Concealments in Hemingway’s Works

Gerry Brenner

Like any writer who continues to engage our interest, compel our attention, and challenge our understanding, Ernest Hemingway was simultaneously blessed and cursed throughout his life by an obsession. It is Professor Brenner's opinion that that obsession—Hemingway's relationship with the chief emotional object of his life, his father—empowered all of his writing, and that exploring it uncovers previously unseen complexities in both the man and his work.

Using the methods of New Criticism, generic criticism, classical Freudian theory, and psychobiography, Dr. Brenner extracts from Hemingway's deceptively "artless" works their dynamic but hidden aims. When viewed from these combined critical perspectives, the justly acclaimed novels, the troublesome nonfiction, and even stories dismissed as mediocre take on dimensions of meaning and significance that have previously gone undetected.

Professor Brenner's revisionary reading divides Hemingway's mature writings into five phases in order to trace Hemingway's obsession and two related ideas: that until his last phase, Hemingway's novels and books of nonfiction were experimental—an intention he tried rigorously to conceal—and that his aesthetic aim, during all phases of his career, was to conceal his art and his cunning as an artist.

To the first phase, which he terms the Thesis Phase, Brenner assigns *A Farewell to Arms* and *The Sun Also Rises*; to the second, the Aesthetic Phase, the nonfictional *Death in the Afternoon* and *Green Hills of Africa*. The third or Aristotelean Phase contains *To Have and Have Not* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, conscious attempts to write, first, a classical tragedy and, second, a classical epic. *Across the River and into the Trees* belongs to the Imitative Phase, Dante's *Divine Comedy* being Hemingway's deliberate, concealed model. The fifth and final phase—the Anti-

(Continued on back flap)
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for Terry and our three sons

Pat, Kyle, and John


The chapter entitled "A Dantesque 'Imitation': Across the River and into the Trees" in Part 4, "The Imitative Phase," has been revised from "An 'Imitation' of Dante's Divine Comedy: Hemingway's Across the River and into the Trees," originally published in the 1976 volume of the Fitzgerald/Hemingway Annual. Used by permission of the publisher.


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Author’s Note

I cite page references to quotations from Hemingway’s works in the body of my text. Where the source of a quotation is clear, I cite only page references; where the source is unclear, I adopt the short titles below. In both cases all citations are from the following editions published by Charles Scribner’s Sons, of New York:

Sun Rises  The Sun Also Rises, 1926 and 1954, Student’s Edition
Farewell  A Farewell to Arms, 1929 and 1957, Scribner Library
Afternoon  Death in the Afternoon, 1932 and 1960, Scribner Library
Green Hills  Green Hills of Africa, 1935, Scribner Library
Have Not  To Have and Have Not, 1937 and 1965, Scribner Library
Bell Tolls  For Whom the Bell Tolls, 1940, Scribner Library
Across the River  Across the River and into the Trees, 1950
Old Man  The Old Man and the Sea, 1952, Scribner Library
Stories  The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway, 1953, Modern Standard Authors
Feast  A Moveable Feast, 1964, Scribner Library
By-Line  By-Line: Ernest Hemingway: Selected
Articles and Dispatches of Four Decades, ed. William White, 1967

Islands Islands in the Stream, 1970

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