

Ernest Hemingway – A Psychiatric View

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OUR study of Hemingway is not an attempt to explain the man or his art, but rather to illuminate the underlying forces which shaped the content and structure of his work. This artist in particular warrants study: not only was he a stylistic genius of far-reaching literary influence, but he was both mirror to and architect of the 20th-century American character. Hemingway struggled all his life with severe characterologic problems and, in a severe paranoid depression, committed suicide. This paper considers the major psychodynamic conflicts, apparent in his lifestyle and fiction, which led to that event.

ERNEST Hemingway died by suicide on July 2, 1961. Since then his bones have been stirred by hordes of journalists, critics, biographers, and eulogizers, all of them, and we too, attempting to appraise the Hemingway heritage. As scholars we gather around his historical and literary remains – Hemingway would have said like hyenas around carrion.

We join this congregation knowing that it is already overcrowded and realizing that we court the dead man's curse rather than his blessing. What do a psychiatrist and still another professor of literature have to add to the innumerable words which have already been published? It was perhaps the appearance of the long-awaited Baker biography¹ which convinced us that, despite the thoroughness of this useful encyclopedic work, some extremely important areas of Hemingway's inner world are still to be explored. Much as the psychiatrist tries to understand his patient, we shall undertake an examination of the major psychodynamic conflicts with which Hemingway struggled. We do not, of course, propose to explain or dissect his genius, but only to clarify the internal forces which so shaped the structure and substance of his work. Our data consist of the recorded events of Hemingway's life and his own writings. We have also been fortunate enough to have the counsel of Major General Charles T. (Buck) Lanham, one of Hemingway's closest friends, whose insightful memories and suggestions have been invaluable in the preparation of this manuscript.

To a psychiatrist, Hemingway is considerably more than another important writer, even more than the best-known American novelist of the century. When alive he was a public figure of the first magnitude, recognizable on sight to the literate of this country

and most of Europe. His name was a synonym for an approach to life characterized by action, courage, physical prowess, stamina, violence, independence, and above all 'grace under pressure' – attributes so well-known that any of our readers could have compiled a comparable list. He was, in short, the heroic model of an age.

A popular hero is, to a large extent, a reflection, symbol or symptom of the culture which creates him. The Hemingway image was of such vitality, however, that he not only mirrored his culture but helped to shape and perpetuate it. Wide exposure to Hemingway in multimedia imprinted his values into contemporary psychic life; he has been incorporated into the fabric of the character structure of a generation of Americans. Even those who did not read him were familiar with his famous cinema surrogates: Gary Cooper in 'A Farewell to Arms' and 'For Whom The Bell Tolls,' Humphrey Bogart in 'To Have And Have Not,' Tyrone Power in 'The Sun Also Rises,' Gregory Peck in 'The Snows Of Kilimanjaro,' Burt Lancaster in 'The Killers,' and Spencer Tracy in 'The Old Man And The Sea.' Today Hemingway still has a large following, especially among adolescents and college students, though they have newer idols. While the young cannot deny him his literary position as the leader of a revolution in prose style, there are many indications that he is no longer an heroic model for a rising generation of culture makers. Those militantly committed to a national policy of peace find it hard to emulate a man who wrote that he did not believe in anything except that one should fight for one's country whenever necessary.² Young activists are disenchanted with the author who eschewed political and social involvement, for he was basically an apolitical man, drawn to battle less from ideological commitment than from the lure of danger and excitement. Unlike the socially minded writers of the 1930s who unsuccessfully attempted to activate him, he early lost any idealistic desire to change the world, as he humorously expressed in this 1924 verse:

*I know monks masturbate at night
That pet cats screw
That some girls bite
And yet
What can I do
To set things right?³*

In the retrospect of scarcely ten years, it appears to us that Hemingway's legacy is one more of form than of substance, that he will be remembered as a stylistic genius but as a very narrow guide to life. While we appreciate the existential considerations generated by the Hemingway encounters with danger and death, we do not find the same measure of universality and timelessness we associate with a Tolstoy or a Conrad or a Camus. Why, we ask ourselves, is this so? Why is the Hemingway world view so restricted? We suspect that the limitations of Hemingway's vision are related to his

personal psychological restrictions. There are many questions he never raised about the universe. There are even more he never dared to ask about himself. Just as there is no doubt that he was an extremely gifted writer, there is also no doubt that he was an extremely troubled man, relentlessly driven all his life, who in a paranoid depressive psychosis killed himself at the age of 62.

During his training the psychiatrist is usually required to write for each patient a report which attempts to ‘explain’ the inner world of the patient through an analysis of the past and current interpersonal and intrapersonal forces operating on him. This ‘dynamic formulation’ as it is labeled is invariably the student’s most difficult chore: generally he is lost in a sea of information, multiple theoretical schools stream by, like so many sturdy transport ships, yet none seems capable of carrying the entire cargo of clinical information available for each patient. The ‘reliability’ of the dynamic formulation is low, i.e. many psychiatrists with similar information will compose radically different formulations. ‘Validity’ fares no better, for the dynamic formulation has little correlation with the diagnosis and clinical course of the patient.

The psychiatrist who gratuitously offers a dynamic formulation for the patient he has never seen must be particularly humble. Ernest Hemingway resisted professional psychological introspection during his life and now, posthumously, he remains uncooperative to clinical inquiry. We nonetheless hope to suggest a frame of reference through which disparate pieces of information may be organized into a coherent logical schema, which may generate new hypotheses for future investigation.

Unlike the student psychiatrist struggling to make sense of an avalanche of anamnestic interview data, fantasy, dream, and dream-associated material as well as auxiliary information from concerned and generally cooperative relatives and friends, we – the Hemingway formulators – are obliged to rely on scanty and often unreliable data. Hemingway’s own statements offer little assistance: he was not celebrated for telling the truth about himself. World traveler and explorer, he never purposefully and publicly embarked upon an inward journey and he opposed those psychologically oriented critics who attempted the journey on his behalf. The difference between his attitude to psychological inquiry and that of another major American writer was vividly demonstrated to one of us (I.Y.) by the following incident.

Several months ago, at a psychiatric meeting, I attempted to interview Howard Rome, the psychiatrist who treated Hemingway in his final depression. A friend pointed him out to me in a room crowded with colleagues, but as chance would have it, I approached the wrong man. After apologizing and explaining my interest in Hemingway, he remarked that, though he knew little about Hemingway, he had been Eugene O’Neill’s psychiatrist! He continued by informing me that O’Neill had left him many personal effects, including letters and recorded conversations, and had encouraged him to write

an in-depth account of his final years. It was not so with Hemingway. When I finally located Dr. Rome, he informed me, with a finger across his mouth, that before treating Hemingway, he had been obliged to promise that his lips would be forever sealed.

The reconstruction of the early formative years is a particularly vexing task. Baker's comprehensive and scholarly biography exceeding 600 pages devotes to Hemingway's first 17 years only 20 pages and much of that is prosaic factual material, which does not provide the kind of information useful for an investigation of the inner world. Other biographies, including the ones by Hemingway's brother Leicester and his sister Marcelline, are considerably less helpful.⁴⁻⁵ Perhaps though, we should not mourn the irretrievable loss of the early years. The reconstruction of the past and the subsequent use of this construct to comprehend the present (and the future) is an inferential, risky process. It has been well established by psychological research that recall of one's early life, especially of affect-laden events, is subject to considerable retrospective falsification.⁶ The process of recall, in effect, tells us more about present psychological realities than about past events; present attitudes dictate which of the entire panoply of early life experiences we choose to remember and imbue with power. Common sense has it that the present is determined by the past and, yet, is not the converse equally true? The past becomes alive for us only as it is re-experienced through the filter of our present psychic apparatus. In different emotional states, in different stages of life, the past may assume a variety of hues. Mark Twain tells us that when he was 17 he thought his father was a damn fool but when he was 21 he was surprised to see how much the old fool had learned! We propose, then, an horizontal exploration rather than a vertical one. To understand an individual fully, one must understand all the conflicting internal forces operating on him at a point in time; the vertical or genetic exploration is, contrary to the lay conception of psychiatry, merely ancillary to the horizontal goal. We turn to the past only to explicate the present, much as a translator turns to history to elucidate an obscure text.⁷ To aid us in our reconstruction of a psychological cross-section, there is a not inconsiderable body of data from the middle and late years – anecdotal accounts by friends, a few recorded interviews, a large body of letters, and, most of all, the fiction itself. Hemingway's letters and notes corroborate the highly autobiographical nature of his writing. Baker cites a conversation with Irving Stone where Hemingway clearly said that his stories 'could be called biographical novels rather than pure fictional novels because they emerged out of lived experience'.¹ Like all latter-day romantics, his material is psychologically, if not factually, personal: Hemingway's loves, needs, desires, conflicts, values, and fantasies swarm nakedly across the written page.

Observe Hemingway at any point during his mature years and one meets a powerful imposing figure – the Hemingway image which he presented to others and to himself. 'He was,' said the poet John Pudney of Hemingway in 1944, 'a fellow obsessed with playing the part of Ernest Hemingway!'¹ Whatever else we can see, always there is

virility, strength, courage: he is the soldier searching out the eye of the battle storm; the intrepid hunter and fisherman compelled to pursue the greatest fish and stalk the most dangerous animal from the Gulf Stream to Central Africa; the athlete, swimmer, brawler, boxer; the hard drinker and hard lover who boasted that he had bedded every girl he wanted and some that he had not wanted¹; the lover of danger, of the bullfight, of flying, of the wartime front lines; the friend of brave men, heroes, fighters, hunters, and matadors.

The list is so long, the image so powerful that it obliges even the most naive observer of human nature to wonder whether a man firmly convinced of his identity would channel such a considerable proportion of his life energy into a search for masculine fulfillment. Since the earliest reviews of his works, a stream of Hemingway critics have pointedly noted his need to assert again and again a brute virility.⁸ Before we examine the image itself, let us test its boundaries. Was the Hemingway image a public image only, constructed by the author and his publisher, in secret complicity, to hoodwink the public and to increase revenue? Our research leads us to a most emphatic 'No!' All available evidence suggests that the public and private Hemingways are merged; the Hemingway of private conversations, of letters, and of notebooks is identical with the Hemingway who careened across the pages of newspapers and journals and the many Hemingways who fought, loved, and challenged death in his novels and stories.

Although he was a well-known raconteur, Hemingway never laughed at himself, nor did he permit friends to question the Hemingway image. General Lanham, his closest friend for the last quarter of his life, once remarked to Hemingway's wife, Mary, that her husband was 'frozen in adolescence'. Hemingway learned of the remark, remembered it, and eventually rejoined: 'Perhaps adolescence isn't such a bad place to be frozen'. On another occasion during World War II Lanham's 22nd infantry fought a hard battle to capture the town of Landrecies, ultimately ending up 60 miles ahead of the entire First Army. Lanham, scholar as well as soldier, sent Hemingway a bantering message paraphrasing Voltaire which read, 'Go hang thyself, brave Hemingstein. We have fought at Landrecies and you were not there'. Responding as if to a dare, Hemingway sped through 60 miles of German-infested territory, at great personal risk, in order to flourish his panache in front of Lanham.

Both publicly and privately Hemingway invested inordinate psychic energy into fulfilling his idealized image. The investment was not primarily a conscious, deliberate, one, for many of Hemingway's life activities were overdetermined; he acted often not through free choice but because he was driven by some dimly understood internal pressure whose murky persuasiveness only shammed choice. He fished, hunted, and sought danger not only because he wanted to but because he had to, in order to escape some greater internal danger. In 'The Snows Of Kilimanjaro' Hemingway suggested that he needed to kill to stay alive.⁹ The years following World War II were not generally good

ones for the writer and man, and Hemingway complained of the emptiness and meaninglessness of his life without war.

Who does not have an idealized image? Who does not formulate a set of personal aspirations and self-expectations? But Hemingway's idealized image was more, much more. Rather than expectations, he forged a set of restrictive demands upon himself, a tyrannical and inexorable decalogue which pervaded all areas of his inner world. Many personality theorists have dealt with the construct of the idealized image, but none so cogently as Karen Horney. For a complete exposition of her personality theory we refer the reader to her last book, *Neurosis And Human Growth*.¹⁰ To summarize drastically, a child suffers from basic anxiety, an extremely dysphoric state of being, if he has parents whose own neurotic conflicts prevent them from providing the basic acceptance necessary for the development of the child's autonomous being. During early life when the child regards the parents as omniscient and omnipotent, he can only conclude, in the face of parental disapproval and rejection, that there is something dreadfully wrong with him. To dispel basic anxiety, to obtain the acceptance, approval, and love he requires for survival, the child perceives he must become something else; he channels his energies away from the realization of his real self, from his own personal potential, and develops a construct of an idealized image – a way he must become in order to survive and to avoid basic anxiety. The idealized image may take many forms, all of which are designed to cope with a primitive sense of badness, inadequacy or unlovability. Hemingway's idealized image crystallized around a search for mastery, for a vindictive triumph which would lift him above others.

The development at an early age of an idealized image and the channeling of energies away from fulfillment of one's actual potential has extremely far-reaching ramifications on the developing personality. The individual experiences great isolation as chasms arise between himself and others. He places increasingly severe demands upon himself (a process which Horney calls the 'tyranny of the shoulds'), he develops a complete pride system that defines which feelings and attitudes he can permit and which he must squelch in himself. In short, he must shape himself according to a predesigned form rather than allow himself to unfold and to enjoy the experience of gradually discovering new and rich parts of himself.

When the idealized image is severe and unattainable, as it was for Hemingway, tragic consequences may result: the individual cannot in real life approximate the superhuman scope of the idealized image, reality eventually intrudes, and he realizes the discrepancy between what he wants to be and what he is in actuality. At this point he is flooded with self-hatred, which is expressed through a myriad of self-destructive mechanisms from subtle forms of self-torment (the tiny voice which whispers, 'Christ you're ugly!' when one gazes at a mirror) to total annihilation of the self.

Considering only the broad brushstrokes of Hemingway's life, one might assume that he approximated his idealized image, that in every way he became what he most wanted to be. Yet throughout his life Hemingway judged himself, found himself wanting, and experienced recurrent cycles of extreme self-doubt and self-contempt.

Consider the quality of self-sufficiency upon which the Hemingway man is predicated: he must be true only to himself, to perhaps an elite cadre of friends, and impervious to the opinions of all others. Yet Hemingway was exceedingly dependent on praise from all quarters and highly sensitive to any critical judgment. He bore his critics vengeance and, in a paranoid way, considered anything but unqualified praise as conspiracy against him.¹ He was so tormented by adverse criticism of his writing that only a foolhardy friend would dare offer anything resembling authentic appraisal.

The lack of war decorations immediately following World War II was another ignominious affront to the Hemingway ego. He often lamented to Lanham that the Distinguished Service Cross rightfully his for fighting in Rambouillet was given to another. (Though Hemingway fought valiantly in the war, he was ineligible for citation as a soldier since he was a correspondent and not officially permitted to carry weapons in World War II.) In 1947 'he was glad enough to accept a Bronze Star . . . for 'meritorious service' as a war correspondent.'¹ He wrote plaintively to Lanham of his fear that 20 years after his death 'they' would deny he was in the war. Later this was shortened to 'ten years' and finally to the fear that before his death 'they'll' deny he ever saw action.

His relationship to Lanham was often highly inconsistent with the Hemingway image. The letters to Lanham reveal childlike admiration for the professional soldier, with whom Hemingway simultaneously compares himself unfavorably and attempts to identify. He wrote to Lanham that others were 'always jealous' of people like them, that he 'hurt' when Lanham 'hurt', that *The Old Man And The Sea* had in it everything in which they both believed. He wrote also in a period of depression that he was just killing time wishing he were a soldier like Lanham instead of a 'chickenshit writer'. He demeaned his own accomplishments by suggesting that he would get into history only because of his close association with Lanham when Lanham commanded the 22nd infantry.¹¹⁻¹⁴ In his relationship to the women in his life, Hemingway assumes a curiously paradoxical pose, scorning them as much as he loves them. He is at once the celebrated champion of romantic love and the misogynist. Yet to be written is the story of his innumerable love affairs and four marriages, wherein he undoubtedly demonstrated tenderness, sensitivity, and a capacity for caring, as well as the erotic feats of which he publicly and privately boasted. Baker's biography gives numerous examples of thoughtful attentions to his wives – Hadley, Pauline, Martha, and Mary. But despite Baker's tactful presentation of Hemingway the lover, there are numerous incidents of the unkindness, ugliness, and patent unfaithfulness which were invariably served to the

Hemingway women; the menages a trois to which Hadley and Pauline were subjected with their respective successors, and which Mary endured with younger rivals, are cases in point.¹ Lanham tells us that Hemingway was notoriously rude to his friends' wives, some of whom served as models for the 'bitches' he described in his fiction. He rewarded Gertrude Stein, his early mentor and friend, with some vicious pages in *A Moveable Feast* (a not uncommon treatment of his fellow authors, whether they had befriended him or not). Hemingway once wrote that the things he loved were in the following order: 'good soldiers, animals and women.'¹⁵ In his fiction, which includes some of the most moving love stories in contemporary literature, there is scarcely a single example of a successful male-female egalitarian relationship. *The Sun Also Rises* describes the relationship of an impotent man, Jake Barnes, with the seductive, promiscuous Brett Ashley. In *For Whom The Bell Tolls* the worldly American Robert Jordan and the young ingenuous Maria come together like teacher and pupil. This disparity is even more pronounced in *Across The River And Into The Trees*, where the 19-year-old girl Renata is called 'daughter by her lover, the 50-year-old Colonel Cantwell. In *To Have And Have Not* Harry's wife Marie is an unfeminine, blowsy ex-prostitute. In *The Snows Of Kilimanjaro* Harry is married to a rich, intrusive woman who feeds on his vitality, and in *The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber* the protagonist's wife infantilizes him until he begins to discover his authentic self, whereupon she manages to kill him by accident. The couple in *A Farewell To Arms* are perhaps Hemingway's most fulfilled lovers, yet their relationship appears unconvincing ; Catherine Barkley, Frederick's former nurse, is an extraordinarily selfless, fleshless being who lives only for Frederick and dies rather pointlessly following childbirth by caesarian section (which, incidentally, was written immediately after Hemingway's second wife Pauline was delivered of his second child by caesarian section).

If Hemingway avoids depicting egalitarian male-female relationships, he is indeed inventive in creating alternatives. It is as though his attempts to portray a satisfying love-sex relationship are thwarted by a number of powerful counterforces, many of which Hemingway recognizes. Looming large in such works as *The Snows Of Kilimanjaro*, *The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber*, *Now I Lay Me*, *The Three Day Blow*, *Mr. and Mrs. Elliot*, *Out of Season*, *Hills Like White Elephants*, and *Cat in the Rain* is the danger of emasculation. Though the narrative varies, the outcome in each is the same – an enduring union with a woman results in a devitalized man. The father in *Now I Lay Me* observes, powerlessly, while his wife burns his treasured belongings. In *Hills Like White Elephants* another devitalized and dependent husband pleads with his pregnant wife to have an abortion because he cannot bear the thought of competition for her attention.

Even closer to home was the decline of Hemingway's own father from the able doctor and legendary huntsman immortalized in the Nick Adams stories to the wasted figure who visits his son some months before his death like a premature ghost whose life

force had been absorbed by Hemingway's mother, looming beside him, 'a picture of ruddy health' (Marcelline Sanford, cited in Baker.¹) Believing that his mother's aggressive bullying had driven his father to suicide, Hemingway modeled the parents of Robert Jordan in *For Whom The Bell Tolls* upon his own parents; like Ernest, Robert calls his father a coward because he did not resist his wife and finally resorted to suicide – the weakest act of all.

Throughout his life Hemingway considered love between man and woman as detrimental to other, truer types of relationships, such as friendship between males or man's communion with nature. When he fell in love with Hadley, he castigated himself for no longer caring about the two or three streams he had loved better than anything else in the world.¹ In *Cross Country Snow* the impending marriage of a young man threatens to destroy his deep relationship with a skiing comrade. The two speak wistfully of skiing again in the place to which one must move, but both know that 'the mountains aren't much . . . They're too rocky. There's too much timber and they're too far away'.¹⁶ Another risk inherent in an adult love relationship is the potential rejection by the woman and the ensuing insult to one's narcissism.

While recovering from his wound in the First World War, Hemingway fell deeply in love, probably for the first time, with Agnes von Kurowsky, one of the nurses who tended him. When Agnes finally chose another man, Hemingway was plunged into despair. That this emotional injury was profound and enduring is indicated by the fact that Hemingway returned to it in four separate works: *A Very Short Story*, *The Snows Of Kilimanjaro*, *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell To Arms* .

To love another is to expose oneself to the risk of painful separation or loss, a risk against which Hemingway admonished in *In Another Country*.¹⁷

'Why must not a man marry?'

'He cannot marry, he cannot marry,' he said angrily. 'If he is to lose everything he should not place himself in a position to lose.

He should find things he cannot lose.'

Still another counterforce to mature love arose from a deeply based fear of women stemming from oedipal conflicts. Literary critics are sometimes more intrepid than psychiatrists in offering highly inferential interpretations; Young, for example, in a study which Hemingway tried to block during his lifetime, suggested that Hemingway was psychologically crippled by castration anxiety, and that his major works derive from this source.¹⁸ Freudian developmental theory holds that the male child in his early years experiences libidinal desires toward his mother; these libidinal impulses are, as Freud reminds us, not clearly sexual, but of the stuff from which sex will come.¹⁹ They beget conflicted feelings toward the father, at first competitive and then destructive, which may take the guise of stark death wishes; these hostile feelings rapidly evoke another

constellation of feelings – fears of retribution which may assume the amorphous form of global annihilation or the specific form of castration. A successful resolution of this conflict involves identification with the father and repression or relinquishment of the incestuous desire for the mother.

If resolution does not occur, the child does not attain psychosexual maturity, and a number of adverse outcomes may ensue. Sexual encounters with women become symbolic recapitulations of the relationship with the mother, with its attendant feelings of desire, repulsion, and the anticipation and dread of catastrophe; sexual intercourse becomes an inchoate nightmare. Some methods of coping involve the abandonment of women as sexual objects, with the individual seeking refuge in perverse outlets. More common yet is the splitting of women into sexual and non-sexual categories; one avoids intercourse with ‘pure’ women of one’s age, intelligence and class; one goes to bed with an unequal partner, women obviously inferior in education and social status.

The evidence that castration anxiety played an important role in Hemingway’s conflicted attitude towards women is meager, and there are, as we have indicated, a number of other dynamics operating. Nevertheless, the theory of castration anxiety gains support as we consider Hemingway’s reaction to significant physical trauma – one final area in which he experienced a marked discrepancy between his idealized and his real self. The idealized Hemingway courts danger and endures physical injury with little self-concern, heals quickly with no functional or psychological residue, and returns, untrammelled, to the fray. The real Hemingway did indeed court danger and did indeed suffer injury. The inventory of Hemingway’s physical injuries rivals a list of his published works; it includes several spectacular plane and automobile crashes resulting in brain concussions, hemorrhages, multiple fractures, severe cuts, and burns, and a lifetime of minor accidents, many associated with hunting, fishing, boxing, and skiing. Lanham remarked that his body was criss-crossed with scars. Yet it seems that the Hemingway wounds seared his mind more harshly and more indelibly than they ever cauterized his flesh. Indeed the big wound, the one suffered in Fossalta di Piave, Italy, in July 1918, may be regarded as the critical incident of his life.

During World War I, in which Hemingway served as an ambulance driver, he succeeded in getting closer to the fighting by distributing chocolates and cigarettes by bicycle to the front-line Italian troops at Fossalta. An enemy trench mortar shell exploded nearby, spewing scrap metal into Hemingway and three Italian soldiers. One soldier was killed outright, another severely wounded, and Hemingway absorbed hundreds of pieces of metal into his legs, scrotum, and lower abdomen. Nonetheless, with remarkable endurance and courage, he carried the wounded soldier 50 yards before he was hit in the leg by machine gun fire and then another 100 yards before he lost consciousness – a feat of bravery and fortitude of which any man would be proud. Young quotes Hemingway as saying, ‘I had been shot and I had been crippled and gotten away’.

We agree with Young who, aptly, wonders whether Hemingway truly got away and how far away he got.¹⁸ Hemingway was never to forget Fossalta and repetitively revisited it in person, in his conversation, letters, and, as we shall discuss, in his fiction; what happened that day was to be recounted in numerous variations for the fascination of tens of millions of Hemingway readers and moviegoers. Why could he not forget? Why could the wound not heal? Other men have suffered similar wounds without psychological sequelae.

Hemingway speculated that the wound haunted him so because it punctured the myth of his personal immortality. Through the lips of Colonel Cantwell in *Across The River And Into The Trees* he says²⁰:

He was hit three times that winter, but they were all gift wounds; small wounds in the flesh of the body without breaking bone, and he had become quite confident of his personal immortality since he knew he should have been killed in the heavy artillery bombardment that always preceded the attacks. Finally he did get hit properly and for good. No one of his other wounds had ever done to him what the first big one did. I suppose it is just the loss of the immortality, he thought. Well, in a way, that is quite a lot to lose.

The loss of his sense of immortality was indeed no small loss, for an important premise of Hemingway's assumptive world was that he was markedly different from others: he boasted [to Charles Lanham] that he had an unusually indestructible body, an extra thickness of skull, and was not subject to the typical biological limitations of man, being able, for example, to exist on 'an average of two hours and 32 minutes sleep for 42 straight days'.

It is not unlikely, however, that the wound (and the subsequent convalescence which involved falling in love with his nurse) had an additional significance for Hemingway. A serious and bloody injury to his legs and scrotum may have evoked terrifying, primitive fears of castration or annihilation. At some level of consciousness Hemingway realized this: the war wound inflicted upon his fictional counterpart in his first novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, rendered him physically, but not psychologically, impotent. In one of his letters he pens a ribald subtitle to *The Sun Also Rises*, adding 'so does your cock if you happen to have one'.²¹ In his posture towards the major areas we have considered – self-sufficiency, physical injury and integrity, women and mature love – Hemingway fell very short of his idealized goals. His failure to do so took its toll; he was plagued by recurrent periods of self-hatred. Newton's third law of mechanics has its psychodynamic analogy: every force evoking an appreciable degree of dysphoria is countered by a psychological mechanism designed to guard the security of the

individual. Hemingway employed a number of such mechanisms, each offering some temporary respite and all destined to fail in the final depressive cataclysm which culminated in his suicide.

Hemingway's anxiety and depression stemmed in large part from his failure to actualize his idealized self. Two factors were important in this failure: the image was so extreme that superhuman forces would have been required to satisfy it; secondly, a number of counterforces limited his available degree of adaptability. These secondary counterforces, e.g. dependency cravings and oedipal conflicts, were sources of anxiety in their own right and hampered the actualization of the idealized self.

Hemingway rejected the conventional source of help offered by psychotherapy; the suppliant, passive role of patient was anathema to the very core of the Hemingway ideal. He hated psychiatrists, openly mocked those he knew, and once told an army psychiatrist that he [the psychiatrist] knew a lot about 'fuck-offs' but little about brave men.¹ It seems more pathetic than ironic that he was forced into the role of psychiatric patient during the last weeks of his life – a role which, according to Lanham, Hemingway must have considered 'the ultimate in dignity'. He said that his Corona typewriter was his analyst and one can hardly disagree with him. We described the blow suffered by Hemingway when his nurse, Agnes, rejected his love. Hemingway attempted to work this through with his typewriter and relived the romance in four different works of fiction, each time capping it with an ending more satisfying to his pride than the real episode. In *A Very Short Story* the marriage for which Agnes leaves him does not materialize, and he rapidly forgets her, soon contracting gonorrhoea from a casual sexual relationship with a salesgirl. One senses that he demeans Agnes by the banal circumstances of his next romantic encounter. In *The Snows Of Kilimanjaro* the hero remembers writing, while intoxicated, an un-Hemingway, pleading letter to an Agnes surrogate; he regains his esteem immediately by making off with another man's girl after subduing his rival in a primitive brawl. Lt Henry in *A Farewell To Arms* is, of course, not rejected by his nurse; on the contrary, it is she who contributes the greater love to their union, and she who dies during the delivery of his child. Brett Ashley, Jake Barnes' nurse in *The Sun Also Rises*, is meted out her dole by hopelessly loving the one man who is unable to satisfy her sexual needs. She laments, 'That's my fault. Don't we pay for all the things we do, though . . . when I think of the hell I've put chaps through. I'm paying for it all now.'²² When his typewriter was called upon to help repair the trauma suffered at Fossalta, it seems to have been summoned in vain. He relived that injury often in his letters, conversation, and in his fiction. Not only does he revisit the site of the wound in real life but makes a pilgrimage there in three works: *A Moveable Feast*, *A Way You'll Never Be* and *Across The River And Into The Trees*, In the latter (written over 30 years after the injury) Col Cantwell finds the exact site at Fossalta where the accident occurred, defecates there, and buries money in a ritualistic ceremony. (When Hemingway revisited Fossalta he was

prevented from doing likewise only by the lack of privacy.) The big wound, in fact, was relived in every major piece of fiction, for each Hemingway protagonist receives a major injury, generally to an extremity. Jake Barnes' injury, of course, was to his genitals; Lt Henry in *A Farewell To Arms* suffers Hemingway's exact wound; Robert Jordan at the end of *For Whom The Bell Tolls*, fractures his leg and lies waiting for his death with 'his heart pounding on the pine needle floor of the forest'²³; Harry in 'The Snows Of Kilimanjaro' dies from a gangrenous injury to his knee; Harry Morgan in *To Have And Have Not* suffered an injury which necessitated amputation of his arm; Col Cantwell in *Across The River And Into The Trees* had been badly wounded at Fossalta, which resulted in a limp and a badly misshapen hand; at the end of the novel he dies of a coronary; Santiago in *The Old Man And The Sea*, in addition to minor inflictions, endures the crudest injury of all – old age.

Of what value is the fantasised or factual revisit to the site of injury? Does it not merely probe for pain in the same way that the tongue compulsively jars an aching tooth? Most psychiatric theoreticians agree that the deliberate revivification by a part of the psyche of a traumatic incident represents an attempt at mastery. When the terrifying event becomes familiar, it becomes detoxified, and indeed several psychotherapeutic techniques are based on this strategy. For example, during World War II narcosynthesis was introduced, which consisted of administering sodium pentothal (a powerful sedative) to the subject and then helping him (with accompanying simulated battle noises, if necessary) re-experience the traumatic battle incident. By re-experiencing the event with markedly less anxiety (because of medication and the knowledge, at some level of consciousness, that this time there is no 'real' danger) the subject is gradually desensitized. Several other forms of therapy (for example, behavioral therapy) operate on similar assumptions, but, unassisted, the individual often does not desensitize himself to the trauma but merely freezes in his symptomatology and is doomed to be haunted by recurrent fantasies, nightmares, or disembodied waves of panic.

Hemingway attempted to heal his wound through counterphobic means and by forcing the incident, or its associated affect, from consciousness. By flaunting the danger, by recklessly re-exposing oneself to a similar threat, one is, in effect, denying to oneself that danger exists. Inwardly the ego employs repression and denial, outwardly the individual seems compelled to face the very thing he fears the most. From his earliest years Hemingway roared in the face of danger; ' 'fraid a nothing' he shouted to his mother at the age of three¹ and he maintained that pose for the rest of his life in real and imaginary combat. The concept of counterphobia by no means repudiates Hemingway's courage. The military board members awarding decorations do not take personal psychodynamics into consideration. When one draws a line under his name and totals up his deeds, no one can deny Hemingway was a brave man; Lanham, who was with Hemingway under fire during World War II, says he was the bravest man he ever knew.

But perhaps the most striking manner in which Hemingway dealt with trauma was by demonstrating in his fiction again and again that a maimed, crippled man could still be a man, could, despite his defects and injuries, function in the best tradition of the Hemingway code. In each of his major works an injured and noble hero reminds us that physical handicaps can be overcome. In *The Sun Also Rises* Jake Barnes, despite his impotence, still functions with dignity and grace. Indeed, he and Pedro, the matador, are the only heroic male figures in the book, and Pedro never more so than after a brutal beating. In *For Whom The Bell Tolls* Robert Jordan dies manfully despite a painfully broken leg, manifesting in the face of death the qualities of grace and courage which Hemingway most admired. In *To Have And Have Not* the one-armed Harry Morgan is a rugged hero, who, in one memorable scene, triumphs over his impairment by making love to his wife with the stump of his arm. In *Across The River And Into The Trees* Col Cantwell also has a maimed hand which seems to aid rather than impede his romantic progress, since Renata during lovemaking wants to examine and caress his wound. In *The Old Man And The Sea* old age has assailed Santiago's entire body, yet he temporarily transcends his physical condition through an act of endurance praiseworthy in even a younger man.

Throughout his life Hemingway attempted to abolish the discrepancy between his real and idealized selves. No alterations could be made upon the idealized self; there is no evidence that Hemingway ever compromised or attenuated his self-demands. All the work had to be done upon his real self; he pushed himself to face more intense danger, to attempt physical feats which exceed his capabilities, while at the same time he pruned and streamlined himself. All traces of traits not fitting his idealized image had to be eliminated or squelched. The softer feminine side, the fearful parts, the dependent cravings – all had to go.

Not infrequently Hemingway externalized undesired traits, i.e. he saw in others those aspects he rejected in himself and often responded to the other person quite vitriolically. The mental mechanism of 'projective identification' (the process of projecting parts of one self to another and then forming an intense, irrational relationship with the other) has been given permanent literary embodiment by Dostoevsky in *The Double* and by Conrad in *The Secret Sharer*, to mention only the best of the modern authors who have intuitively understood this phenomenon. Projective identification was perhaps one of the major mechanisms behind Hemingway's extremely vituperative outbursts to innocent strangers and the unwarranted invective he frequently directed to friends and acquaintances.¹ At a time when most Americans felt compassion, if not admiration, for their wartime president, Hemingway scorned Roosevelt's physical infirmity, his sexlessness, and womanly appearance.¹ He disliked Jews because of their softness, passivity, and 'wet-thinking', yet it was no accident that the Jew, Robert Cohn, in *The Sun Also Rises* was, like Hemingway, an expert boxer and dealt, quite badly, with

unrequited love; nor is it an accident that Hemingway joked about his own mock Jewishness, very often referring to himself as Dr Hemingstein.

Hard men drink hard. Hemingway joked and boasted about his drinking in real life and glamorized it in his fiction. Yet there is no doubt that Hemingway, as the years went by, leaned more and more heavily on alcohol for respite from intense anxiety and depression. His wife, Mary, who tends to underplay Hemingway's flaws, notes that in the last few years of his life he obtained most of his nourishment from alcohol rather than from food.²⁴ Hemingway went into 'training' when embarking upon serious writing for a new book. The training rules consisted of getting into good physical shape and abstaining from alcohol until noon (he did all of his writing in the morning). Lanham reports that when he visited him while he was in training for *The Old Man And The Sea* Hemingway swam 80 laps in the morning in his very large pool. From time to time he would swim to the edge of the pool to look at his watch. At about 11.00am his majordomo would come out of the house with what appeared to be a half-gallon pitcher of martinis. Hemingway would grin and say, 'What the hell, Buck, it's noon in Miami,' and that ended the swimming for the morning. Lanham could drink two of the powerful martinis, his wife about one and a half. Hemingway finished the rest of the pitcher. Towards the end of his life, as his health faltered and his hypertension increased, his internist attempted, with only moderate success, to prevent him from drinking.

The mechanisms employed to ward off dysphoria – alcohol, writing, intense physical feats – all the frenetic attempts to perpetuate the image he created, interlocked to form only a partially effective dam against an inexorable tide of anguish. Throughout his life, Hemingway suffered from recurrent bouts of depression. As early as 1926 he wrote to F. Scott Fitzgerald that he had been living in hell for nine months with plenty of insomnia to light the way around and assist him in the study of the terrain.¹ Time and again he gratuitously, and tongue-in-cheek, reassured his friends that he was no longer at the 'bumping off' stage. It is not difficult to glean from any individual's life correspondence and conversation a series of melancholic comments, and to do so now proves only that hindsight is a sorry human faculty. Hemingway's fulsome preoccupation with death, melancholia, and suicide throughout his life, and especially in his later years, was, however, a source of concern to those who knew him well. After World War II the 'black-ass' days (as Hemingway called his depressions) increased in frequency. Success offered only brief respite; he wrote Lanham in 1950 that *Across The River And Into The Trees* had sold 130,000 copies and that they could eat a share but that he had not much appetite.²⁵ A letter from Africa following his plane crashes contains the crossed-out statement that the wake of the boat looked very inviting.

Of all the insults and injuries suffered by Hemingway, none was so grave, so irreparable to his psychic economy as the somatic decline of his advancing years. He had no easy way of befriending old age; no slot existed for the old man in the Hemingway

code. In *The Old Man And The Sea*, his final brilliant fantasy, Santiago triumphs over the receding power of the flesh through sheer strength of will. But the pathos of it! How many old men, after all, can transcend their years by taking to the sea in an open boat to catch the giant marlin? He tried, it seems, to find an old-age identity for himself as the counselor of the young, preferring to be called 'Papa' by almost everyone, but he was not ready for the role of the wise old sage. When we read of the inappropriate antics of Hemingway at 60¹, we feel compelled to cry out like Lear's fool: 'Thou shouldst not have been old till thou hadst been wise.' There are the attempts to replenish his youth through associations with young women²; the impossibility of that rebirth is pathetically foreshadowed in *Across The River And Into The Trees* where the love affair between Col Cantwell and the 19-year-old Renata (whose name in Italian means 'reborn') cannot delay his deterioration and early death. Hemingway in 1960 seemed finally overwhelmed by the inexorable advance of years and equally relentless deterioration of his soma. The earlier rivulets of concern about his body soon swelled into a torrent of hypochondriasis; he magnified the significance of minor ailments and grew increasingly preoccupied with major ailments to the extent that his conscious thoughts, like the pages of his letters and the walls of his bathrooms, were plastered with meticulously kept charts of daily fluctuations in weight, blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol. In 1960 Hemingway's mental health sharply deteriorated and he developed the signs and symptoms of a major psychological illness. The clinical picture of his final condition reflected a splitting asunder of the union of the ideal and the real Hemingway, a psychic system that, to survive, had become increasingly rigid and then, finally, brittle.

The expansive self in the end submerged from view but signaled its subterranean persistence through paranoid trends both tragic and grotesque. For example, Hemingway in his last year had many 'ideas of reference', that is he tended to refer circumstantial events in his environment to himself. Hotchner describes an episode in which Hemingway arrived in a town late at night, noted lights on at the bank, and expressed his conviction that the Internal Revenue Service had auditors working furiously on his tax statement. 'When they want to get you they get you.'²⁶ On another occasion Hemingway suddenly left a restaurant because he surmised that two men at the bar were FBI agents disguised as salesmen who had been assigned to keep him under surveillance.

Stark persecutory trends appeared, as Hemingway became convinced that the Immigration Bureau, as well as the FBI and the IRS, was after him for corrupting the morals of a minor. Soon friends were admonished not to write or use the phone or speak too loudly since he was constantly spied upon. His persecutory convictions were true delusions in that they were fixed, false beliefs impervious to logic. Gradually the delusional system expanded to include all those about him – nurses, doctors, friends, and, finally, his immediate family. An elaborate persecutory delusional system is the

voice of a runaway decompensated grandiose self; if everyone in one's environment is preoccupied with plotting, watching, listening, then it can only be because one is an extremely special person. Every paranoid delusion has a center crystal of truth: Hemingway was a very special and important person but obviously not so special as to warrant the total energy of his environment.

Grandiosity does not occur de novo, it arises in response to an inner central identity experienced as worthless and bad. The grandiose or expansive solution allowed Hemingway to survive without crippling dysphoria; it permitted him to form a platform, albeit, as we have seen, an unsteady one, on which to base his feelings of self-worth and regard. At the end, the union of the psychological central identity and the grandiose peripheral system fragmented: Hemingway's inner core, naked and vulnerable, pervaded his experiential world. Consumed with feelings of guilt and worthlessness he sank deep into despair. Delusions of poverty plagued him, he externalized his sense of inner emptiness and developed the conviction that he had no material financial stores.

In 1960 the accompanying signs and symptoms of depression – anorexia, severe weight loss, insomnia, deep sadness, total pessimism, self-destructive trends – became so marked that hospitalization was required. At the Mayo Clinic two courses of electroconvulsive treatment were administered, but in vain. Electroconvulsive treatment is the treatment of choice for severe depressive illness, but is frequently ineffective in the presence of strong accompanying paranoid trends. Finally Hemingway grew to regard his body and his life as a prison of despair from which there was only one exit – and that exit, suicide, the most ignoble one of all. It was the shameful 'thing' that Robert Jordan's father and his own father, and later, his sister had to do. It was the act that no Hemingway hero had ever done. It was not the death that we would have wished for this man who, at the age of 20, wrote to his father, ' . . . and how much better to die in all the happy period of un-disillusioned youth, to go out in a blaze of light, than to have your body worn out and old and illusions shattered.'¹ Bickford Sylvester assisted in this project.

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