

Hence, this part of the 'code' constitutes a game as it were, and the closer one follows the rules of the game the surer he is of winning. Furthermore, there are different levels of valuation, or morality, by which the behaviour of the participants can be calculated. Santiago, in The Old Man and the Sea, is a great fisherman - the greatest fisherman perhaps - because he plays the giant Marlin according to

the rules which force him to use his greatest reserves of strength, courage, and endurance. The same is true of Pedro Romero in Death in the Afternoon. The Player knows in advance what is expected of him, and his rewards, if he follows the rules closely and plays the game truly, will hardly be material. Instead, he will gain spiritual rewards - confidence, peace of mind in knowing he can do a difficult job well, and emotional satisfaction in knowing he has accepted and faced a challenge as a man should. But there is more to the Hemingway code than this. The man who acts this way might well be termed, as Philip Young suggests,<sup>12</sup> the sportsman's hero, since he does not embody all the qualities of the 'real' hero which Hemingway envisages. The sportsman's code is not, in its fullest sense, the Hemingway code, although it does embody instances and illustrations of the workings of the real code.

We have already seen that Hemingway consciously and consistently viewed and depicted life as a game, but the game is unlike any that was ever played among sportsmen. The world which Hemingway understood was essentially destructive, and living, he believed, was a constant struggle to keep the world from killing one; and because of this, the real Hemingway code is concerned primarily with learning how to make one's position in the 'game of life' strong

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<sup>12</sup>Cf. P. Young, Ernest Hemingway: A Revaluation, Rinehart Editions, 1952, pp. 3, 63-64.

and invulnerable, how, in other words, to make one's weaknesses into a strength, and how to claim the maximum guerdon (dignity, manliness) from the experience. The code demands that one exert his manhood. Joseph Waldmeir writes about it this way:

A man must depend upon himself alone in order to assert his manhood, and the assertion of his manhood, in the face of insuperable obstacles, is the complete end and justification of his existence for the Hemingway hero. The Old Man must endure his useless struggle with the sharks. Manuel in 'The Undeafed', must, in spite of his broken wrist and a terrible goring, go in on the bull six times and accept the horn at last. Jake must continue to live as 'well', and 'truly', and as 'honestly' as he is able in spite of his overwhelming frustration. And each must face his struggle alone, with no recourse to other worldly help, for only as solitary individuals can they assert their manhood.<sup>13</sup>

But, as Joseph Waldmeir realizes, there is much more to the Hemingway code than this. In a frequently quoted comment in Death in the Afternoon, Hemingway wrote that

...all stories, if continued far enough, end in death, and he is no true storyteller who would keep that from you... There is no lonelier man in death, except the suicide, than that man who has lived many years with a good wife and then outlived her. If two people love each other there can be no happy end to it.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>J. Waldmeir, 'Confiteor Hominem: Ernest Hemingway's Religion of Man', Hemingway, ed. by Robert P. Weeks, Prentice Hall, Inc., 1962, p. 165.

<sup>14</sup>Death in the Afternoon, Op. Cit., p. 122.

This is essentially a tragic view of life, and the Hemingway code is actually the philosophic answer, the approach to life which demands that man accept the demands which existence places on him. Within this framework, then, Hemingway tries to impart meaning, coherence, and value to the seeming uselessness of man's headlong rush to death and oblivion.

The formulation of the code occupied Hemingway so consistently throughout the whole course of his life that no single piece of his work gives a complete illustration of the application of the code. However, moving insights into the depiction of the code can be obtained from the haunting short story 'A Clean Well-Lighted Place'. The story is hardly five pages in length, yet, as Sean O'Faolain says, it has 'unsuspected depths', and has the effect of an 'almost silent movie'.<sup>15</sup> Here at a glance is a vivid, almost-dramatic, presentation of his poetic vision, and it is here that the 'still point concept' is partially developed and focused.

On the surface there is hardly any action, but as the 'camera focuses', the setting gains utmost importance; and we see that there are indeed 'unsuspected depths'. As Sean O'Faolain says 'the story is as near to a poem as prose can go without ceasing to be honest prose'.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>S. O'Faolain, Hemingway, ed. by Robert P. Weeks, Op. Cit., p. 112.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 112.

We are afraid for the old man and we pity him.

We spend a bit of a night - by inference, many, many nights, by extension, a whole life - in the company of three Spaniards, one very old, one middle-aged, one still young. The camera is angled, at a distance, on a café-front; it closes in on an old man who says only two words; it passes from him to the two waiters; it ends with the middle-aged waiter. It rests longest on him. With him it becomes a ray entering his soul. Age, death, despair, love, the burden of life, two elderly men seeking sleep and forgetfulness, and one still young enough to feel passion, cast into an hour and a place whose silence and emptiness, soon to become more silent and empty still - it all creates in us, at first, a sad mood in which patience and futility feebly strive with one another, involve us, mesmerize us...<sup>17</sup>

Hemingway's accomplishment in this story is not obvious. The two waiters in the café discuss the old man who a week before had attempted suicide, and who now has no place to go. The young waiter closes up the place against the old man's objections; but the older waiter, understanding somewhat the old man's problems, thinks of the warmth of the well-lighted café, the problems of old age, and the difficulty of sleeping when one feels only loneliness and emptiness inside.

What did he fear? It was not fear or dread. It was nothing that he knew too well. It was all a nothing and a man was nothing too. It was only that and light was all it needed and a certain cleanliness and order. Some lived in it and never felt it but he knew it was all nada....<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>18</sup>E. Hemingway, A Clean Well-Lighted Place, p. 32.

The old waiter then recites the Lord's prayer, changing all the important words to nada, has a cup of coffee at a bodega, and goes home to suffer from insomnia.

The story is chilling, almost frightening, in its display of nothingness. Nada exists everywhere outside the clean well-lighted place, 'so huge, terrible, overbearing, inevitable, and omnipresent that, once experienced, it can never be forgotten'.<sup>19</sup> Where there is nada there is an absence of light, no order, no meaning to life. The chaos is a reality for Hemingway, as it is for Eliot and Woolf in different terms, and it demands that the human will challenge and rebut it by finding things in this life which have a permanent spiritual effect on the individual. Thus, realization of the still moment of time where the human volition is begged and forced to respond is a necessity if one is to wrest meaning from this seemingly meaningless life. The moment is succinctly put forth in Eliot's 'The Hollow Men':

Between the idea  
And the reality  
Between the motion  
And the act  
Falls the Shadow

For Thine is the Kingdom

Between the conception  
And the creation  
Between the emotion  
And the response  
Falls the Shadow

Life is very long

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<sup>19</sup>Carlos Baker, Hemingway: The Writer as Artist, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956, p. 124.

Between the desire  
 And the spasm  
 Between the potency  
 And the existence  
 Between the essence  
 And the descent  
 Falls the shadow

For Thine is the Kingdom<sup>20</sup>

But Hemingway's 'clean well-lighted place' is distinctly different from Eliot's shadow in that the shadow in Hemingway's fiction has no religious significance whatsoever. Eliot was, essentially, a religious writer; but Hemingway, as a number of critics have pointed out,<sup>21</sup> was not a religious writer, at least not in the traditional, orthodox sense. Passage across the shadow for Eliot involves, ultimately, a reliance on other-worldly, spiritual, phenomena, and his writing is thus cast in a theological framework. Hemingway's code, on the other hand, is an attempt to cross the shadow purely within a humanistic framework; and, while both attempts contain mysteries, Hemingway's undoubtedly is grounded in the 'real' world as we know it.

'A Clean Well-Lighted Place' throws further light on this. As Carlos Baker says, 'it shows once again that remarkable union of the naturalistic and the symbolic which is possibly his (Hemingway's) central triumph in the realm of practical esthetics'.<sup>22</sup> The homely, sparkling café stands

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<sup>20</sup>T. S. Eliot, Collected Poems 1909-1935, Faber, p. 85.

<sup>21</sup>Cf. J. Waldmeir "Confiteor Hominem", Op. Cit., pp. 161-168.

<sup>22</sup>Carlos Baker, Op. Cit., p. 123.

out in opposition to the darkness and confusion of nothingness. It is a place where those without the joy of youth, the comforts of belief and religion - where those without confidence, hope, or faith, - can come and ruminate with dignity. In short, it is an abode where man can rest for awhile to gather his strength and renew again the battle with chaos.

Fear of darkness and 'nada' is an evil which plagues a number of Hemingway's heroes. Frederic Henry in A Farewell to Arms was very much aware of the same thing.

I know that the night is not the same as the day; that all things are different, that the things of the night cannot be explained in the day ... and the night can be a dreadful time for lonely people once their loneliness has started.<sup>23</sup>

All men then, according to Hemingway, need a special light for the night; and the fact that they do need this light is not an adverse reflection on their dignity. Actually, Hemingway takes special care to point out the dignity of those who do need a light, as he does with Santiago, the old fisherman, Manuel in 'The Undefeated', and even Harry in The Snows of Kilimanjaro. 'This old man is clean', the older waiter says. 'He drinks without spilling. Even now, drunk, look at him...He walks 'unsteadily but with dignity'.<sup>24</sup> It does not matter that the old man has

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<sup>23</sup>E. Hemingway, A Farewell to Arms, p. 219.

<sup>24</sup>'A Clean Well-Lighted Place', Op. Cit., p. 31.

attempted suicide just a week before; nor does it matter that he had failed in his initial attempt. What is significant is that he has attempted a passage across the shadow. He has met the meaningless and chaos head on; and in the process of doing this - of living, in other words - he has achieved the single most important thing which the game of life permits - dignity. Santiago in The Old Man and the Sea knew the game well, and dignity was one of his rewards. 'A man can be destroyed but not defeated',<sup>25</sup> he says, because no matter what happens, if he follows the rules expertly and precisely, he can still retain his dignity.

For T. S. Eliot, an acute mental and emotional awareness of the still moment was an effective way of gaining spiritual dignity, and was, in short, a means of embattling a valueless, senseless world. For Hemingway, as we shall see more explicitly in Chapters 4 and 5, the still point involves an attempt to structure, to order, to rebut the chaos of which he is constantly aware. It is not a permanent escape from the chaos, of course, for a café cannot remain open forever; in fact, it is quite momentary, for, even when the café is open, there are 'shadows of leaves' which tend to disrupt the imposed order at any moment. The essential difference between Eliot and Hemingway is actually one of philosophic perspective; Eliot, we might say, was of this world but not in it; Hemingway was of this world and in it as well.

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<sup>25</sup>E. Hemingway, The Old Man and the Sea, p.24.

## CHAPTER THREE

### The Sun Also Rises: A Study in Disillusion

There are some things which cannot be learned quickly, and time, which is all we have, must be paid heavily for their acquiring. They are the very simplest things, and because it takes a man's life to acquire them, the little new that each man gets from life is very costly and the only heritage he has to leave.

(Death in the Afternoon)

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We have already seen from some of his short stories that Hemingway, like Eliot, Woolf, and Yeats, was essentially a tragic writer. However, The Sun Also Rises is the first novel where he enlarges upon this tragic vision of life, and as such it is really a study in disillusion.

Hemingway once said that the 'worst thing for anyone is to lose the center of his being, the thing that really is'.<sup>1</sup> In one way or another most of the characters in The Sun Also Rises have lost their center of being. Of course, there has been wide disagreement among critics about basic issues in the book, for it is difficult, if not impossible, to establish which of the characters in the novel is to be taken as the norm, since none of the characters, with the possible exception of Pedro Romero, conforms to the Hemingway code rigidly and unflinchingly. Since the novel was published just four years after Eliot's The Wasteland, critics have been overwhelmingly hasty in cataloguing it as another variation on the death of love during the second world war. Indeed, Mark Spilka in his article, "The Death of Love in The Sun Also Rises", builds an interesting study around the disappearance of love. It is partly true that Brett Ashley and Jake Barnes are two lovers sexually deprived by the war, that Robert Cohen is hardly a normal man, that there is something 'queer' about Count Mippipolous, that conventional values and stable domestic life have been

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<sup>1</sup>A. Hotchner, Papa Hemingway, p. 251.

forsaken and lost, that the characters indeed are part of the 'lost generation' - a phrase from Gertrude Stein which Hemingway put at the beginning of the book. But the phrase has led to the somewhat general misunderstanding that the book is about the profligacy of the post-war generation. It is about that, to be sure, but the novel includes much more as well. The second inscription which Hemingway used, the one from Ecclesiastes which includes the title phrase, begins: 'One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth forever'.<sup>2</sup> By making chaos so abysmal and frightening Hemingway reminds us just how necessary it is to find things in this world which are permanent. Knowledge of the 'still moment', as we shall see in For Whom the Bell Tolls, and The Old Man and the Sea, is one means of combatting this 'nada' which constantly threatens to eliminate man from the earth.

War has rendered Jake impotent, and like many of Hemingway's other characters, he is forced to react passively to the challenges which life affords - instead of taking control and shaping circumstances to fit his own inclinations. He has 'to hold on', to accept the absurdity of his fate and somehow make it meaningful. Jake's sexual wound places him in a position of excessive vulnerability and helplessness. He compares the feeling he has to eating during the war. 'It was like certain dinners during the war.

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<sup>2</sup>E. Hemingway, Title phrase to The Sun Also Rises.

There was much wine, an ignored tension, and a feeling of things coming that you could not prevent happening.<sup>3</sup>

Jake is very much aware of terrible complications but he has no way to handle them, 'and his wound is a token for this kind of impotence'.<sup>4</sup> Yet his code is not completely unlike the Hemingway code:

I thought I had paid for everything. Not like the woman who pays and pays and pays. No idea of retribution or punishment. Just exchange of values. You gave up something and got something else. Or you worked for something. You paid some way for anything that was got good. I paid my way into things that I liked, so that I had a good time. Either you paid by learning about them, or by experience, or by taking chances, or by money. Enjoying living was learning to get your money's worth and knowing when you had it.<sup>5</sup>

The novel is thus a recording of Jake's painful lessons of learning how to live in the world and to get 'your money's worth' while paying the price that the world demands. Jake, apparently, has had his money's worth, and the fact that he has 'been there' enables him to be aware of the necessity to keep the 'center of his being' and never to surrender to 'nada' without force. And, although his position is rendered doubly precarious because of his impotence, and although he does not find anything definite to hold to as

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<sup>3</sup>Mark Spilka, "The Death of Love in The Sun Also Rises" Hemingway, ed. Robert P. Weeks, p. 128.

<sup>4</sup>E. Hemingway, The Sun Also Rises, p. 153.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 153.

Santiago does in The Old Man and the Sea who still retains his dignity in spite of an overwhelming physical defeat, he is not living in a world of illusion like Robert Cohn.. In some respects, however, Cohn and Barnes are alike. They are both writers, they both love Brett Ashley, they are both sensitive to the meaninglessness of drinking, prostitution, and the aimless hedonism which surrounds them, and they are both aware of the brevity of life, its destructiveness, and the necessity to impose order and meaning on the chaos which surrounds them; they are both aware that the game of life demands high stakes, and, even then there is great uncertainty at winning. But there are essential differences between the two. Jake is willing to try - to live in other words - to do battle with the chaos. Cohn, on the other hand, has never 'been there' in that he has never been willing to help himself, and it does not seem that he ever will. His attitude is completely passive, for he is content to live in a world of illusion and self-deception. He merely hopes to get away from it all, although he knows he is 'not really living it':

"Listen, Jake", he leaned forward on the bar.

"Don't you ever get the feeling that all your life is going by and you're not taking advantage of it. Do you realize that you've had nearly half the time you have to live already?"

"Yes, every once in awhile".

"Do you know that in about thirty-five years more we'll be dead?"

"What the hell, Robert," I said. "What the hell."

"It's one thing I don't worry about," I said.

"You ought to."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

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Cohn is an expert at the art of self-deception, and he epitomizes much that Hemingway despised in some men. He is a kind of romanticist who dreams of exotic life but never lives it. Jake tells him: 'You can't get away from yourself by moving from one place to another. There's nothing to that.' Then toward the end of the novel the stark truth is out and we see how far Cohn is from the Hemingway Code, how far, indeed, he is removed from living. Cohn begs Jake's forgiveness for his actions at Pamplona:

"I just couldn't stand it about Brett. I've been through hell, Jake. It's been simply hell. When I met her down here Brett treated me as though I were a perfect stranger. I just couldn't stand it. We lived at the San Sebastian. I suppose you know it. I can't stand it any more".

"I guess it isn't any use," he said.

"I guess it isn't any use."

"What?"

"Everything. Please say you forgive me, Jake."

"Sure," I said. "It's all right."

"I felt so terribly. I've been through such hell, Jake. Now everything's gone. Everything."<sup>7</sup>

Cohn is content to live amongst chaos and uncertainty since he has no intention of forsaking his illusions and deceptions. He will not seek a 'clean well-lighted place'. He is, in short, one of the most despicable characters that Hemingway ever created; and because of his inability to display the 'manly traits' and his refusal to adhere to the Hemingway code he illuminates all the more the necessity for a 'clean well-lighted place' around which one can center one's being.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 201-202.

Mark Spilka has built up a penetrating argument that The Sun Also Rises is really a novel about the death of love, since all the characters are really a variation of that theme. To be sure, this is partly true. Jake Barnes is impotent; Brett only 'loves' for a short time; Cohn it seems is in love with the idea of love; the Count is 'always in love', a shaky position indeed; Georgette is a prostitute; and even Pedro Romero, the steadiest character in the novel, loves and loses. So it would seem that the novel is indeed about the death of love. Such an interpretation however overlooks two important factors: Hemingway himself said that the book was not meant to be a 'hollow or bitter satire, but a damn tragedy with the earth abiding forever as the hero'.<sup>8</sup>

This essentially is what the second inscription which Hemingway used at the beginning of the book says: 'One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, but the earth abideth forever'. Hemingway then shows us the lost generation searching around Europe aimlessly looking for something permanent and elemental. In this respect, two characters stand out; Vincente Girones, a minor figure, and Pedro Romero who is surely not lost.

Vincente Girones is a very minor character in the novel who dies almost before we find out anything about him. Yet his death has a special relevance to the lives of the others,

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<sup>8</sup>C. Baker, Hemingway, Op. Cit., p. 81.

since it points out, ironically, the subtle web of differing values which the novel portrays. Vincente Girones, who was a twenty-eight-year-old farmer from Tafalla, had come every year to the fiesta at Pamplona to join in the encierro, the running of the bulls through the streets to the bull-ring. But he was unlucky; Jake saw him tossed, gored, and finally killed in the streets and the crowd of happy people which passed on over him to the bull ring. On returning to the café he reports the event to the waiter:

The waiter nodded his head and swept the crumbs from the table with his cloth.

"Badly cogida," he said. "All for sport. All for pleasure...A big horn wound. All for fun. Just for fun. What do you think of that?"

"I don't know".

"That's it. All for fun. Fun, you understand".

"You're not an aficionado?"

"Me? What are bulls? Animals. Brute animals...You hear? Muerto. Dead. He's dead. With a horn through him. All for morning fun. Es muy flamenco".

"It's bad".

"Not for me", said the waiter. "No fun in that for me".<sup>9</sup>

Later we are told that the young fighter, Pedro Romero, kills the bull which had gored Girones to death, and gives the ear to Brett. And later still, Jake tells Bill that a man had been killed on his way to the ring. Significantly, Bill's comment is: "Was there?"

Trivial as this short episode seems on the surface, it has, nevertheless, monumental importance. The stark fact of Girones' death - 'this man who lay face down in the mud' -

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<sup>9</sup>The Sun Also Rises, Op. Cit., p. 154.

is far more important to Hemingway than all the trivialities, perfidies, and baseness of the principal characters put together, and it shows how unmistakably far from living - how inhuman and uncaring-these 'lost souls' are.

Girones' untimely death, which caught him while he was having 'a bit of sport', succinctly points out the typical Hemingway lesson. 'Enjoying living was learning to get your money's worth and knowing when you had it'. The stakes in the game of life are high, and Girones pays the highest price for his fun, since he does not get his 'money's worth' for his death. His death is really a lesson to the others. The earth does indeed abide forever, but its inhabitants - the millions of Jakes, Bretts, and Bills - have but a limited time. And if they succumb to nothingness, if they choose to live this death-in-life, if they do not seek a 'clean-well-lighted place' in the darkness of life, then they must pay with their deaths, like Girones, without extracting a sufficient reward from their ordeal. 'After such knowledge what forgiveness?' is the haunting question which plagued Hemingway as it did Eliot and other writers of the post-war period. In the actions of Pedro Romero Hemingway attempts to answer this question.

Pedro Romero, in his person and actions, embodies much that is lacking in the other principal characters. He is not a loser like the others, and, if there is anyone in the

novel who gets his money's worth from the life he has chosen to live, it is he. With him there is no faking, no trying to 'get away from it all' like Cohn. Romero lives according to the Hemingway code, and the fact that he is always so near death (as a bull fighter), and so aware of it, makes him all the more sensitive to the importance of living at the moment. Bull-fighting for Romero is an art, like fishing for Nick and Santiago or war for Colonel Cantwell. Hemingway carefully distinguishes Romero from the bad, pretentious, bull-fighter:

Romero never made any contortions, always it was straight and pure and natural in line. The others twisted themselves like corkscrews, their elbows raised, and leaned against the flanks of the bull after his horns had passed to give a faked look of danger...Romero's bull-fighting gave real emotion, because he kept the absolute purity of the line in his movements and always quietly and calmly let the horns pass him close each time...Romero had the real thing, the holding of his purity of line through the maximum of exposure, while he dominated the bull by making him realize he was unattainable, while he prepared him for the killing.<sup>10</sup>

Romero is an expert at his job. Mark Spilka says that 'he moved forever on a kind of imaginative frontier, where the opposition is always Nature, in some token form, where the stakes are always manliness and self-respect, and where death invests the scene with tragic implications'.<sup>11</sup> In these decadent times of bull-fighting Pedro Romero is a

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 174.

<sup>11</sup>Mark Spilka, Op. Cit., p. 133.

sparkling pebble in an otherwise murky stream. He has the 'old thing' as he displays grace, control, and sincerity in his bull-fighting. And in his fight with Cohn, which, incidentally, he loses, he still exhibits courage and pure integrity which are inextricably connected with the Hemingway code. In particular, the moment when Romero kills the bull embodies the utmost significance. Notice the ritual, the integrity of the moment:

Out in the center of the ring Romero profiled in front of the bull, drew the sword out from the folds of the muleta, rose on his toes, and sighted along the blade. The bull charged as Romero charged. Romero's left hand dropped the muleta over the bull's muzzle to blind him, his left shoulder went forward between the horns as the sword went in, and for just an instant he and the bull were one, Romero way out over the bull, the right arm extended way up to where the hilt of the sword had gone in between the bull's shoulders.<sup>12</sup>

In another novel on bull-fighting in Spain Hemingway recalls being profoundly moved by the kill: 'I remembered in the midst of the confused excitement having a great moment of emotion when the man went in with the sword'.<sup>13</sup> Here Hemingway is careful to point out that it is not just the act of killing, but the properly performed act, the aesthetically fit, that evoked his emotion, since he watched the slaughter of some fifty more bulls before the emotion was experienced again. For just a moment, Hemingway says,

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<sup>12</sup>The Sun Also Rises, Ibid., p. 227.

<sup>13</sup>Death in the Afternoon, Op. Cit., p. 278.

Romero and the bull were one; man and bull - the living and the dead - are joined by the sword which touches the bull's heart. Furthermore, the bull-fight itself, when it is done correctly as Romero does it, is steeped in ritual; and we know from what Hemingway has said about bull-fights, that if a 'great moment of emotion' is to be elicited, there is only one correct way to fight and prepare for the killing of the bull.

This is not the first time that Hemingway has shown a deep concern for ritual. It is true that a man who has passed through the valley of the shadow of death becomes strangely sensitive to the beauties of the world. To such a person life is more precious, important, and urgent, and he will probably develop a sense of form, a style by which he will attempt to categorize and hold his sensual experiences. He will, in short, develop little rituals so that he can be reasonably sure of receiving the same intense emotion from similar impressions which he receives during his lifetime. Malcolm Cowley, in his introduction to the Viking Portable edition of Hemingway says that the novelist has provided us with rites for drinking and killing in The Sun Also Rises, for animal sacrifice in Death in the Afternoon, for sexual union in For Whom the Bell Tolls, for symbolic death and re-birth in the Caporetto passage of A Farewell to Arms, and

for death itself in Across the River and into the Trees.<sup>14</sup> And there are countless other little rites that have to do with eating, fishing, sailing, shooting, talking, cursing, and writing - in short, with nearly everything that Hemingway ever did.

This special preoccupation with ritual has a particular relevance to The Sun Also Rises. This extraordinary sensitivity, stylized into ritual, suggests that there is a kind of mystery about life and the universe for Hemingway, a certain vibrant quality going beyond the mere realm of the senses. With the possible exception of Pedro Romero, all the characters in The Sun Also Rises know that they are missing something very important, they are somehow out of focus, and that they have no kinship with "the earth that abideth forever". They are far away indeed from a 'clean-well-lighted place'. As we shall see later on, Robert Jordan in For Whom the Bell Tolls experienced this strange mystical quality, and Santiago in battling his great fish in The Old Man and the Sea had it (he called the fish his brother); it is something like the realization of kinship between Romero and the bull when the sword touches the skin and gently works towards the heart. It is a kind of recognition of the inner unity of all life that reminds one of St. Francis of Assisi who felt that way towards all the birds, animals, and trees.

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<sup>14</sup>Cf. Malcolm Cowley in his introduction to The Viking Portable edition of Hemingway.

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The Sun Also Rises then stands to Hemingway's fiction as the frosting to the ice-berg, in that we are presented with an essentially tragic vision of the world with which he was to be consistently occupied in much of his later fiction. The overriding decadence in morals and values which gnawed at humanity after the first world war is brilliantly cast and portrayed. The suddenness of Girones' death makes living all the more urgent and propelling, and it points out, painfully, the living deaths of the others - Cohn, Barnes, and Ashley. And in Pedro Romero we are shown how important "sinking into the earth is," how necessary it is to get back to nature, to the elemental things where a man can be a man for at least awhile. And finally, the novel throws extra light on the Hemingway code, on the futility which necessarily engulfs every individual, and the necessity of holding that futility at bay by clinging to 'a clean well-lighted place.' Hemingway is aware that, while futility can be opposed by means of the code, it can never be wholly defeated; and realization of this fact is what separates the men from the boys in the world of Jake Barnes. The good and the brave must eventually return to dust, into 'failure', just like the bad and the cowardly, since there never has been any effective means which can deliver man permanently from the 'nada' which surrounds him. 'All is vanity', says the voice of the Old Testament Ecclesiastes, and the world of Jake Barnes and,

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indeed, of every Hemingway protagonist is essentially the 'vain' world of the Biblical preacher. All that Jake and some of his friends can do is hold futility off for awhile; they can never defeat it entirely. They can act with courage and pride and hold to the 'light' by following a carefully predetermined sequence of actions - the code. Robert Cohn shows indirectly what the code is all about, since he represents much that Hemingway despised and feared. He succumbs nearly completely to absolute chaos. His love comes out of books, his ambitions are dreams, his pride is nothing more than childish ego. He can accept nothing real and endure nothing, and life is a process of stubbornly asserting that which is simply not true. Beneath his facade of charm, physical strength, and money, there is a basic weakness and lack of virility which was characteristic of much of the post-war civilization itself. And precisely because of this it is not Robert Cohn but Jake Barnes, whom the war has rendered impotent, and Pedro Romero, whom Cohn 'defeats' in a fist fight, who demonstrate what manhood and pride actually mean. Thus the novel rests on a fundamental opposition - the Cohn way of life and the Barnes/Romero way of life.

It is precisely this opposition which Hemingway was later to recapitulate in For Whom the Bell Tolls and especially in The Old Man and the Sea. In this latter novel, for instance, Santiago, the fisherman, has grown too old for

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the superficial proofs of virility. He has grown beyond physical strength, sex, violence, or wealth. All he has is his tremendous capacity for endurance - for will - and these, in the final analysis, are the real definition of manhood according to Hemingway. For manhood, as Jake and Romero well know, is a spiritual rather than a physical thing; because Jake and Romero, and even the Count, with their own endurance, pride, and courage, they emerge strong within their manhood, unlike those individuals who, despite an appearance of power, are less than men because of the personal emptiness which exists beneath the surface of their skin.

In his next novel, A Farewell to Arms, we shall see that Hemingway is still concerned with war, death, and disillusion; but Frederic Henry, the hero of the book, begins to see things "sharp and hard and clear" and to realize that there are indeed things in this world which are worth living for.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### A FAREWELL TO ARMS: WAR AND MORE DISILLUSION

The feet of the rats  
scribble on the door sills;  
the hieroglyphs of the rat footprints  
chatter the pedigrees of the rats  
and the babble of the blood  
and the gabble of the breed ...  
And the wind shifts  
and the dust on a door sill shifts  
and even the writing of the rats  
tells us nothing, nothing at all ...

(Carl Sandburg, Four Preludes on  
Playthings of the Wind)

Hemingway's next novel, A Farewell to Arms, was his first commercial success. Whereas The Sun Also Rises was concerned mainly with the after-effects of war, the setting for this novel is actually the war itself. The novel has been called among other things a tragedy, a love story, a depiction of the senselessness of war, and a continuation of Hemingway's personal biography about his war experience in Italy.<sup>1</sup> To be sure, the novel does deal with these things one way or another; but the key to its appreciation lies, I feel, with its chief protagonist, Frederic Henry, who is still a wounded man - wounded, in fact, much like Hemingway himself was wounded - but he has begun to develop a philosophy about what is happening to him; furthermore, the story which he tells is his own story told in his own voice. Therefore, any meanings which we extract from the novel must, necessarily, be his own which he has learned from his own experiences with the jumbled chaos which surrounds him and constantly threatens to engulf him. In this light the novel offers a constant self-discovery on the part of Frederic Henry about who he is, why he is, and what life is.

Early in the novel we find him scrutinizing the reasons for his actions. He tries to fathom why he had gone to the city to engage in hedonistic pleasures instead of

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. C. Baker's very interesting examination of the novel on a symbolic level, Hemingway, Op. Cit., pp. 98-116.

going to the priest's home in Abruzzi, where the atmosphere was altogether different.

I felt myself as badly as he did and could not understand why I had not gone. It was what I wanted to do and I tried to explain ... winefully, how we did not do the things we wanted to do; we never did such things ... I wanted to go to Abruzzi; I had gone to no place where the roads were frozen and hard as iron where it was clear cold and dry and the snow was dry and powdery and hare-tracks in the snow and the peasants take off their hats and called for your hand and there was good hunting. I had gone to no such place but to the smoke of the cafés and nights when the room whirled ... nights in bed drunk, when you knew that that was all there was, and the strange excitement of waking ... and the world all unreal in the dark and so exciting that you must resume again unknowing and uncaring in the dark, sure that this was all and all and all and not caring. Suddenly to care very much and to sleep to wake with it sometimes morning and all that had been there gone and everything sharp and hard and clear ... I tried to tell about the night and the difference between the night and the day and how the night was better unless the day was very clean and cool and I would not tell it, as I cannot tell it now. But if you have had it you know it. He had not had it but he understood that I had really wanted to go to Abruzzi; but had not gone and we were still friends, with many tastes alike, but with the difference between us. He had always known what I did not know and what, when I learned it, I was always able to forget. But I did not know that then, although I learned it later.<sup>2</sup>

'But I did not know that then, although I learned it later', characterises the process of self-discovery through which Frederic Henry passes. The world which Frederic Henry

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<sup>2</sup>E. Hemingway, A Farewell to Arms, p. 21.

encounters - with the exception of the circumstances which the war imposes - is not unlike that of the old man in 'A Clean Well-Lighted Place', and that of Jake in The Sun Also Rises. It is still chaotic and brutal, a world which gives forth little joy, love, light, certitude, or help for pain; it is still a 'darkling plain'.

At the beginning of the novel Frederic Henry can best be described as a man who is shiftless, has few friends, and cares little about anything. He hardly knows what or why he is fighting, and he is certainly one like Eliot's Gerontion, experiencing a death-in-life type of existence '... the world all unreal in the dark ... and not caring in the night, sure that this was all and all and all and not caring'. All is meaningless and irrational, and even the war, since he is fighting a foreign war in a foreign country, has no special relevance to his life. He would not be killed in this war, 'since it did not have anything to do with me. It seemed no more dangerous to me myself than war in the movies'.<sup>3</sup> He has never really loved any woman, although he has had several experiences with them. Like Gerontion and the civilization which he represents he is inactive, torpid, listless - 'a dirty sneaking American Italian ... a snake with an Italian uniform, with a cape around his neck'.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 217.

Yet Frederic Henry, we feel, is not completely lost, not totally incapable of caring. As Ray B. West says, / 'the subject of the novel is the search for truth ...'<sup>5</sup> and the truth which Frederic Henry seeks is truth about himself - about his love for Catherine and his relationship with her, about the war and the ethical standards which have been lost during the war - and, strangely enough, as Frederic Henry progresses from non-caring to caring, he goes from involvement in the war to non-involvement and clings at last (in the process of caring) to the warm relationship which has developed between himself and Catherine. For their relationship is the only thing which can **rebutt** the meaninglessness which engulfs them, and, in reality, it serves as a kind of clean well-lighted place for them both.

At the beginning of the novel Frederic Henry attempts quite successfully to dull his perceptiveness, not to care, not to see things 'sharp and hard and clear', since he thinks he has nothing to lose. He fights in a war in which he has no interest, and at first when he meets Catherine he 'plays along' passively at the game of love.

I knew I did not love Catherine Barkley nor had any idea of loving her. This was a game, like bridge, in which you said things instead of playing cards. Like bridge you had to pretend you were playing for money or for some stakes. Nobody had mentioned what the stakes were. It was all right with me.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Ray B. West, "The Biological Trap", Hemingway, ed. Robert P. Weeks, p. 140.

<sup>6</sup>A Farewell to Arms, Op. Cit., p. 21.

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At this point in the novel Frederic Henry's attitude towards almost everything is overwhelmingly passive. Even religion, which is so other-worldly, has no special relevance to his life.

I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious, and sacrifice and the expression in vain. We had heard them, sometimes standing in the rain almost out of earshot, so that only the shouted words came through, and had read them, on proclamations that were slapped up by bill posters over other proclamations, now for a long time. And I had seen nothing sacred, and the things that were glorious had no glory and the sacrifices were like the stockyards at Chicago if nothing was done with the meat except to bury it. There were many words that you could not stand to hear and finally only the names of places had dignity.<sup>7</sup>

Frederic Henry is in a position not unlike that of W. H. Auden's monk who rises in the morning to find that while in his cocoon-like sleep he has lost his birthplace, his name, everything. He is nothing and nobody.

And the first thing that Frederic Henry realizes is that there is a 'me', a person, a living being; and this realization comes, significantly, with his first terrible wound of the war. He finds out painfully that the war does indeed affect him and that it might destroy him.

I tried to breathe but my breath would not come and I felt myself rush bodily out of myself and out and out and out and all the time bodily in the wind. I went out swiftly, and all of myself, and I knew I was dead and it had all been a mistake to think you just died.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 164-165.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

Literally it 'was a mistake' to think that he had just died for he goes on to live even after his lover and his child have died. This passage, however, demands a subtle reading which is central to the thesis which this paper purports to establish. It was indeed a mistake for Frederic Henry to think that he had just died, for in reality he has been dead long before he received his shell wound. Up to the time of his wound he has been living a kind of 'death-in-life' existence. The sweets of life are always more precious to one who has been close to death, and it takes a terrible wound to shock Frederic Henry into an appreciation of life; but from the time of the wound there is a definite change in his life. Undoubtedly, what he experiences is a "moment of perception", a vivid comprehension, and because of this his life will never be the same again.

Rinaldi, his soldier-friend, remains much as Frederic Henry was before he experienced his wound, and, although he tries to persuade Frederic Henry that love is an illusion, that Catherine is no good for him, that what the priest says has no relevance to their lives, that if one does not care he cannot be hurt, Frederic Henry moves slowly away from Rinaldi's position to that of the priest. This does not mean, however, that the hero of the novel has suddenly become religious, for religion, among other things, demands that one's beliefs extend outwards towards some sort of

metaphysical entity, that one trust, believe, and have faith in other-worldly phenomena. And Hemingway surely does not recommend this. What Frederic Henry's leaning towards the priest's position does show is his break with the past, his new awareness, since the priest defines his insufficiency and tells him what caring really entails.

He looked at me and smiled.  
 'You understand but you do not love God'.  
 'No'.  
 'You do not love Him at all'? he asked.  
 'I am afraid of Him in the night sometimes'.  
 'You should love Him'.  
 'Yes', he said. 'You do. What you tell me about in the nights. That is not love. That is only passion and lust. When you love you wish to do things for. You wish to serve'.<sup>9</sup>

Love, according to the priest, entails 'serving, caring, giving', and, as Book One closes it seems that Frederic Henry is at least conscious of this fact.

Book Two depicts Henry's convalescence in the hospital in Milan and the inevitable growth of love between himself and Catherine into a seemingly perfect union of body and soul. When they are together their love seems to offer a near perfect escape from the world and its destructiveness; and there is hardly any doubt that Catherine's love is the kind about which the priest had been speaking. 'I want what you want. There isn't any me any more. Just what you want'.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 99.

On this same point Harvey Webster in his study 'Ernest Hemingway: The Pursuit of Death', says that

there can be no doubt of the dignified sanctity of Catherine's and Henry's love. Henry, we feel, inarticulately agrees with Catherine's wish: 'I want you so much I want to be you too...' Indeed, love is for both of them religion... a substitute for the love of God he has lost in the nothingness of death which he can attribute to nothing but God's awful omnipotence.<sup>11</sup>

Mr. Webster is undoubtedly correct about Catherine's unselfish love, but Frederic Henry's position gives rise to speculation and doubt. To be sure, when he is in her company he experiences a communion and fulfillment which even erases the horrors which the darkness of the night brings; but Frederic Henry by this time has many of the common characteristics of the popular Hemingway hero. Although he is genuinely concerned about Catherine's pregnancy and her being unmarried, he is undoubtedly the master in their idyllic love affair. He does not, to use the words of the priest, 'wish to serve', but the very fact that he has permitted himself to fall in love at all is an indication of his willingness to care at least partly. And furthermore, by permitting this he has permitted himself to live - to withdraw from his shell of non-participation like Rinaldi into the world of the living where a man must take his own chances on his investment even if the investment is life itself.

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<sup>11</sup>Henry C. Webster, Ernest Hemingway: The Pursuit of Death, pp. 156-157.

Frederic Henry's attitude toward their love relationship and Catherine's position in that relationship cannot be fully understood without an appraisal of Frederic's involvement in and reaction to the war. Book Three returns him to the front again and to his two friends Rinaldi and the priest, who, as we have already noted, are diametrically opposed. Rinaldi does not want to get involved, to place himself in any kind of vulnerable position; and like the narrator in Tennyson's Maud he buries himself in himself, in his work, in anything to avoid caring. Even the priest's faith, which before had been so steadfast and strong, seems to wane a little under the pressure of war and death. And Frederic Henry becomes progressively more disillusioned. He witnesses the catastrophic Caporetto retreat, tries desperately to rescue his ambulance crew and to do his job; and then, completely disillusioned and sick of it all, he takes his symbolic leap into the river, washing his hands of the whole mess. Malcom Cowley has said that Frederic Henry's plunge into the river to escape execution is a kind of baptism - a wiping away of his whole tragic past; yet we must remember, as Ray B. West Jr. does, that 'this is true only in so far as it refers to his decision concerning the war'.<sup>12</sup> War is actually a chaos in nature in which neither loyalty nor courage have any

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<sup>12</sup>"The Biological Trap", Op. Cit., p. 145.

meaning, and so he deserts. But his desertion itself is significant. War has taken away his will and reduced him to passivity, because it denies him the opportunity to display his manly virtues, and this, of course, is the ultimate nightmare not only for Frederic Henry but for Hemingway as well. He is left in a world stripped of all meaning and this threatens not only his life but the very essence of his manhood. He deserts only because there is nothing else left to do, and in reality he is still acting passively. He is, however, close to caring in the way that the priest defines it. 'I was not made to think. I was made to eat. My God, yes. Eat and drink and sleep with Catherine ... and we're going away again except together. Probably have to go damn quickly. She would go'.<sup>13</sup> So finding in the war only chaos and destruction Frederic turns to Catherine who provides at once a true love and a cause - a means of achieving value in a situation of futility. Book Four confirms what we have been implying already - that now at last he really cares in the true sense.

The communion which Frederic Henry experiences with Catherine in this book serves much the same function as a 'clean well-lighted place' for the old man and as the ritual and the killing of the bull for Pedro Romero. Of course, all these moments contain mysteries - inexplicable

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<sup>13</sup>A Farewell to Arms, Op. Cit., p. 205.

qualities - but only "those who have been there", as Hemingway says, can know their true value and meaning. John Donne had written of such an experience in The Good Morrow, and Robert Browning in By the Fireside - the only significant difference being that whereas Hemingway wrote in prose they wrote in verse. Frederic Henry now sees things 'sharp and hard and clear', and the fact that he no longer wants to be alone and is no longer afraid in the darkness shows the utmost intensity and paramount importance of their love relationship:

Often a man wishes to be alone and a girl wishes to be alone and if they love each other they are jealous of that in each other, but I can truly say we never felt that. We could feel alone when we were together, against the others. It has only happened to me like that once. I have been alone when I have been with many girls and that is the way you can be most lonely. But we were never lonely and never afraid when we were together. I know that the night is <sup>NOT</sup> the same as the day: that all things are different, that the things of the night cannot be explained in the day, because they do not then exist, and the night can be a dreadful time for lonely people once their loneliness has started. But with Catherine there was almost no difference in the night, except that it was an even better time.<sup>14</sup>

Later Frederic Henry tells Count Greffi, a man of ninety-four years, that what he values most in this world is 'someone I love';<sup>15</sup> and the Count, seeing that this is true,

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 219.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 229.

reminds him, ironically, of the way the priest defined love: 'Then you are in love. Do not forget that it is a religious feeling'.<sup>16</sup> In forsaking the war and all that it stands for, Frederic Henry achieves a separate peace, a special kind of union; but, like the café which cannot remain open forever, the union must eventually be broken, and Frederic Henry finds himself at the conclusion 'a winner who takes nothing'.

Book Five is chilling, catastrophic, frightening, as it moves towards the inevitable death of Catherine. Hemingway once said that all 'stories, if continued far enough, end in death, and he is no true story teller who would keep that from you ... If two people love each other there can be no happy end to it'.<sup>17</sup> By his own definition Hemingway is certainly a 'true story teller' for there is no obvious happy end to this story. The action moves swiftly to Catherine's death, and all the while Frederic Henry is on the outside looking in, as it were, on a sequence of swiftly moving events, helplessly alone and lost. The rains come again, Catherine is delivered of a dead child, and shortly afterwards she herself dies. Death seems to engulf Frederic Henry too, and once again he is back to the chaos from which he had briefly escaped. He cannot stop death, and as Ray B. West Jr. makes succinctly clear, his mind will not allow

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 230.

<sup>17</sup> E. Hemingway, Death in the Afternoon, p. 122.

him to accept death as Catherine does as just another 'dirty trick'. So in his moment of utter anguish he turns to God and begins to pray mechanically.

I knew that she was going to die and I prayed that she would not. Don't let her die. Oh, God, don't let her die. Please, please, don't let her die. Dear God, don't let her die. Please, please, please, don't let her die. God, please make her not die. You took the baby, but don't take her. That was all right but don't let her die. Please, please, God, don't let her die.<sup>18</sup>

This is a desperate plea by a man in a wilderness of loneliness; and Frederic Henry's hope that he or anyone else can prevent her from dying is pure illusion. In the end he goes out into the rain and returns to his hotel room, a loser of every good thing that he ever possessed.

Carlos Baker has made a penetrating study of the novel especially on a symbolic level, and he notes that according to the patterns of imagery (the rain, wind, the mountain and plain) the novel is Hemingway's first successful study in doom.<sup>19</sup> Such an interpretation of the novel bears out Hemingway's own statement that it was his Romeo and Juliet although the novel bears very little resemblance to that play outside the undercurrent of doom which hangs over the work 'like the echo of a bugler who has just finished playing the last call'.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>A Farewell to Arms, Op. Cit., pp. 286-287.

<sup>19</sup>Hemingway, Op. Cit., p. 116.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 98.

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Yet the conclusion permits another interpretation which is inevitably linked to the title of the novel and throws further light on Frederic Henry's progress from uncaring to caring. Before his wound and his love affair with Catherine Frederic Henry lived in a half-world of dreams and illusions, listlessness, and inactivity. However, his love affair slowly awakens him from his cocoon-like sleep to the world of the living; and in so doing helps him attain a center of being whereby he can shape and give his experiences some kind of meaning. Love offers a light in the darkness, a comforting rod and staff for Frederic Henry who walked in the valley of the shadow of death. Like the old fisherman in The Old Man and the Sea he loses all earthly possessions - even his child and his love. Yet, strangely enough, he is a winner with no stakes to show. He has played the game of life to the hilt, and the only thing he has left to show is himself, Frederic Henry.

It has been suggested by some critics that the title 'A Farewell to Arms' refers to Frederic Henry's farewell to war and to all the hardships which war presses on him; others have suggested that it refers to Catherine's arms and to the love which he will never know again. But it may also suggest a third farewell - a farewell to the other Henry, to death-in-life, and uncaring. It is to Hemingway's credit that all readings are equally plausible. Frederic Henry's position

in the novel is somewhat ambiguous, since he does not follow the dry, empty life of Rinaldi, nor does he embrace completely that of the priest. He stands somewhere between the two. Essentially, like Hemingway himself, Frederic Henry is 'of this world and in it as well'. Death is a reality, a fact to be reckoned with just as much as life; and love, which Frederic Henry helped create and make grow, and which he found to be the only sustaining force in an increasingly chaotic world, is indeed real and true and just as important as death. Death is not really a victor in A Farewell to Arms any more than it is in The Old Man and the Sea. In Frederic Henry's case it leaves a sting and a bitter one at that; but it also stings him into awareness, into caring and living, and into a realization of just how precious the things of this world - life, love, communion - really are.

In his next major novel, For Whom the Bell Tolls, we shall see that Hemingway, even though he presents a vivid, articulate picture of war and the suffering which it brings to those who are involved, is more concerned with the depiction of intense moments of perception. It is in this novel then, as well as in The Old Man and the Sea, that Hemingway becomes increasingly concerned with the chaotic state of the world, with time and tradition; and it is in these two novels that he portrays the 'still moment' more clearly than in any of his previous fiction.

CHAPTER FIVE

FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS: A GROWING CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE  
STILL POINT

I'll tell you even though I am not a believer in the Analysts, I spend a hell of a lot of time killing animals and fish so I won't kill myself. When a man is in rebellion against death, as I am in rebellion against death, he gets pleasure out of taking to himself one of the god-like attributes of giving it.

(Papa Hemingway, p. 152)

In the years that intervened between A Farewell to Arms (1929) and For Whom the Bell Tolls (1940) Hemingway's art does not show any marked improvement. His dramatization of the fundamental conflict between man and nature does not show any significant refinement. Of course, he talks liberally of his art in Green Hills of Africa, and takes time out from his lessons in bull-fighting in Death in the Afternoon to give hints and pointers about literary problems - about some of his own problems in writing fiction - but this period in Hemingway's career is generally thought to be the time when his creative abilities were at their lowest. Some of the short stories published at this period are fairly good Hemingway, but even as late as the publication of To Have and Have Not (1937), which is his least autobiographical and most poorly constructed work, Hemingway does not seem to have pulled his talents together to produce a good piece of fiction like The Sun Also Rises, and A Farewell to Arms. For this reason then, and also because the novels For Whom the Bell Tolls, and The Old Man and the Sea, show Hemingway's artistic powers at their zenith (and hence his ultimate concern with the 'still point concept'), I choose not to discuss the intervening novels and short stories. I will, however, allude to these works from time to time, for many of the literary comments which Hemingway made in The Green Hills of Africa and in Death in the Afternoon have a direct bearing on an understanding of his later novels, and forecast, in a way, what was to come in his last works.

For Whom the Bell Tolls has been described as Hemingway's most ambitious work. It is certainly his longest, comprising four hundred seventy-one pages in its final form, and taking exactly eighteen months to complete.<sup>1</sup>

In a message which he wished to have read in receipt of the Nobel prize for literature he stated his literary intentions thus:

.... for a true writer each book should be a new beginning, where he tries again for something that is beyond attainment. He should always try for something that has never been done, or that others have tried and failed. Then sometimes, with good luck he will succeed. How simple the writing of literature would be if it were only necessary to write in another way what has been well written. It is because we have had such great writers in the past that a writer is driven way out past where he can go, out to where no one can help him.<sup>2</sup>

For Whom the Bell Tolls is indeed a 'new beginning'. Stylistically, Hemingway does not follow the techniques of his earlier successes. In previous works he used dialogue as the preferred means of communication and avoided the use of lyrical and extended phraseology. However, in this novel, he inserts stream-of-consciousness passages, uses objective analysis, and shifts the point of view frequently. In short, the 'famous Hemingway prose' is mixed with more

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<sup>1</sup>C. Baker, Hemingway, Op. Cit., pp. 238-239.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 239.

traditional stylistic devices. Always a skilful innovator of language, Hemingway now employed a new device - he sought to use the Spanish language in a strict, literal translation to achieve a feeling for people. Hence, he uses the archaic English forms of "thee" and "thou" to render the Spanish familiar forms of address which cannot be accurately translated into English. The effect is bold and attains some success, especially since it adds sincerity and dignity to the story.

Besides the fascinating linguistic virtuosity, For Whom the Bell Tolls has been a constant source of debate among critics ever since its publication in 1940. The novel has been attacked by both conservatives and liberals alike as a distorted picture of the Spanish Civil War, so much, in fact, that critics seem more interested in the political implications of the book than in its literary merits. Because of the complex political and international situation at the time the novel was unfortunately judged as a political tract rather than as a work of art. Beyond a doubt, Hemingway sympathized with the Loyalists, and his journalistic endeavours were slanted towards an appreciation and respect for the Republic's survival. He helped to raise funds, narrated a documentary film, The Spanish Earth, and wrote a play, The Fifth Column. This, however, does not justify a one-sided political interpretation of the novel, since it is a work of art and should be judged accordingly. An attempt to

communicate in fiction the feelings and reactions of a group of people (and by extension, humanity) caught up in the conflict between totalitarianism and democracy, Fascism and Communism, is an extremely difficult task, and the wonder is that Hemingway succeeded as he did.

For Whom the Bell Tolls has been called, among other things, an experiment in a new prose form, a novel specifically about the Spanish Civil War, a novel in which Hemingway finally comes to terms with death,<sup>3</sup> and by Carlos Baker, 'a living example of how, in modern times, the epic quality must be projected'.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, Hemingway, in this novel, finally comes to grips with the problem of time, and the novel therefore is a very conscious attempt by the author to squeeze a life-time of existence, of living, into a short interval of time - more commonly known as the 'perpetual now',<sup>5</sup> or the moment of truth.

In the introduction to this paper I mentioned how integral a part of T. S. Eliot's poetry was his handling of time. He is aware of three kinds of time - the regular day-to-day time or linear time, eternal or geological time, and still

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<sup>3</sup>H. C. Webster, E. Hemingway: The Pursuit of Death, p. 158.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Frederick I. Carpenter, "Hemingway achieves the fifth Dimension", PMLA., CXIX, September, 1954, pp. 711-718.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 711-718.

time, which occurs at the point of intersection of linear time and geological time. This concept is developed fully and extensively in The Four Quartets. We saw too that Virginia Woolf, like Eliot, believed that the past was eternally present and her writings abound with questions about these different kinds of time. In Hemingway's fiction three kinds of time are apparent as well - ordinary linear time, geological time, which is eternal, and the single moment, which is the point of intersection of timelessness and time.

Geological time occurs frequently in Hemingway's fiction and it somehow hints at the permanence which he hoped his fiction would attain. He wrote of the streams and the mountains, the valleys, the 'rain which comes every fall', and the 'earth which abideth forever.' In Green Hills of Africa we find a passage which, because of its unbroken length and gentle-flowing rhythm, suggests the very thing which it is about - eternal time. He describes the feeling which comes to him when he is alone and responsible only to himself.

If you serve time for society, democracy, and the other things quite young, and declining any further enlistment make yourself responsible only to yourself, you exchange the pleasant, comfortable stench of comrades for something you can never feel in any other way than by yourself. That something I cannot yet define completely but the feeling comes when you write well and truly of something and know impersonally you have written in the way and those who are paid to read it and report on it do not like the subject so they say

it is all a fake, yet you know its value absolutely; or when you do something people do not consider important as the things that are in fashion, and when, on the sea, you are alone with it and know that this Gulf Stream you are living with, knowing, learning about, and loving, has moved, as it moves, since before man, and it has gone by the shoreline of that long, beautiful, unhappy island since before Columbus sighted it and that the thing you find out about it, and those that have always lived in it, are permanent and of value because that stream will flow, as it has flowed, after the Indians, after the Spanish, after the British, after the Americans and after all the systems of governments, the richness, the poverty, the martyrdom, the sacrifice, the unreality and the cruelty are all gone as the high-piled scow of garbage, bright coloured, white-flecked, illsmelling, now tilted on its side, spills off its load into the blue water, turning it a pale green to a depth of four or five fathoms as the load spreads across the surface, the sinkable part going down, and the flotsam of corks, bottles, and used electric light bulbs, seasoned with an occasional condom or a deep floating corset, the torn leaves of a student's exercise book, a well-inflated dog, the occasional rat, the no-longer distinguished cat; all this well shepherded by the boats of the garbage pickers who pluck their prizes with long poles, as interested, as intelligent, and as accurate as historians; .... the stream with no visible flow, takes five loads of this a day when things are going well in La Habana and in ten miles along the coast it is as clear and blue and as unimpressed as it was even before the tug hauled out the scow; and the palm fronds of our victories, the warm light bulbs of our discoveries and the empty condoms of our great loves float with no significance against one great lasting thing - the stream.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>E. Hemingway, Green Hills of Africa, pp. 149-150.

This is eternal time narrated with an obvious disgust for linear time in which man lives among all the chaos, erosion, and destruction. The 'Stream', like Eliot's 'ground swell which is and was from the beginning' is permanent; and, although the waste from civilization may contaminate it for awhile, it always flows clearly as it did before the discoveries and inventions. Likewise, it is no accident that many of Hemingway's heroes love to fish on the clean flowing rivers, that Santiago wages his great battle on the deep clear waters of the Gulf-Stream, that Harry Morgan's blood mingles with these same waters, that Colonel Cantwell dies 'across the river and into the trees,' and that Robert Jordan (the hero of For Whom the Bell Tolls) finds both love and death among the rugged Spanish mountains that, like the Gulf-Stream, abide forever.

Hemingway has constantly talked of fiction which is permanent 'and of value' and has prophesied in Green Hills of Africa "The kind of writing that can be done - how far prose can be carried if anyone is serious enough and has luck".<sup>7</sup> The serious writer, then, must be concerned with depicting emotion in prose and at the same time making it permanent. Furthermore, his writing must be an attempt to capture emotional intensity in time and then to give it a

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<sup>7</sup>E. Hemingway, Green Hills of Africa, p. 154.

degree of timelessness. Harry Levine has suggested that Hemingway's style is "lacking in the surface complexity of structure", but he goes on to say that "Hemingway keeps his writing on a linear plain. He holds his purity of line by moving in one direction, ignoring sidetracks and avoiding structural complications. By presenting a series of images, each of which has its brief moment when it commands the reader's attention, he achieves his special vividness and fluidity."<sup>8</sup> But Hemingway's prose has the effect of presenting more than 'special vividness and fluidity.' His prose, and his images in particular, have the effect of isolating, focusing, and framing experiences so that they seem detached and removed from time when actually they take place in time. Indeed, it seems that 'still moments' are most vividly portrayed when the style has the effect of isolating and suspending action, as if the action did not take place in linear time at all. This "framing of experiences" is certainly the effect one gets on reading 'A Clean Well-Lighted Place', and it is undoubtedly one of the things Hemingway admired in the bull-fight as he described it in Death in the Afternoon. The spectator at the bull-fight, if he really understood what was happening, and if the bull and the matador really performed 'truly' and 'well',

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<sup>8</sup>Harry Levin, "Observation on the Style of Hemingway", Kenyon Review, XIII, Autumn, 1951, p. 601.

would experience a peculiar sensation as if everything were fused into the one single moment when the sword touched the heart, when beast and man became one, life and death joined, linear and eternal time met. Hemingway explains it thus:

If the spectators know that the matador is capable of executing a complete consecutive series of passes with the muleta in which there will be valor, art, understanding and, above all, beauty and grace, they will put up with mediocre work . . . . because they have the hope sooner or later of seeing the complete faena; the faena that takes a man out of himself and makes him feel immortal while it is proceeding, that gives him an ecstasy, that is, while momentary, as profound as any religious ecstasy; moving all the people in the ring together and increasing in emotional intensity as it proceeds, carrying the bull-fighter with it, he playing on the crowd through the bull and being moved as it responds in a growing ecstasy of ordered, formal, passionate, increasing disregard for death that leaves you, when it is over, and the death administered to the animal that has made it possible, as empty, as changed, and as sad as any major emotion will leave you.<sup>9</sup>

But it is not the bull-fight only which can bring on such a profound emotion. In A Farewell to Arms we saw that Catherine and Frederic Henry experience such moments in their love-relationships, and Hemingway further substantiates the power to produce intense emotions which seem suspended in time when he writes in Green Hills of Africa that the feeling one gets when alone among the hills in Africa is akin to the feeling one gets when one is in love.

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<sup>9</sup>Death in the Afternoon, Op. Cit., pp. 206-207.

Now, looking out the tunnel of trees over the ravine at the sky with white clouds moving across in the wind, I loved the country so that I was happy as you after you have been with a woman that you really loved, when empty, you feel it welling up again and there it is and you can have it all and yet what there is, now you can have, and you want more and more, to have and be, and live in, to possess now again for always, for that long, sudden-ended always; making time stand still, some times so very still that afterwards you wait to hear it move and it is slow in starting.<sup>10</sup>

Intense love relationship, as we shall see, is a pervasive theme in For Whom the Bell Tolls. Although Hemingway has always been interested in depicting the intensification of experience in his fiction, For Whom the Bell Tolls is his first full-length novel to describe and successfully achieve and communicate to the reader this mysterious kind of reality.<sup>11</sup> Of course, like all good works of art the novel is open to various interpretations, and, as Hemingway said, 'what the reader brings to it will be a measure of the success of the author'. There is no doubt that Hemingway loves Spain and tries to present the people as 'truly' and 'warmly' as possible; he also attempts to deal 'honestly' and 'truly' with a very complex war, which affected not only the Spanish but, indirectly, the whole of humanity. But most important of all is the vision of life which the novel embodies; for it portrays important insights into Hemingway's metaphysic of time, his vision of life, and his handling of the still moment.

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<sup>10</sup>E. Hemingway, Green Hills of Africa, p. 72.

<sup>11</sup>"Hemingway Achieves the Fifth Dimension", Op. Cit., p. 714.

As Frederick I. Carpenter suggests, 'the novel attempts to realize the "fifth dimension" of an "eternal now", beyond the usual "fourth dimension" of time.' It consciously describes as well as subconsciously suggests - the telescoping of time involved in this realization of immediate experience.<sup>12</sup>

It has been noted by a number of critics that the structure of For Whom the Bell Tolls is unlike any other in Hemingway's fiction<sup>13</sup> in that the whole novel is centered around one large steel bridge. The bridge serves as a hub around which all the action - that of the Loyalists and rebels alike - is centered. All roads for all the participants converge on the bridge and go forth from it, and the destiny of all of those concerned seems to hang on the bridge. The success of the Loyalists depends on blowing the bridge and thus preventing the movement of the Fascist troops; and Robert Jordan, the hero of the novel, is given the highly dangerous job of destroying the bridge at the opportune time. Early in the novel Hemingway writes: 'there is a bridge and that bridge can be the point on which the future of the human race can turn.'<sup>14</sup> The bridge then is the center of the conflict, 'the hub on which the future of the human race can turn.'<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 714.

<sup>13</sup>Cf. especially Carlos Baker pp. 223-263, and William T. Moyhahan, College Eng., Dec., XXI, pp. 127-132.

<sup>14</sup>For Whom the Bell Tolls, Op. Cit., p. 43.

<sup>15</sup>Carlos Baker, Hemingway, Op. Cit., p. 246.

This is a big claim to make for the novel, yet it can be shown that Hemingway has successfully squeezed the actions of a group of people into a single moment, given the action a quality seemingly apart from time, and yet embodying universal significance as if it were reaching endlessly into the past and at the same time continuing into the future "ad infinitum".

Carlos Baker writes of For Whom the Bell Tolls that the 'novel is a living example of how, in modern times, the epic quality must probably be projected.'<sup>16</sup> As Baker says, this is a claim which must carefully be judged, but there is no doubt that Hemingway did attempt to magnify the importance of the civil war. Heroic action on a grand scale is a characteristic of the epic in Western European literature, and For Whom the Bell Tolls has this ingredient. The setting is primitive, and the emphasis is on the simple vices and virtues of a rude and elementary people. The people are engaged in a life and death struggle of which this particular episode at the bridge is a microcosm; as a result the success or failure of the mission is symptomatic of the Loyalist cause in Spain. There is no doubt that the men engaged in the conflict are prepared to sacrifice their lives, and they are exceptional for their acts of daring and heroism. Although there are vast differences between Homer's epic of the Trojan war and For Whom the Bell Tolls it is not difficult to find parallels. Jordan and Pablo might symbolize the superior hero, Achilles,

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 247.

and the ready warrior, Ajax, respectively. Pilar, with her palm reading, might denote the oracles and the supernatural; and Madrid, like Troy, is destined to collapse. Add to this the 'intentionally heightened language,' the 'over-all-seriousness of conception,' and 'the characterization in depth,'<sup>17</sup> and we are undoubtedly aware of definite affinities with the traditional epic. Also the general effect is one of greatness, grandeur, and dignity - of universality and perpetuality. The war is not just a civil war in Spain, but any civil war or all civil wars, and Robert Jordan could be a young man in any of these wars giving his life as countless thousands did before him. Thus, the event has a degree of timelessness which has not appeared in any of Hemingway's novels so far.

This timelessness is suggested in a number of ways. All the events in the novel take place within a seventy-hour span, which is only a moment when compared to a life time. Yet Hemingway gives the impression that a whole life time is being squeezed into these seventy hours. Linear time - the time in which we live - is made to seem momentary, almost still, as if everything existed for the moment in which one acted. Robert Jordan seems overwhelmingly aware of this:

Maybe that is my life and instead of being three score years and ten it is forty-eight hours or just three score hours and ten or twelve rather. Twenty-four hours in a day would be three score and twelve

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 248-250.

for the three full days. I suppose it is possible to live as full a life in seventy hours as in seventy years; granted that your life has been full up to the time that the seventy hours start and that you have reached a certain age.<sup>18</sup>

We are never permitted to forget that these seventy hours are not just seventy ordinary hours of linear time but rather the measurement of a life time. It is not only seconds and minutes that are ticking away imperceptibly, but Jordan's life and the life of all the others; and since Jordan recognizes this, living and doing what has to be done (like Santiago in The Old Man and the Sea doing what he was born for) become all the more urgent and necessary.

In comparison with the magnitude of the undertaking and the broad implications which the work embodies the plot is extraordinarily simple. Robert Jordan is an American volunteer, fighting for the Loyalists in the Spanish Civil war, who arrives with his orders at Pablo's cave, carefully makes arrangements to do his job, falls in love with a peasant girl, Maria, controls the very unpredictable Pablo, blows the bridge at the exact moment, and then prepares to die on the soft earth when physical injuries make it impossible for him to escape.

Yet the simplicity of the plot helps the creation of the illusion of suspended time, as if everything were hanging on a dangerous precipice ready to fall at a predetermined moment.

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<sup>18</sup>For Whom the Bell Tolls, Op. Cit., p. 166.

Actually it is doom which always seems to be lurking in the distance, and it is this eerie feeling of foreboding, of inevitable catastrophe, that makes the precarious actions seem so important and urgent.

This is one of the reasons why the love affair between Jordan and Maria is so significant. A whole life time of 'caring' and 'wanting to do things for' must be squeezed into seventy hours. Hemingway has received considerable adverse criticism for the creation of this idyllic love relationship. Critics have said that the emotional entanglement of the hero and heroine does not always ring true, that the whole situation is too idealized, that Maria is too perfectly drawn - a stereotype rather than a real living woman. Furthermore, they add that the story is an example of Hemingway's rampant romanticism when depicting the union of lovers, that the conversation between the two is at times painfully sentimental, and that the two lovers give the impression of being removed from the coming warfare. These are certainly grave criticisms, and they spring from a failure to appreciate the illusion of suspended time, which Hemingway seeks to create; for both are inseparably connected.

Frederic I. Carpenter says that "The love affair forms the core of the book. And paradoxically ... seems obtrusive because it struggles under so heavy a weight of conscious meaning."<sup>19</sup> It is true that their relationship is somewhat

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<sup>19</sup>"Hemingway Achieves the Fifth Dimension", Op. Cit., p. 715.

idyllic and ideal and that Maria is symbolic of all that Jordan needs to make his short hours complete. This is precisely the impression Hemingway wishes to create. We saw in A Farewell to Arms that union with Catherine was the only effective way of imposing order and meaning on the chaos which threatened Frederic Henry, and that their love made his life more precious and worthwhile. So too in For Whom the Bell Tolls. Maria "with her cropped head", her natural simplicity, and her essential peasant goodness, is symbolic of the hero's own self-realization of the justness of the cause for which he risks his life, of Spain and its people, of humanity itself. Critics are correct perhaps when they assert that Hemingway was not completely successful here, but the wonder is not that he has failed—if indeed he has—but that he should embark on such a stupendous endeavour at all.

The significance of Jordan's experiences, his whole lifetime which now is only seventy-two hours, can only be communicated and made tangible in his relationship to someone else; and thus his near perfect sexual relationship with Maria where he becomes completely unaware of linear time as the apex of that experience. The love affair begins almost immediately when Maria squeezes into Jordan's sleeping bag on the first night. She hopes to erase the memories of the terrible things which had been done to her at the hands of

the enemy but she finds that her lover is not completely with her, that he is thinking of the inevitable passage of time:

"And what time is it now? lo sobes?"

"No. Thou hast no watch?"

"Yes. But it is behind my back".

"Take it from there."

"No."

"Then look over my shoulder."

It was one o'clock. The dial showed bright in the darkness that the robe made.<sup>20</sup>

Later, however, after Pilar, the gypsy fortune-teller, warns that "There is not much time", their love affair becomes meaningful, and it is in this utter union of souls and bodies that the still moment of time is most clearly achieved. This union occurs frequently in the novel, but nowhere is it more explicitly and obviously expressed than in the following passage. Note the obvious disregard for ordinary linear time and the apparent mergence with the earth which abideth forever:

"Speak not. Speak not."

Then they were together so that as the hand on the watch moved, unseen now, they knew that nothing could ever happen to the one that did not happen to the other, that no other thing could happen more than this; that this was all and always; this was what had been and now and whatever was to come. This, that they were not to have,

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<sup>20</sup>For Whom the Bell Tolls, Ibid., p. 72.

they were having. They were having now and before and always and now and now and now. Oh, now, now, now, the only now, and above all now, and there is no other now but thou now and now is thy profit. Now and forever now. Come now, now for there is no now but now. Now, please now, only now, not anything else only this now, and where are you and where am I and where is the other one, and not why, not even why, only this now; and on and always please then always now, always now, for now always one now; one only one, there is no other one but one now, one, going now, rising now, sailing, now, leaving now, wheeling now, soaring now, always now, all the way now, all of all the way now; one and one is one, is one, is one, is one, is still one, is still one, is one descendingly, is one softly, is one longingly, is one kindly, is one happily, is one in goodness, is one to cherish, is one now on earth with elbows against the cut - and slept - on branches of the pine tree with the smell of the pine boughs and the night; to earth conclusively now, and with the morning of the day to come.<sup>21</sup>

"And this was all and always." The effect is not unlike that which Hemingway suggested in Green Hills of Africa when one feels that he is really in love ... "that long, sudden-ended always; making time stand still, sometimes so very still that afterwards you want to hear it move, and it is slow in starting."<sup>22</sup> The passage quoted above obviously indicates a mystical quality and rightly so, since every intense experience or ecstasy which results in insight or special illumination contains a mysterious quality. The

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 279.

<sup>22</sup>Green Hills of Africa, Op. Cit., p. 72.

repeated use of the words 'always', 'now', and of different forms of the verb 'to be', suggest that there is a peculiar characteristic attached to their sexual union, and Hemingway further substantiates this in the words of Robert Jordan, when after their love scene, he says that his mind,

his best companion, was thinking La Gloria. She said La Gloria. It had nothing to do with glory nor La Gloire that the French write and speak about. It is the thing that is in the Corte Hando and in the Saetas. It is in Greco and in San Juan de la Cruz, of course, and in the others. I am no mystic, but to deny it is as ignorant as though you denied the telephone or that the earth revolves around the sun or that there are other planets than this.<sup>23</sup>

In A Farewell to Arms Frederic Henry and Catherine experience moments like this but there is nothing in the novel to suggest the completeness of the mystical transport and the intensity of the sexual union which Jordan and Maria experienced. And as if more proof of the significance and extent of their unity were necessary, Hemingway further illuminates it at the conclusion of the novel when Jordan, wounded and unable to escape, bids farewell to Maria: "Not me but us both. The me in thee. Now you go for us both ... There is no good-bye, guapa, because we do not part ... Thou art me now. Thou art all there will be of me".<sup>24</sup>

As Jordan and Maria melt into each other, Jordan gains from the experience a tinge of immortality; he experiences

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<sup>23</sup>For Whom the Bell Tolls, Op. Cit., p. 380.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 464.

the sensation of merging oneself with an entity far greater and more important than the self; for Maria is hardly just a simple Spanish girl caught in the clutches of war. To be sure the ravages of war have left their marks on both her body and spirit, and one of the important effects of their love is to erase these scars and to place her in a position to live a healthy normal life again. But Maria is more than just a simple Spanish girl enjoying the delights of a short sweet love affair. The fact that she has been so intimately attached to the brutality of war - or wars - makes the cause for which Jordan gives his life all the more just, universally applicable, and necessary. But Maria, (the name is significant) stands for more than this. Frederic I. Carpenter puts it well when he says that her name

becomes a symbol of the traditional mariolatry of the Spanish Catholic Church which "the reformation never reached;" and the violence of the Spanish Civil war becomes an intensified union of all modern history since the Reformation, compressed in symbolic time. His (Jordan's) love for this modern Maria becomes both a symbolic fulfillment of history, and a transcendence of the "time". In a flash, the immediate experience of the eternal now becomes not only a personal "system of belief", but a philosophy of history illuminating the whole love.<sup>25</sup>

In the novel Maria is referred to almost constantly as "rabbit", and she is identified time and time again with nature (for example, her short hair is referred to as a

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<sup>25</sup>"Hemingway Achieves the Fifth Dimension", Op. Cit., p. 716.

field of ripening wheat). So to Robert Jordan she represents life itself - "But in the night he awoke and held her as though she were all of life and it was being taken from him. He held her feeling she was all of life there was and it was true."<sup>26</sup>

Through union with Maria, Robert Jordan gains a oneness with nature which surpasses anything else in life. It is not so much a resignation to nature but rather a merging with the pulses and rhythms - the regenerative powers - which have been going on since time began. It is as close as one can come perhaps to gaining immortality while living this very mortal life.

Like Brontë's Heathcliff, whose very spirit seemed to permeate the moors surrounding Wuthering Heights, Robert Jordan, toward the end of the novel, experiences a gradual immersion into nature, "into the earth that abideth forever." In a passage that rings of mysticism, Hemingway writes of merging with nature as he awaits the right time for blowing the bridge:

Robert Jordan lay behind the trunk of a pine tree on the slope of the hill above the road and the bridge and watched it become daylight. He loved this hour of the day always and now he watched it, feeling it grey within him, as though he were part of the slow lightening that comes before the rising of the sun; when solid things darken and the lights that have shone in the night go yellow and then fade as the

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<sup>26</sup>For Whom the Bell Tolls, Op. Cit., p. 264.

day comes. The pine trunks below him were hard and clear now, their trunks solid and brown and the road was shiny with a wisp of mist over it. The dew had wet him and the forest floor was soft and he felt the give of the brown, dropped pine needles under his elbows.<sup>27</sup>

A further endorsement of the fact that Robert Jordan had found peace in and with this world comes almost at the end of the novel where Hemingway boldly writes of the peace, the contentment, and the quiet joy which the hero experiences as he lies on the sweet-smelling earth awaiting death.

Robert Jordan saw them there on the slope, close to him now, and below he saw the road and the bridge and the long lines of vehicles below it. He was completely integrated now and he took a good long look at everything. Then he looked up at the sky. There were big white clouds in it. He touched the palm of his hand against the pine needles where he lay and he touched the bark of the pine that he lay behind.<sup>28</sup>

And, significantly, the last sentence of the novel reads almost as a reminder of Jordan's union with nature: "He could feel his heart beating against the pine needle floor of the forest."<sup>29</sup>

What Jordan has accomplished in this novel is similar to that which the old fisherman in The Old Man and the Sea accomplishes. "A man can be destroyed but not defeated", says Santiago, and the maxim is characteristically applicable

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<sup>27</sup>For Whom the Bell Tolls, Op. Cit., p. 431.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 471.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 471.

to Robert Jordan, though he dies at the end. His victory must be seen in the wider context of the Hemingway vision, for essentially the novel is about "nada" and the necessity to rebut it with all the resources that the human body and spirit can muster. "That bridge", Hemingway says, "can be the point on which the future of the human race can turn", but as it turns out, the blowing of the bridge has no significance whatever. As Carlos Baker says, "nothing is settled". This is the wheel-like turn of Spain's tragedy; indeed, after all the agony and all the blood, nothing is settled, and Spain is back where it began, in a medieval situation.<sup>30</sup> The blowing of the bridge pointedly demonstrates in physical terms just how much 'this span' is not the point on which the future of the human race turns, since it displays in graphic terms a remarkable lesson in "nada". In terms of the war effect, the bridge, when it is blown, is almost insignificant; but we must remember here that it has a spiritual and social effect on "that little band of people". The fascists have already prepared for the coming attack, and the blowing of the bridge means little or nothing to them. In this sense then the blowing of the bridge and the loss of human life which accompanies it is just another gruesome aspect of the senselessness of war. And war here means much the same as it did in A Farewell to Arms. War is chaos,

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<sup>30</sup>Hemingway, Op. Cit., p. 263.

futility, (meaninglessness), and the twisted broken steel of the bridge along with the mangled bodies strewn around the area is a grim reminder of the "nada" which has entered into the lives of the little band who have taken it, of the war which has enveloped them, and of their attempt to create meaning out of the futility which surrounds them.

But in the wider terms of Hemingway's vision the bridge does represent a kind of 'clean well-lighted place' and does function as 'the point on which the future of the human race can turn'. It does provide a kind of light in the night - a means of imposing order on the chaos of life. Because of the bridge Robert Jordan and Maria meet, fall in love, and for a while the earth becomes their heaven. Because of the bridge the little group of Loyalists are forged into a whole in their concentrated flight for a cause, and even the unpredictable Pablo becomes part of the group again, at least temporarily. Or by extension, because of the bridge humanity has once again shown itself an effective cohesive force in battling the numerous imponderables of life. Finally, because of the bridge,

no man is an Iland, intire of it self;  
every man is a peece of the continent, a  
part of the maine; if a clod bee washed  
away by the sea, Europe is the lesse, as  
well as of a mannor of thy friends or me,  
because I am involved in mankinde: And  
therefore never send to know for whom the  
bell tolls; It tolls for thee.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>For Whom the Bell Tolls, Op. Cit., Title Page to the Novel.

CHAPTER SIX

THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA: "SUFFERING AND THE STILL POINT."

About suffering they were never wrong  
The old Masters: how well they under-  
stood  
Its human position; how it takes place  
While someone else is eating or opening  
a Window or just walking dully along;  
How, when the aged are reverently,  
passionately waiting  
For the miraculous birth, there always  
must be  
Children who did not specially want it to  
happen, skating  
On a pond at the edge of the wood:  
They never forget  
That even the dreadful martyrdom must run  
its course,  
Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot  
where the  
Dogs go on with their doggy life and the  
Torturer's horse  
Scratches its innocent behind on a tree.  
(Musée Des Beaux Arts, W. H. Auden)

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In Death in the Afternoon Hemingway describes metaphorically the kind of prose he wanted to write: He says that "if a writer of prose knows enough about what he is writing he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of the movement of an iceberg is due to only one-eighth of its being above water".<sup>1</sup>

The Old Man and the Sea, Hemingway's last and perhaps his greatest published novel, aptly illustrates this statement. Commenting in Time on his intention in writing The Old Man and The Sea Hemingway said: "I tried to make a real old man, a real boy, a real fish and real sharks. But if I made them true and good enough, they would mean many things".<sup>2</sup> Apparently Hemingway has made them true and good enough, for ever since the publication of the novel there has been an attitude of awe and mystery among critics as if the novel contained things which they did not care to talk about. Of course, the critics have spoken - and even today numerous echoes still resound from the pages of literary journals - but a goodly number of them has been concerned with superficialities and has failed to link the novel to Hemingway's vision and to probe sufficiently the deep, inner, philosophical undercurrent which runs throughout the work.

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<sup>1</sup>Death in the Afternoon, Op. Cit., p. 192.

<sup>2</sup>Quoted in Time, Dec. 19, 1954, p. 72.

Of course, interesting and provocative studies of the novel have been made, and though a lot of these studies vary considerably in subject and scope, a number of them are quite interesting. Carlos Baker has made an excellent study of the symbolism in the novel and has suggested that the work is unmistakably Christian and that Santiago is pointedly suggestive of Christ.<sup>3</sup> In another approach Philip Young has noted the epic qualities in the novel, and has called the book "classical, not only technically, in its narrow confines, its reduction to fundamentals ... purity of design, ... and fatal flaw of pride ... but ... in spirit ... and praise of things as they are."<sup>4</sup> And - representing another approach to the novel - Leo Gurko sees the work as portraying Hemingway's romanticism, and has dealt considerably with Santiago's rugged individualism and the love he feels for the creatures of the world who share an existence which is essentially violent.<sup>5</sup> These diverse readings of The Old Man and the Sea are not, however, incorrect, as substantial proof can be produced for the validity of each particular line of thought. What they actually do is differ only in emphasis since they point out nearly the same conclusion - namely, that Santiago represents dignity, courage,

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<sup>3</sup>Carlos Baker, Hemingway, Op. Cit., p. 299.

<sup>4</sup>Philip Young, Ernest Hemingway, Op. Cit., pp. 128-129.

<sup>5</sup>Leo Gurko, 'The Old Man and the Sea', College English, XVII, 14 (Oct., 1955), p. 28.

bravery, and humility, that he is essentially a Christ-like figure, and that his individualism shows what a man can do in an alien world which attempts to defeat him but which he loves, nevertheless, very dearly.

Yet, valid as these interpretations seem, there is still a deeper and more comprehensive level of significance, a deeper level on which The Old Man and the Sea can be read as the final portrayal of Hemingway's vision. In this respect the novel displays a kind of philosophic naturalism, grounded in human affairs and the actions of men, and at the same time shows a transcendentalism which gives universal meaning - a seeming mystical quality - to the harsh things which Hemingway preferred to write about.

In view of this then the first thing to be considered in The Old Man and the Sea is the deep feeling of togetherness, harmony, and continuity which runs throughout the work. Earlier in this paper it was shown how Hemingway viewed life as being essentially chaotic, and how a real attempt at living was actually an attempt to impose order on the "nada" which surrounded man and sought to destroy him. The Sun Also Rises depicts this world view meticulously, almost painfully, and shows how Jake Barnes and some of his friends attempt to find a "center of being" amongst the harsh inevitabilities of life. In A Farewell to Arms the world is still futile and chaotic, but amidst the confusion and

uncertainty Frederic Henry manages to establish a kind of order on the meaningless. Here relations between people become important, and love between Catherine and himself nearly becomes the sole basis on which he builds his existence. And in For Whom the Bell Tolls love becomes a seeming transcendental quality, relations between people are developed, and a harmony between man and nature is apparent. However, what The Old Man and the Sea shows is not only the warmth which springs from social intercourse but the essential harmony of all things. The novel displays not only a human community but an universal community, and the basic truth which Hemingway has at last discovered gives meaning to all struggles, including man's.

What then is this truth which The Old Man and the Sea seems to embrace and which seems to apply to all living things which Santiago encounters as well as to himself? And furthermore, how can this truth be explained in terms of Santiago's rugged individualism which seems, on the surface at least, to be in direct opposition to the harmony of all things - the sense of togetherness - which the novel seems to embody? Clinton S. Burhans Jr. was surely correct when he noted that Hemingway since 1937 has shown a greater concern for human relations and that The Old Man and the Sea is the culminating 'expression' of the total community which is necessary to life. Burhans, however, stresses "solidity

and interdependence without which life is impossible" and says that Santiago must "learn it as it has always been truly learned, through the agony of active and isolated individualism in a universe which dooms such individualism".<sup>6</sup> To be sure "isolated individualism" is a pervasive theme in The Old Man and the Sea and the communal element is certainly a powerful undercurrent in the book, but rather than interdependence as a means to solidarity there is the dependence of the many on the one, of the passive on the active - and Santiago is surely in the latter category. This is also a moving theme in For Whom the Bell Tolls, although the idea is not developed as extensively and completely as it is in this, his last published novel.

In the first place, this concept - not of interdependence, but of the dependence of the many on the one - is reinforced by the Christian religious symbolism in the book. A mere listing of the major religious symbols will suffice. Santiago is a fisherman, and he is likewise a teacher, one who has taught the boy not only how to fish well, but how to live virtuously as well. In his struggle with the great Marlin and later on with the sharks, his hands become painfully cramped, the line cuts into his back, he gets a terrible headache, his chest aches miserably, and he spits blood. He hooks the fish at noon, and at noon of the third day he

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<sup>6</sup>Clinton S. Burhans Jr., "The Old Man and the Sea: Hemingway's Tragic Vision of Man", American Literature, XXXI (Jan. 1960), p. 447.

kills it. As he sees the sharks attacking he groans "Ay", and Hemingway says: "There is no interpretation for this word and perhaps it is just a noise such as man might make involuntarily, feeling the nail go through his hands and into the wood."<sup>7</sup> On landing, the old man shoulders his mast and goes uphill from the sea to his simple hut; he is forced to rest several times on his journey up the hill; and when he finally arrives, he lies on the bed "with his arms out straight and the palms of his hands up".<sup>8</sup>

The figure which these symbols represent is undoubtedly Christ, but this symbolism reveals a deeper significance that goes beyond the suggestion that Santiago is just a Christ-like figure. A closer scrutinization of the symbolism points to a particular event in the life of Jesus. Santiago's bleeding back and hands, his hurt chest, and his journey up the hill to his home with his mast on his back is an unmistakable allusion to Calvary. Thus, the type of community which this novel suggests is not unlike that suggested by the Calvary scene. Calvary suggests at once the dependence of the many on the one, strong individualism on the part of the Redeemer, the sense of doing it alone; and it is not incorrect, I think, to view the novel as displaying this kind of community and Santiago, especially, as this kind of Redeemer.

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<sup>7</sup>The Old Man and the Sea, Op. Cit., p. 118.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 134.

Accordingly, as the story of the old man progresses, we find that Santiago exerts his individualism for a purpose, and that he is primarily concerned with the intensity of the experience which he derives in the encounter, and that this is what gives him the courage, initiative, and drive to go fishing again and again. In fact, many of the creatures which Santiago meets on his fishing trip, and which he admires, closely resemble him in their dependence on strength, their willingness to endure adversity, and their willingness even to go against nature when it does not fit their wishes. Thus, the great Marlin swims against the current of the Gulf Stream as soon as he is hooked, seemingly in protest against nature of which he is so very much a part.<sup>9</sup> Yet, paradoxically, because of his colour, and the great depths at which he swims, he seems to be closer to the sea than many other fish who swim listlessly with the current. Similarly, other admirable creatures of the sea portray a definite defiance of nature when nature does not conform to their plans. Thus, we see that the big Mako shark, like the Marlin, "had no fear at all and would do exactly what he wished,"<sup>10</sup> and the golden dolphin who had purple stripes on his sides as on a Marlin", would become very angry when he was "truly hungry"<sup>11</sup> and stop at nothing. And even Santiago, who

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 111

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 79.

loved the sea so much, who was part of the sea and spent his life on it, was prepared to go against its wishes when it was necessary. We are told that he went far out to the dangerous places where no other fisherman would venture, that he understood fishing and the sea<sup>12</sup> perfectly and that he "crowded the current"<sup>13</sup> when it was to his best advantage to do so.

Indeed, Hemingway seems to advocate in The Old Man and the Sea that at times it is necessary and right for one to oppose nature, for in this paradoxical opposition one is able to experience the most intense feelings, or come closest perhaps to experiencing the "perpetual now".<sup>14</sup> The Marlin, we are told, is a very old fish; Santiago is likewise a very old man battered by the elements, and wrinkled, with a face full of sun cancer.<sup>15</sup> And yet both of them wage a battle which would seemingly challenge the vitality and strength of a much younger man or beast; consequently, what Santiago lacks in strength he makes up in skill, ingenuity, and a more concentrated effort. So it would seem that the basic structure of the novel rests on a number of oppositions. Santiago can be compassionate but violent, comfortable while in pain, strong even though he

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<sup>12</sup>There is a good commentary on Santiago's fishing skill in Joseph Waldmer's, 'Confiteor Hominem', pp. 166-167.

<sup>13</sup>The Old Man and the Sea, Op. Cit., p. 36.

<sup>14</sup>"Hemingway Achieves the Fifth Dimension", PMLA, Op. Cit., p. 712.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

is old and "weak", and victorious even in defeat. Also, this quality of opposition is peculiar to nature in a way, for the workings of nature can at one moment be a blessing to some and a curse to others. Accordingly, Santiago recognizes this paradoxical logic of nature, since the strangeness of his eyes suggests that he can perceive things which lesser fishermen cannot see<sup>16</sup>, and that he understands the pulses and rhythms of nature since he has been part of her since his boyhood. Alone on the Gulf Stream Santiago seems closer to nature perhaps than Robert Jordan even as he lay on the pine needles with his heart throbbing. We are told that Santiago fished expertly, that his lines reached down into the clear blue water with one bait down "forty fathoms", the other at "seventy-five" ... "and the third and fourth .... down in the blue water at one hundred and one hundred and twenty-five fathoms"<sup>17</sup> respectively. This suggests, I think, that Santiago can be seen as that natural link between humanity and the physical world. His lines which reach down into the deep join him, as it were, to that mysterious quality which makes nature what it is. Like Christ, when the battle with the Marlin approaches its zenith, he cushions "the pull of the line with his body"<sup>18</sup>, and Christ-like he bears calmly, almost passively, the agony which this

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<sup>16</sup>The Old Man and the Sea, Op. Cit., pp. 15, 107, 112.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 85.

great battle with a friend imposes upon him. And significantly, Santiago says: "Now we are joined together and have been since noon. And no one to help either of us."<sup>19</sup>

Accordingly, critics regard The Old Man and the Sea as Hemingway's lesson in the significance of isolated activity, and say that Santiago's reward comes not when he is alone on the Gulf Stream with the Marlin, but when he returns again to civilization and to the warmth of the friendship between Manolin and himself. To be sure, the community element is a pervasive theme running throughout the work, but it should be seen as being secondary to Santiago's experience, for his reward comes not when he arrives home from his battle, but when he is farthest away from civilization, at the moment when he is completely alone with the Marlin. It comes when he plunges his lance into the Marlin's heart.

To appreciate this, we need to recall Hemingway's handling of time in For Whom the Bell Tolls - how he meticulously, painstakingly, narrated the exact passage of linear time, how the reader was made acutely aware of eternal time, and how all time seemed to fuse at the intense moment of Maria's and Jordan's love relationship. Accordingly, we are never permitted to forget the passage of linear time in The Old Man and the Sea. We are told how Santiago fished on the Gulf Stream for eighty-four days without landing a single

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

fish, and that for the first forty days he had been accompanied by the boy, Manolin. On the eighty-fifth day he rowed "way out" past where anyone else had gone, and at noon he hooked a giant male Marlin. The rest of that day and all that night he pitted his strength against that of the fish and on the afternoon of the second day he first saw the fish which had been hooked now for some twenty-seven hours. The flight continued all through the second night, and as the third day began, the fish, being tired, began to circle the boat, and at noon of the third day Santiago finally drove his lance into the Marlin's heart, tied the fish to his boat, and turned towards home. An hour passed before the arrival of the fierce Mako shark. Santiago fought it desperately until he killed it; but others came and he fought them until he lost his last weapon, and late in the third night he sailed into the calm waters of the harbour with only a long white skeleton - a winner with no material gain to show.

Thus, as in For Whom the Bell Tolls, we are constantly made aware of the passage of linear time; furthermore, the novel evokes in the reader's mind a strange quality of timelessness. The Gulf Stream, which has been Santiago's home since he was a boy, and which is also the home of the great fish which he so loves and admires, is the same Gulf Stream which <sup>Hemingway</sup> he wrote about in Green Hills of Africa.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Green Hills of Africa, Op. Cit., pp. 149-150.

Generations come and go, but these waters, like the mountains in Spain and the green hills in Africa, "which is and was from the beginning"<sup>21</sup> remain forever. And even Santiago himself, who is a very temporal being to be sure, has a peculiar quality of strangeness and mystery about him which suggests a degree of timelessness. We are told that "he is a strange old man"<sup>22</sup>, with scars "as old as erosions in a fishless desert"<sup>23</sup> and that "everything about him was old except his eyes."<sup>24</sup> We are made aware of the strange quality of infinite time which prevades the novel.

But there is another kind of time which is closely linked to the moment when Santiago received his reward. As the awesome battle with the Marlin concludes, the fish circles nearer and nearer the boat, and then with "one final death leap the fish surges and seems to "hang in the air"<sup>25</sup> above the old man. Hemingway describes the episode thus:

Then the fish came alive with his death in him, and rose out of the water showing all his great length and width and all his power and beauty. He seemed to hang in the air above the old man in the skiff. Then he fell into the water with a crash that sent spray over the old man and over all the skiff.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Four Quartets, Op. Cit., p. 37.

<sup>22</sup>The Old Man and the Sea, Op. Cit., p. 15.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 104.

Surely this is another of the moments of suspended time which we have already seen occurring in previous Hemingway fiction. Yet the point has not been commented upon sufficiently to define the achievement which Santiago derives from this obvious transcendental experience; for it is precisely because of this unique experience that the old man can be called a winner with no material gains to show. Frederic I. Carpenter has commented upon Santiago's performance of ritual and how he identifies the "intensity of his own experience and suffering with that of the great fish he is slaying".<sup>27</sup> But he does not comment on the peculiar death of the fish, which is so related to Santiago's own transcendental experience, so an otherwise brilliant paper seems hollow toward the end. For as the fish hangs - momentarily suspended in the air - the old man undergoes a strange, peculiar sensation of timelessness not unlike that which Robert Jordan felt when the "earth moved out and away" from him and Maria. It was as if linear time and eternal time fused for a moment; it did not matter that he had fished a hundred or a thousand times before. This moment was worth "fishing for". "When he saw the fish come out of the water and hang motionless in the sky before he fell, he was sure there was some great strangeness and he could not believe it. Then he could not see well, although now he saw as well as ever."<sup>28</sup> Santiago's reward,

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<sup>27</sup>"Hemingway Achieves the Fifth Dimension", Op. Cit., p. 718.

<sup>28</sup>The Old Man and the Sea, Op. Cit., p. 109.

then, is far removed from earthly matters, and, contrary to what many readers seem to think, it does not take the form of a lesson at all. Rather, it is that almost instantaneous perception of the eternal which only exceptional creatures are able to wrest from this mortal existence - something akin to Bernard's final revelation in Virginia Woolf's The Waves or to that mysterious perception of Lear as he stands alone on the cliffs of Dover amidst the storm. Such a concept is difficult to talk about, and poetry, perhaps, is the best medium for its portrayal. Hence, The Waves and The Old Man and the Sea are really prose poems.

We have already seen in this paper that one comes closest to glimpsing the eternal in moments of ideal love. Thus we saw that Frederic Henry progresses from uncaring to caring mainly because of love, and that Robert Jordan's moment of ecstasy is most intensely felt and realized in sexual union with Maria. And, significantly, Santiago's occurs when he kills this fish which he loves - this fish which he considers a brother. In fact, in killing the great Marlin, Santiago feels as if he has betrayed the fish: "I am only better than him through trickery", he thinks, "and he meant me no harm".<sup>29</sup> Hence, a central paradox is attached to this killing, for Santiago is both compassionate and violent in that he kills the object of his love. The fact that he calls the fish his

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 110.

brother and feels a genuine oneness with him is more than an obvious case of pathetic fallacy. It is like the realization of kinship which exists between the torero and his bull at the moment when he is pushing the sword into the heart.

And Hemingway, we remember, felt the same way when he killed the Kudo in the climactic scene in Green Hills of Africa:

"I stooped over and touched him [the Kudo] to try to believe it ... and there was not a mark upon him and he smelled sweet

and lovely like the breath of cattle and the odour of thyme

after rain".<sup>30</sup> Santiago's reaction to his fish is much the

same. "I want to see him, he thought, and to touch and to

feel him ... I think I feel his heart ..."<sup>31</sup> Undoubtedly,

what we have in this combination of love and violence, which

Hemingway has frequently written about and which he seems to

perpetuate in The Old Man and the Sea, is a key perhaps to

a further insight into his handling of the still moment and

of the universal harmony which man can share with other men

and with the lesser creatures. A brief comparison of San-

tiago's slaying of the Marlin with the killing of the bull

in the bull-fight should illuminate this.

The bull-fight, as Hemingway has described it in Death in the Afternoon and elsewhere, is a highly stylized and pre-meditated event, and consists largely in manoeuvring the bull into a favourable physical state for killing by following

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<sup>30</sup>Green Hills of Africa, Op. Cit., p. 231.

<sup>31</sup>The Old Man and the Sea, Op. Cit., p. 105.

closely a sequence of action carefully planned and executed. In short, the whole pattern is highly ritualistic. This, of course, is not the only example of ritual in Hemingway's fiction; there is Nick's ordered, patterned fishing-trip in In Our Time and Colonel Cantwell's ritualistic death in Across the River and into the Trees - to mention only a few. However, it is in The Old Man and the Sea that Hemingway brings the whole ritualistic process to a head. We are told, painstakingly, how carefully and accurately the old man performs his function as fisherman. He carefully baits his hook, makes sure his lines are down the exact depth, keeps the right tension on his lines "just below the breaking point" when the fish is hooked, and takes good care to preserve his strength for the killing of the great fish. The calmness and exactness of both the man and the fish give the whole conclusion a ritualistic quality. Furthermore, Santiago's fish, as it nears death, behaves much like the bull as the torero prepares the kill. We are told that the fish begins to swim with the current, that it starts to circle, and that Santiago guides it in ever-diminishing circles until he passes close by the boat several times much as the bull is slowly positioned by the matador for the climactic kill. We are then told precisely how Santiago killed the Marlin:

The old man dropped the line and put his foot on it and lifted the harpoon as high as he could and drove it down with all his strength, and more strength he had just

summoned, into the fish's side just behind the great chest fin that rose high in the air to the altitude of the man's chest. He felt the iron go in and he leaned on it and drove it further and pushed all his weight after it.<sup>32</sup>

We should compare this passage with a celebrated passage in Death in the Afternoon where the actual death thrust by the matador is vividly described. Note the obvious parallels with the death of the Marlin:

... the beauty of the moment of killing is that flash when man and bull form one figure as the sword goes all the way in, the man leaning after it, death uniting the two figures in the emotional, aesthetic and artistic climax of the fight.<sup>33</sup>

Hence, what Hemingway has been successfully able to achieve in The Old Man and the Sea, among other things, is the application of the paradox of the bull-fight and the hunt so as to reconcile the forces of love and violence which have been a constant source of speculation and doubt up to the publication of this novel. In fact, the seemingly complementary existence of love and violence is implicitly present in For Whom the Bell Tolls, although it does not appear explicitly until the book is nearly finished. The whole love relationship between Jordan and Maria takes place in an atmosphere of violence and killing, but it is not till the concluding chapter that Jordan learns about and accepts the simultaneous existence of both. He also learns that one reinforces the other.

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>33</sup>Death in the Afternoon, Op. Cit., p. 247.

He had never thought that you could know that there was a woman if there was battle; nor that if there was a woman that she should have breasts small round and tight against you through a shirt; not that they, the breasts, could know about the two of them in battle; but it was true and he thought, good. That's good.<sup>34</sup>

Robert Jordan seems to realize that love and violence can indeed turn on the same wheel at times, and that the juxtaposition of the two can, under certain conditions, produce worthwhile effects. But this achievement is most clearly portrayed in The Old Man and the Sea. Throughout the novel Santiago certainly stresses his admiration and love for the great fish, his love for the dolphins and ducks, and admiration even for the great Mako shark; but in the end he must do what has to be done - "what he was born to do as a fisherman" - and he therefore kills the Marlin. And so "far out", beyond all people, way out past the other fishermen, beyond the glow of the lights from Havana and into the blue wilderness of waters with only his brothers and friends of the sea and the sky he merges himself with the things around him which he knows so well. Santiago is no longer the man he was when he embarked on his fishing trip three days before. For a seemingly imperceptible moment he loses his individuality and feels that he is "good forever."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>For Whom the Bell Tolls, Op. Cit., p. 456.

<sup>35</sup>The Old Man and the Sea, Op. Cit., p. 102.

You are killing me, fish, the man thought. But you have a right to. Never have I seen a greater, or more beautiful, or a calmer, or more noble thing than you, brother. Come on and kill me. I do not care who kills who. Now you are getting confused in the head, he thought. You must keep your head clear and know how to suffer like a man. Or a fish, he thought.<sup>36</sup>

It is significant to note too that not only Santiago but the other champions in the story act in accord with the natural order of things. This is portrayed especially in the various time sequences which the reader is carefully made aware of. The Marlin struggles for forty-eight hours from the moment he is hooked to the moment of his death; and the whole fishing trip lasts exactly seventy-two hours. We are reminded that the "Great negro from Cienfuegos" with whom Santiago fought in his youth and defeated in the "hand game"<sup>37</sup> struggled for twenty-four hours - from dawn to dawn before he was defeated. The great Marlin was hooked when the sun was at its zenith and its death leap occurred at noon on the second day when the sun was again at its zenith. Furthermore, Santiago's journey reminds us of the gradual rise and fall of the sun. For as the sun rises to its zenith and then falls again to the point from which it rose, so too does Santiago's journey take him first from the harbour, then way out past everything and everyone, and finally

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., pp. 76-78.

to victory and defeat and back again to the harbour and home. Indeed, that often-quoted line from T. S. Eliot's Four Quartets, "In my end is my beginning", could well characterize Santiago's journey and the effect which the struggle has on him. His struggle is not unlike that of the fish; for as the fish fought against overwhelming odds so too does Santiago as he pits his strength and endurance against the fish and the sharks. As the sharks do their work Santiago's strength and endurance are eaten away slowly just as the fish gradually succumbed to the continuous tension on the line. And just when the fish's heart was pierced by the harpoon, Santiago felt "something break in his chest" and he noticed the "coppery taste" of blood in his mouth.

Yet as the story concludes, and Santiago tells the boy of his broken chest, we do not feel in the least that he is defeated. In fact, like the marlin who "came alive with his death in him", Santiago undergoes a seeming transformation of spirit, and he too "comes alive with his death (old age) in him". The end then is really a beginning for him, since we are told that he will prepare to fish again, this time with the boy, Manolin.

The kind of experience Santiago undergoes is an incommunicable one, but it is valuable, priceless, and therefore worth fishing for again and again. Hence, it does not

matter that the old man had fished well a thousand times before; he must continue to struggle again and again for each new struggle brings the opportunity of glimpsing the eternal for a moment, and this is more important than any number of fish that he can bring in. Hemingway, I think, is not concerned with victory nor with defeat; rather, it is the struggle which counts, out of which man can sometimes wrest a tinge of the immortal.

There is nothing remarkable about the old man when he returns from his long "trip out". In fact he is in a much worse physical condition than he was when he embarked on his journey - there are certainly no material gains at all. His reward comes, as we have seen, at the moment when he plunges the harpoon into the Marlin's heart; and the satisfaction derived from this victory is immeasurable. What matters is that as a man - as a very extraordinary man - he has both contributed to and partaken of that universal order about which very few people are even aware. Like the great creatures which he fought, he possessed innate qualities which have permitted him to complete an action fully and completely. He has lived and done what "he was born to do as a man" as fully, completely, and intensely as possible; and it is fitting therefore that his reward should be none other than spiritual. "A man", says Santiago, "can be destroyed but not defeated."

The way a man must go about this business of living then is clearly outlined in The Old Man and the Sea; Hemingway's philosophy is one of action, of doing and making. It does not constitute a having and a resting but a growing and a becoming, and, as Santiago clearly demonstrates, there is always an opportunity of glimpsing the eternal when one lives this way. The world in The Old Man and the Sea is still harsh and brutal, so much so in fact that Hemingway, like Eliot, seems to have known what he would write about even before he began writing at all. But what is of greater importance in this novel is that Santiago's "moment of recognition" marks the first time in Hemingway's major fiction in which the experience of the "still moment of time" culminates a hero's main endeavor.

There are (as we have seen in this paper) the old man's comfortable sojourn in "A Clean Well-Lighted Place," Romero's satisfying encounter with the bull in The Sun Also Rises, Frederic Henry's idyllic love affair with Catherine in A Farewell to Arms and Robert Jordan's ecstasy which occurs with Maria, during a lull in his preparation for the bridge; significantly, Santiago experiences the "moment" when he drives the harpoon into the Marlin's heart. We must recognize, therefore, that Hemingway has not abandoned but extended on his tragic vision of the world in The Old Man and the Sea. And, in this novel, the last great published work

of his life time, Hemingway has finally become as interested in perfecting what he had to say as he had always been in polishing and refining his way of saying it. That he wrote about much the same thing all his life does not mean that as an artist he was unsuccessful. To have been able to do this - to write consistently about a chaotic world, time, tradition, and the "still moment" - and yet present pleasing and interesting fiction, testifies to the greatness of both his ingenuity and art.

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