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Hemingway

SO FAR FROM SIMPLE

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It's always the same problem: that is, the relations between the subject, the truth, and the constitution of experience.

An Aesthetics of Existence, Michel Foucault

There is no great artist who does not make us say: "The same and yet different." (III, 259)

Proust & Signs, Gilles Deleuze

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To the very best grandchildren, bar none,

Zachary
Caitlyn
Jessica
Scott

Chapter V

Being Collected

You know all there is to strategy is
to always be strong—and then
always to be strong at the right place.

Never think that one story represents
my viewpoint because it is much too
complicated for that.

Hemingway, *Letters*

1

The 1930s saw the devaluation of writing as an end in itself. Hemingway was advised to "express" his commitment to external causes, to curb his obsession and transform his writing into a serviceable instrument for "The Big Things that are happening." It was a period of commentary and public causes, the appearance of the *New Masses, Commentary*, and *Partisan Review*. A new, more vocal audience was created, new "institutions of dissemination, preservation, and judgment."[1] Other magazine outlets existed, of course; *Life Magazine* and *Collier's* are two of the better examples that made use of Hemingway's writing. At a later time, academic critics would enter the

scene and add yet new layers of complication. None of these mechanisms of reception left Hemingway untouched; they acted as constraints, limiting the work he had planned. Their effect touches on the three closely related aspects of his particular individuality as a writer. The demands of a new critical audience were inhibiting to Hemingway's sense of self at mid-career. As Said explains: "The writer's life, his career, and his text form a system of relationships whose configuration *in real human time* becomes progressively stronger (i.e., more distinct, more individualized and exacerbated). In fact, these relationships gradually become the writer's all-encompassing subject."[2] The Hemingway myth, the larger-than-life "Papa," points to the "system of relationships" outlined by Said, but it is also an image that contests the perspective afforded by new critical circumstances.

From *Winner Take Nothing* through *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Hemingway directly responded to the attacks of his critics, and in these works disputed their critical assumptions. The next chapter, concerned with *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, explores the question of thought and knowledge, specifically a form of reason found in the Marxist dialectic that seeks to overcome the "unreason" of individual experience. In that context, Robert Jordan is presented as a professor whose serious education begins with his involvement with Pablo's guerrilla group. Hemingway's major works of the 1930s involve educating his public and, as importantly, concern his view of the nature of thought and knowledge. The emphasis, of course, is on their relation to the work of art and the embodied thought found in certain kinds of literature.

As background it should be noted that criticism, in its period of ascendancy, destroyed many writers; Hemingway recorded its threat in *Green Hills of Africa*, as a by-product of modernism and the source of the impotence of his contemporaries. Fitzgerald served as an object lesson for what "happens to our good writers at a certain age" and in the age of critics. Particularly disturbing was Fitzgerald's capitulation in "The Crack Up," the three-part essay first published in *Esquire*:

> Feel awfully about Scott. I tried to write him once (wrote him several times) to cheer him up but he seems to almost take pride in his shamelessness of defeat. The Esquire pieces seem to me to be so miserable. There is another one coming too. I always knew he couldn't think—he never could—but he had a marvelous talent and the thing is to use it—not whine in public. Good God, people go through . . . that emptiness many times in life and come out and do work. . . . The minute he felt youth going he was frightened again and thought there was nothing between youth and age. But it is so damned easy to criticize our friends and I shouldn't write this. I wish we could help him. (*L*, pp. 437–38)

Nor did Hemingway admire *The Last Tycoon*, in which the description of Stahr (Irving Thalberg) showed that Fitzgerald "still had the technique and the romance of doing anything" but where it could never have been completed "with that gigantic, preposterous outline of how it was to be" (*L*, p. 527). Far more caustic was Hemingway's judgment ten years later: "The Last Tycoon, after the part that is written, and was as far as he could write, is really only a scheme to borrow money on" (*L*, p. 695). These remarks are more than a statement of disillusionment with Fitzgerald. They clarify the basis of Fitzgerald's impotence and his increasing inability to finish any work after the success of *The Great Gatsby*. "At present we have two good writers who cannot write because they have lost confidence through reading critics. If they wrote, sometimes it would be good and sometimes it would be quite bad, but the good would get out. But they have read the critics and they must write masterpieces. The masterpieces the critics said they wrote. They weren't masterpieces, of course. They were just quite good books. So now they cannot write at all. The critics have made them impotent" (*GHA*, pp. 23–24). Concerning *The Last Tycoon*, "with that gigantic, preposterous outline," it confirmed for Hemingway that Fitzgerald was continuing to please the critics, by incorporating the fashionable preoccupations of the late 1930s—with Marxist union organizers, capitalist corruption, and so forth.

About the same time "The Crack Up" was published and in contrast to Fitzgerald, Hemingway began to lay plans for *The First Forty-Nine Stories*. This collection would include the new stories he had written since *Winner Take Nothing*, some of which had been published in *Esquire*. He worried that if published separately in a new collection, the critics "will jump on them one at a time. Ignore one and pan the other." Consequently, Hemingway would meet them on his own ground, by publishing a retrospective collection of all his stories,

which would be "too big for them, too damn impressive." As Hemingway goes on to say:

> I don't think it is persecution mania or egotism if I say that there are a lot of critics who really seem to hate me very much and would like to put me out of business. And I don't think I mean it conceitedly when I say that a lot of it is jealousy; I do what they are afraid to do; and they hate you for it. Now there is politics too. So I think the best thing to do is to make a book with so much good reading, and so obviously good that you have them on quality and bulk anyway.
>
> What do you think? (*L*, p. 471)

In traditional terms, "quality and bulk" stand for the status and the volume of a work. Status typically concerns a work's reception, reputation, and earning power, while volume refers to the ever-expanding text, the "life's work." As they apply to Hemingway and to his predecessors and contemporaries, these categories were redefined in the modern period: "volume, in the cases of Mallarmé, Hopkins, Eliot, Joyce, Valery, Kafka, and Wilde has to do with density, rarity and irregularity. Status has to do with the text's inaccessibility to the 'ordinary' public and concomitantly, with its extraordinary capacity for being with, or being part of, other literature."[3] Given these considerations, "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," one of the new stories that begins the collection, is especially important (as argued below). Arguably, it is an addition to the work's "volume" by virtue of the fact that it is a further movement of "meaning fulfillment"[4] as underlying the logic of career, while it maintains the work's "status" as a "difficult" story because of its relation to other literature.

The "bulk" of accomplished work was intended as a challenge to Hemingway's critics, an incentive for reassessment, but, more essential, it is a statement of an internal reality—the writer's ongoing commitment at mid-career. The preface that introduces the collection of stories may have been written as a contrast to "The Crack Up." Unlike Fitzgerald's recantation, the preface is short and impersonal. Implicitly, it acknowledges "that emptiness" that people go through "many times in life," but it is more alive to its positive implications: "and come out and do work." Thus, the preface does not suggest a progress over time, but the repeated overcoming of negative circumstances and the value of work that is a constant recovery of purpose. Moreover, individual stories are said to be the product of time and place, local, specific, and changing, some good and others "not so good." As a concession to the reader, Hemingway says: "There are many different kinds of stories in this book. I hope you will find some that you like." He then gives a short list of stories he still enjoys and has had to disown, "those that have now achieved some notoriety so that school teachers include them in story collections that their pupils have to buy in story courses, and you are always embarrassed to read them and wonder whether you really wrote them or did you maybe hear them somewhere." The falsification that he reacts to is of two kinds: the transformation of personal individualized activity into either a technical lesson or into a form of abstract and impersonal understanding residing in the public domain. Hemingway concludes his preface with his perspective on the relationship of a writer's life to his work:

> In going where you have to go, and doing what you have to do, and seeing what you have to see, you dull and blunt the instrument you write with. But I would rather have it bent and dull and know I had put on the grindstone again and hammer it into shape and put a whetstone to it, and know that I had something to write about, than to have it bright and shining and nothing to say, or smooth and well-oiled in the closet, but unused.

Pragmatic and low-key, Hemingway's preface is subordinated to his stories, which are themselves ruled by chance and altered circumstances, "in going where you have to go . . ." As well, the stories are an effective instrument for conveying Hemingway's perception of his present circumstances, of his "life as lived," beginning with *In Our Time* on through the four new stories that introduce his collection: "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," "The Capital of the World," "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," and "Old Man at the Bridge."

In the new stories that begin Hemingway's collection, chance and attending risks dominate as the circumstance for any action. By chance, Francis Macomber finds a way to momentarily assert his manhood. In the same way, Harry in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" is forced to a reckoning: "I don't see why that had to happen to your

leg. What have we done to have that happen to us" (p. 55). Nothing had meant very much until "a thorn had scratched his knee as they moved forward trying to photograph a herd of waterbuck" (p. 62). Before this, "you spoke only from habit and to be comfortable" (p. 59). By chance, the unnamed old man in "Old Man at the Bridge" is dispossessed in a Spanish offensive. Then, there is Paco, in "The Capital of the World," killed by chance and miscalculation, and "he had not even had time to be disappointed in the Garbo picture which disappointed all Madrid for a week" (p. 51). Chance and unaccountable errors may be the basis of disillusionment but they are also the source of a positive reconstruction, paradoxically the only "safe" ground of permanence. In all of Hemingway's "clean well lighted places," one sees the irrefutable *fatum* of experience, against which a certain clarity is introduced. The slant of light, a metaphor for Hemingway's perspective, necessarily entails a system of injustice, affirmations and negations from a specific and finite point of view.

If modern conditions are ignoble and if the finest feelings are linked to decadence, then an act that tries to reestablish nobility will appear brutish. In *Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche observed the modern need, the curative necessity of the "blond beast of prey," as well as the violence directed at the "effeminacy" of modern pity, fellow understanding, and Christian virtue, as a way of blocking a reactive conscience, "*ressentiment*."[5] This informs Francis Macomber's rejection of his wife—and with it the guilt he experienced in her presence—as it does the callousness of Harry's treatment of Helen. More explicitly, Hemingway identifies his protagonists with actual beasts of prey. In his death, Harry flies to the top of Kilimanjaro, where he is awaited by the solitary carcass of a "dried and frozen" leopard; and Francis Macomber, who had earlier been kept awake by his terror of facing a lion the next morning, dies in a movement that identifies him with a charging water buffalo:

> aiming carefully, (he) shot again with the buffalo's huge bulk almost on him and his rifle almost level with the oncoming head, nose out, and he could see the little eyes and the head started to lower and he felt a sudden white-hot, blinding flash explode inside his head and that was all he ever felt. (pp. 35–36)

The cost of nobility is nothing less than total risk, at the limit of what one can be; and the product of a successful action, to say the least, is bizarre. It is easier, perhaps, to side with the wives in these stories, whose reaction to their husbands' deaths is "crying hysterically."

It is tempting to imagine Fitzgerald's "Crack Up" from Hemingway's point of view as an expression of "effeminacy," where brutality is the antidote, from a superficial standpoint, for "whining in public." But brutality is essential to the completion of a work, since it is, in the words of Paul de Man in *Blindness and Insight*, the manifestation of the modernist tenet that supports "the right of what is coming into being because of one's own actions."[6] The absence of a work and betrayal of talent in Harry's case coincide with his accommodation to his wife's ethos. When he recognizes his imminent death, he turns cruel, attacks her pitilessly: "It's trying to kill to keep yourself alive" (p. 58). Cruelty is an index of his work's autonomy; it severs sentimental ties that swamp (in tears) the accomplishment of the work, erects a barrier between the writer and a grasping public so that the work arises through indirection: "So this is how you died, in whispers that you did not hear." As Harry dies, the work he intended to write is written and it is written against his impending death. The recovery of his youthful aspirations conditions his subject matter as writer, common events of a "life as lived." And all the while, vultures and hyenas, attracted by his gangrenous leg, move closer: "three of the birds squatted obscenely" (p. 52) and "it came with a rush; not a rush of water nor of wind; but of a sudden evil-smelling emptiness and the odd thing was that the hyena slipped lightly along the edge of it" (p. 64). In time, death "simply occupied space . . . and it crouched now, heavier, so he could not breathe" (pp. 74–75). Simultaneous with Harry's death, when "ahead, all he could see, as wide as all the world, great, high, and unbelievably white in the sun, was the square top of Kilimanjaro . . . the hyena stopped whimpering in the night and started to make a strange, human, almost crying sound" (p. 76). As Harry moves progressively into his writing, the "white square top of Kilimanjaro," this process is accompanied by the ignoble presence of vultures. As Harry's death removes him to an unbreachable distance from his ignoble surroundings, the hyena communicates a "strange, human, almost crying sound."

Earl Rovit describes with cold irony the story's ending: "The

despicable hyena joins Helen in weeping for the dead artist, because the hyena becomes a distended identification of the audience the artist must serve. Fickle, treacherous, stupid, and cunning at the same time, it is quick to lament the loss of the artist, even as it is quick to harry him when he is alive. Without pushing the metaphor too far, it is fair to say that Hemingway succeeds in insulting his audience beyond endurance, in making the audience eat its own wounds, and liking it."[7] As for the writing retrieved by Harry in the italicized script of the story, opposed in every sense to the aimless, redundant satisfactions of the rich (whose only difference from everyone else is that "they have more money" [p. 72], it records the factual reality of different lives, given once and, unrepeatable, once only.

Readers are quick to recognize the autobiographical—indeed, prophetic—elements of "The Snows of Kilimanjaro." For example, one of Hemingway's biographers, Kenneth Lynn, maintains that "'Kilimanjaro' and 'Macomber' signal a new phase in Hemingway's imaginative life in which the main character dies an untimely death, but not in a way that could be termed suicide. Although this development would eventually include several novel-length works, its most memorable representations were the brief masterpieces produced at its outset. In 'Kilimanjaro' and 'Macomber,' an author who had appeared in *Green Hills of Africa* completely walled up inside a myth of himself was once again in touch with who he actually was" (p. 429). It is not my purpose to dispute Lynn's comparison or his evaluation of *Green Hills of Africa*, except to point out his realist conception of Hemingway's writing during the period in question. Hemingway makes clear that the depicted life that interests biographers like Lynn is "boring." "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," it should be recalled, is a frame story that calls into question, first, the integrative value of self-consciousness as it concerns Harry at the end of his life and the life he adopted among the "rich," and, second, the italicized events of a life that has not been written because he has lived with the "rich," a natural home of self-consciousness and psychological extremes. (Note, as a comparison, the biographical background of his wife's history: a happy marriage with two children, her first husband's death and the experience of dealing with her alienated children, reading and drinking, welcoming successive lovers, the death of one of her children in a plane crash [a decisive event], and, finally,

Harry—"she wanted some one that she respected with her" [p. 61].) Her "nervousness," not to mention Harry's "unpleasantness," is developed in the linear narrative of the story, but another story, the one not written, presents a quite different perspective. The dying writer recalls exactly rendered scenes of Paris that are discontinuous from the narrative. Like the frame story, these, too, are terminal experiences: blankets of snow, a common poverty observed in the Paris years, recollections of war and violent death, gambling, bankruptcies, the suicide of the proprietor of an inn in Triberg, a betrayed love, and a personal memory of a childhood incident where the cabin owned by Harry's grandfather was destroyed by fire, "*and all the guns that had been on deer foot racks above the open fireplace were burned and afterwards their barrels, with the lead melted in the magazines, and the stocks burned away, lay out on the heap of ashes that were used to make lye for the big iron soap kettles, and you asked Grandfather if you could have them to play with and he said, . . . no*" (p. 68). If these vignettes end badly, tragically, if potentialities are exhausted, it is because they stand for a life that has been lived.

We discussed earlier the limitations of realist writing, but a complementary perspective found in Hemingway's new "vignettes" challenges as well "the perspective of the world that we have within everyday experience." Reidar Due, in his examination of Deleuze's philosophy, explains: literary modernity "not only challenges nineteenth-century narrative or realist conventions, it also challenges experience itself. It presents perspectives on life and on ourselves as beings of desire, living in time, using language and interacting physically with the world and these perspectives are not coordinated by pragmatic and ordinary practical concerns or by self-conscious experience."[8] In line with the questioning of ordinary experience is a suspension of the "subject . . . as the center of coordination within experience." In his work on Proust and in the concept of "temporal complexity" found in Proust, Deleuze observes, "the time of a life is not linear and successive, but different lines of development, different aspects of a personality always co-exist."[9]

When Harry dies and the hyena makes a strange sound, it is said that Helen "did not wake. In her dream she was at the house on Long Island and it was the night before her daughter's début. Somehow her father was there and he had been very rude" (p. 77). Her life and

Harry's intersect for "security and comfort," but they are also, individually, different "lines of development." The realist conventions do not capture this and it is of little consequence to Harry, now at the top of Kilimanjaro, where his decomposition will be slow and impersonal.

2

To Have and Have Not was published a few months before *The First Forty-Nine Stories*. It was said to incorporate "the mechanics of revolution and what it does to the people in it." As always, it was a matter of Hemingway's relationship to his times. "There are two themes in it," continues his letter to Perkins, "the decline of the individual—The Man Harry—who shows up first in One Trip Across—and his re-emergence as Key West goes down around him—and the story of a shipment of dynamite and all the consequences that happened from it" (*L*, p. 448). Harry, in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" finds false "security and comfort" with the "rich," not so Harry Morgan, who finds disaster: "a man alone ain't got no bloody f—ing chance." Trying to survive, he has become involved in a bootleg operation; from that beginning, he transports "revolutionaries" to Cuba; sometime later, is observed by a wealthy, administration executive on his rented yacht, dumping illegal contraband. It ends badly. Is this an extension of the "unwritten" experience of "Kilimanjaro"? Is this "ordinary" experience? Not so curiously, the last section of *To Have and Have Not* centers on a writer who, it is safe to say, is a negation of Hemingway's concept of authenticity.

The novel was not meant to be read as a primer on a particular political standpoint, although references to the "New Deal" and its specific programs and policies for helping the Vets in Key West are unsympathetic. Rather, Hemingway focuses on a novelist who uses party affiliation for self-advancement and on "the big things that are happening." We have no argument with Carlos Baker's observation that the novel contains "Hemingway's notes towards the definition of a decaying culture, and his disgust with the smell of death to come."[10] But what of his frame of mind with respect to critics and the reading public during the mid-1930s; what of his sensitivity to the role he seemed to have adopted; what of a novel that explicitly reflects a degree of social and political awareness and a reorientation of his perspective?

Chapter VI

"How It Really Was"

Power in the West is what displays itself the most, and thus what hides itself the most.

Michel Foucault

I am no mystic, but to deny it is as ignorant as though you denied the telephone.

For Whom the Bell Tolls

1

Before beginning to write his novel of the Spanish civil war, Hemingway had been closely involved in the Loyalist cause for three years. As a correspondent for the North American Newspaper Alliance (NANA), he visited Spain for extended periods twice in 1937 and again in 1938. He wrote the script for *The Spanish Earth* and helped finance the production of the film by joining Dos Passos, MacLeish, and Lillian Hellman in founding Contemporary Historians Inc. He addressed the Second American Writer's Congress at Carnegie Hall: "writers have a special stake in fighting fascism because it is the only form of government that will not allow them to tell the truth."[1]

CHAPTER 3

1. Carlos Baker, *Hemingway: The Writer as Artist* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. 142, 148.
2. Arthur Waldorn, *A Reader's Guide to Ernest Hemingway* (New York: Octagon Books, 1981), pp. 132, 135.
3. Earl Rovit, *Ernest Hemingway* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1963), pp. 67–77.
4. Baker, *Hemingway: The Writer as Artist*, p. 149.
5. Rovit, *Ernest Hemingway*, p. 27.
6. Richard Gilman, *Decadence: The Strange Life of an Epithet* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1980).
7. See Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" in *LCP*, pp. 148–49.
8. *Aesthetics and Politics*, trans. Ronald Taylor (London: NLB, 1977), p. 84.
9. Ibid., p. 97.
10. Ibid., p. 85.
11. "Leçon," *October*, no. 8 (Spring 1979): 15.
12. *Aesthetics and Politics*, p. 95.
13. *Dear Scott/Dear Max: The Fitzgerald-Perkins Correspondences*, ed. John Kuckl and Jackson R. Bryer (New York: Scribner's, 1971), p. 175.
14. See George Bataille, *L'érotisme* (Paris: UGE, 1957), "Conclusion."
15. Ibid.
16. *The Order of Things* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970), p. 300.
17. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, # 109.
18. *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), p. 120.
19. "Language to Infinity" in *LCP*, pp. 53–56.

CHAPTER 4

1. *Hemingway: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Jeffrey Meyers (London: Routledge, 1982), pp. 168–69.
2. Ibid., p. 172.
3. Ibid., p. 176.
4. *Papa: A Personal Memoir* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976), pp. 22–23.
5. *Dear Scott/Dear Max: The Fitzgerald-Perkins Correspondences*, ed. John Kuckl and Jackson R. Bryer (New York: Scribner's, 1971), p. 131. Advising Perkins on how to handle Hemingway, Fitzgerald says "he knows nothing of publishing except in the cucoo magazines."
6. Edward Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), p. 226.
7. Ibid., p. 228.
8. *Hemingway: The Critical Heritage*, p. 219.
9. See Richard Ellman, *James Joyce* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 676, for an accurate rendering of the phrase. See also *L*, p. 874n.
10. See Terry Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin* (London: NLF, 1981), p. 59, for an understanding of "The Destructive Character."
11. Said, *Beginnings*, p. 243.
12. Cited by Kenneth S. Lynn, *Hemingway* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 415.
13. Marcel Proust, "Time Regained," Vol. VI, in *In Search of Lost Time*, trans. Andreas Mayor and Terrence Kilmartin, rev. D. J. Enright (New York: Modern Library, 2003), pp. 276–80.

CHAPTER 5

1. Edward Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), p. 257.
2. Ibid., p. 227.
3. Ibid., p. 254.
4. Ibid., p. 251.
5. Neitzsche, *The Geneaology of Morals*, III, #25.
6. Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 147.
7. Earl Rovit, *Ernest Hemingway* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1963), pp. 38–39.
8. Reidar Due, *Deleuze* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), p. 58.
9. Ibid., p. 61.
10. Carlos Baker, *Hemingway: The Writer as Artist* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 206.

CHAPTER 6

1. Kenneth S. Lynn, *Hemingway* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 450.