Introduction: Three Theses

There are two sorts of guide books; those that are read before [you see a bullfight] and those that are to be read after[,] and the ones that are to be read after the fact are bound to be incomprehensible to a certain extent before. So from now on it is inferred that you have been to the bullfight. [Afternoon, 63]

There is no dispute over Hemingway's early work. It was experimental and imitative. His early fiction imitated and parodied Ring Lardner, Sherwood Anderson, and Gertrude Stein; his poetry, Stephen Crane, Ezra Pound, and the imagists. But self-discipline, stints as journalist and correspondent, his own experimental urgings, and the creative ambiance of postwar Paris—all helped Hemingway cultivate his own prose style. Once realized, that style presumably changed little, let Hemingway coast through the rest of his career without further imitations or experiments: "He learned early in life," declared Faulkner, "a method by which he could do his work, he has never varied from that method, it suited him well, he handled it well." My first thesis not only disputes Faulkner's widespread conclusion—that Hemingway is an example of "arrested" literary development; it also tilts with its relatives, conclusions that monocularly stare at Hemingway's one theme, his one technique, his one style, his one kind of hero, and the like. I argue that until the fifties Hemingway's books were continuously experimental. Having exorcised his novice phase with The Torrents of Spring, he proceeded to write books that I group in four phases of experimentation—thesis, esthetic, Aristotelean, and imitative—before he wrote the more conventional books of what I call his antithetical phase. A sentence or two about the works I put into each phase should give some notion of the content in specific chapters, should let a reader decide
quickly whether my revisionary readings see Hemingway terrain afresh.

Into Hemingway’s thesis phase I put A Farewell to Arms and The Sun Also Rises. Didactic novels with untrustworthy narrators, they subtly express Hemingway’s vision of the world he finds himself inhabiting. To demonstrate in Farewell his conviction that existence is thoroughly irrational, he creates a disoriented narrator whose therapeutic or testamentary story recounts the bizarre events that have led to the recent death of the marginally neurotic woman he loves. Sun tells how to live in that irrational world. Marry discriminating hedonism, it says, to vivifying traditions. The novel says this, but not its narrator, who fails to see that his most significant immoral act, pimping, contributes to achieving—if only symbolically—that ethical ideal.

Too limited and diffident to risk Faulknerian flights, Hemingway was nevertheless too good an artist to replay either thesis with grace notes, too ambitious to rest upon the fame from two novels and a handful of superb stories, and too morally defensive to put up with either highbrow snootiness or convention-bound repugnance at his taste in subject matter. So he spent the next two decades camouflaging more highly experimental and derivative works. A pair of books on bullfighting and big-game hunting form his esthetic phase. In it he explores the relationship between beauty and that taboo topic, death. With perhaps a silent nod to Walton’s Compleat Angler, Hemingway writes Death in the Afternoon, using aspects of the bullfight both to challenge “civilized” attitudes toward death and to endorse an integrated art whose esthetic of act, motion, and energy would repudiate the then-regnant, Aquinian esthetic of image, stasis, and quietude. The second work of this phase, Green Hills of Africa, is poetic, not venatic. In this openly avowed experiment, Hemingway covertly likens the trophy hunter’s pursuit of exotically horned antelope to the artist’s desire to arrest images of fleeting beauty.

In his Aristotelean phase Hemingway turns to traditional esthetic ideas. He puts to use the single most influential work “in the entire history of aesthetics and literary criticism,” Aristotle’s Poetics. How Hemingway came by his knowledge of Poetics is uncertain. But it is demonstrable that he followed closely Aristotle’s discussion of tragedy and the epic, surreptitiously fashioning To Have and Have Not upon the formula of classical tragedy, For Whom the Bell Tolls upon the formula of the epic. In the former, Harry Morgan’s dying words enunciate a tragic “recognition”
(‘No matter how a man alone ain’t got no bloody fucking chance’” [225]) brought on by hubris (his belief that alone and one-armed he is a match for four Cuban revolutionaries) and by hamartia (his mistaken assumption that he had slain his assailant). Divided and intelligent, Harry’s acts are steeped in, but purified of, the moral repugnance demanded of heroes whose authors pursue Melpomene, the Muse of Tragedy. *For Whom the Bell Tolls* not only has such epic features as extended similes, catalogues, elevated language, and statement of theme. It also has a hero who regards a bridge in Spain’s Guadarrama mountains to “be the point on which the future of the human race can turn” (43). That thought suddenly swells Robert Jordan’s heroic stature. He becomes rival of both Leonidas, defending the mountain pass at Thermopylae, and Horatio, defending the bridge over the Tiber. Waiting to halt Lt. Berrendo’s cavalry at the pass as his life ebbs, he even evokes Roland’s rearguard martyrdom and so lets us watch Hemingway this time pursuing Calliope, the Muse of the Epic. (I wonder if, during his Aristotelean phase, Hemingway glanced back with consternation or self-amusement at this admonition eight years earlier: “Remember this too: all bad writers are in love with the epic” [Afternoon, 54].)

Less discernible are Hemingway’s concealments during his “imitative” phase. But *Across the River and into the Trees* is a rendition of Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. Like the poem the novel incorporates actual people and events, arcane allusions, private diatribes, encyclopedism, a double point of view, and much ado about hell and the salvation of a sinful warrior-pilgrim, Cantwell. The novel’s Dantean quality is also evident in Hemingway’s use of another feature of the poem—its merging of mimetic fiction, history, and dream fantasy. *Across the River* might not have stood alone in this phase had Hemingway completed what I guess was his Shakespearean “imitation,” *The Garden of Eden*. Only a few scholars have seen the lengthy unfinished manuscript. But their summaries make it sound very much like one of the bard’s mature comedies, complete with “the transfer of sexual identities.”

In the fifties Hemingway abandoned the experiments and derivative efforts of the previous three decades. The public had failed to appreciate what he referred to as his “calculus,” *Across the River*. His artistic experiments were leading him into a cul-de-sac. Age and injuries were taking their toll. He could no longer repress an array of guilts. And his own three sons were either leav-
ing him, failing to pursue occupations that reflected well upon him, or rejecting him. These number among other factors that brought on the antithetical phase. In it Hemingway creates father figures whose behavior invites radically conflicting interpretations. Each father's exemplary benevolence and compulsive responsibility solicit admiration and approval. But at the same time each man's behavior is so excessive that subversive implications emerge, ones that create problematic effects, counterintended meanings that suggest unconscious influences at work. Specifically, the "fathers" unconsciously aggrandize themselves and display hostility toward others, especially their "sons." Their lack of self-awareness generates scornful pity, an attitude Hemingway had not, I believe, sought. Such antithetical interpretations show an imbalance of affective currents in the four works of the fifties. They are, in brief, deeply flawed. But rather than depreciate them because they fail to meet that high standard of achieved literary art—unified constructs—I value them. After all, their counterintended meanings enrich the significance assignable to them, as I will later argue.

At the beginning of his last decade, then, Hemingway created in The Old Man and the Sea an aged fisherman whose exaggerated moral purity almost hides his self-aggrandizing motives and hostility. Anxious that he is losing influence over a surrogate son, Santiago performs libidinal and destructive feats that demand filial and fraternal adoration. The likelihood that excessive benevolence toward a substitute son hides some degree of hostility—particularly toward a real-life counterpart—is borne out in Islands in the Stream. Exemplary father though Thomas Hudson appears, his three sons' deaths, abundant grief, and Conradian pursuit of his double—the anonymous German submarine captain in "At Sea" who has slain or abandoned three young sailors—reveal his melancholia and strong filicidal wishes. In The Dangerous Summer Hemingway's avuncular regard for Antonio Ordóñez, a truly heroic surrogate son, seems to discount such filicidal tendencies. But Hemingway's obsessive protective-ness and his fascination with the mano a mano expose the tendency, for this form of bullfighting competition acts out a fratricidal contest between "brothers." The lethal undercurrents in these works surface again in A Moveable Feast. Superficially the work is a set of harmless reminiscences of fellow artists during the twenties in Paris and also a hymn to Hadley, the first Mrs. Hemingway. But the book harshly chastises her and fellow artists'
self-indulgence and irresponsibility. It does so to single out the only hard-working, family-obligated, responsible artist in post-war Paris—Hemingway—and to justify himself to his father.

This overview and its revisionary readings will distress a conservative reader. And I must seem incapable of sustaining a single critical methodology, the benchmark of respected books of literary criticism. But pursuing the proof of Hemingway's literary experimentation and the trajectory of his career calls for differing critical lenses—with varying degrees of perception and imperception, I grant. In partial defense of my practice I cite Plotinus: "To every vision must be brought an eye adaptable to what is to be seen." To me that says that a single critical lens will be insufficient to see clearly the complex art of any major writer who seems to have a vision. My shifts from New Critical to generic to psychoanalytic methodologies, then, will only appear reckless.

I also own that my shifting focus from Hemingway's literary experiments and "imitations" of the thirties and forties to the psychobiographical concerns of his antithetical works of the fifties may seem to reveal a schizophrenic critical perspective in me or a radical change in Hemingway. Neither thought, at least to my consciousness, is correct. In 1935 he wrote that "the only people for a serious writer to compete with are the dead that he knows are good" (By-Line, 219). Naturally a writer cannot compete with literary precursors unless he enters their "event," unless he adapts, adopts, or imitates the modes, genres, or formulas they used. Otherwise there are no grounds for judging the competition. And an author who competes with precursors "he knows are good" displaces a more authentic desire: to compete against his father, real or surrogate. He does not compete unless he believes he is able to hold his own against, if not triumph over, his rival. But neither does he compete unless he respects his rival as a worthy competitor, as someone he honors by the competition. For example, in the parodic The Torrents of Spring Hemingway simply disaffiliates himself from the paternal influence of Sherwood Anderson. But in the epical For Whom the Bell Tolls he competes against those who have written great war epics, predecessors he hopes to triumph over and pay oblique respect to. Both novels also show that Hemingway's antithetical phase marks no radical departure from his preoccupation with father-son relationships in his earlier work. Instead, it repeats that preoccupation, concentrating more nakedly and revealingly on his personal problems and so enriching and extending the earlier phases by
illuminating their more subdued patterns. I repeat, then: to follow
the protean shapes of Hemingway’s preoccupation requires a
shifting critical perspective.

One value in seeing Hemingway as a writer deeply committed to
literary experimentation: it shows him in the mainstream of mod­
ern literature, aligns him—though on a much lesser scale—with
his fellow artist-scholar-experimenters Eliot, Joyce, and Pound.
Another value: it lets us better evaluate the creations Hemingway
brought forth, for we can compare them against the literary
wombsthat may also have nurtured some of those experimental
offspring. Yet a third value: it should contribute to any ultimate
assessment of Hemingway’s creative imagination. Was it origi­
nal or finally derivative? And a last value: it should augment re­
spect for Hemingway the man. Who, after all, credits him with the
self-restraint to have kept his own counsel about such experi­
ments? Isn’t it more likely that he would have defended himself
against his critics, abused them for having missed what he had
been about? Could Hemingway have been so shrewd?

Hemingway’s sustained literary experimentation has been rel­
atively neglected. This is due partly to the long-standing critical
attention given either his heroes as thinly veiled self-impersona­
tions or the ethical preeminence of his alleged codes. It is due even
more to his esthetic. It went beyond Oscar Wilde’s epigram: “To
reveal art and conceal the artist is art’s aim.” The aim of Hem­
ingway’s art, my second thesis, was to conceal both the artist and
the art. Long acknowledged though Hemingway’s complexity has
been, its scope is greater than past estimates. Even his earliest
fiction finds him affecting artlessness and concealing implica­
tions so that readers would respond naively, oblivious to the com­
plexity of his understatement, ambiguity, and irony. I have yet to
understand, for instance, why otherwise perceptive critics dis­
miss “My Old Man” as “a mediocre story.” It would deserve
scorn if it only imitated Sherwood Anderson. The story, written in
1923, does that, but it also does more. It scolds Anderson: “This,
Sherwood, is how you should have treated a story of self-pity.”

When motherless young Joe Butler narrates the story of his
early life with his father, a steeplechase jockey, he does so just
after his father’s death and after discovering the true nature of his
father. Butler quit racing in Milan and took Joe to Paris, where he
rode less and less often. Inside information on a fixed race
brought him big money. With it he bought and trained his own
horse, but in his second race he died in a fall while trying to jump a hedge and water obstacle. As young Joe leaves the track with one of his father's friends, he overhears two men:

"Well, Butler got his all right."
"I don't give a good goddam if he did, the crook. He had it coming to him on the stuff he's pulled."
"I'll say he had." [Stories, 205]

Joe is stunned by what he hears and concludes that his father had been a crook. And his story, we see, has focused on episodes that incriminate Butler and justify that conclusion.

Hemingway's story caters to our sentiments, Anderson-fashion. For it reveals a young boy's disillusionment, learning the truth about his father. And Hemingway nicely gains sympathy and sometimes tears for young Joe, not only orphaned but now burdened with the stigma that his father was a crook.

Hemingway's concealing art, though, gains more than that. Tucked inside the sentimental story is an ironic one of Joe's blindness. Although his story proves to him that his father was a crook, it better proves that Butler was an honest man. He not only raced during the war "in the south of France without any purses, or betting or crowd or anything just to keep the breed up" (Stories, 202). He also tried, single-handedly, to clean up the crooked world of fixed, rigged racing. The reason he had to leave Milan? Because he failed to lose the race he had been told to lose. The reason he had trouble on the Paris circuit getting horses to ride? Because owners knew he would not agree to throw races. The reason he bet heavily on an already rigged race? Because he had to buy his own horse to continue racing. That would be his only way of braking the rigged machinery of the races. After all, just one independent jockey, riding his own mount, restores to the racetrack unpredictability, genuine gambling, the world of chance. So when Joe overhears the two men at the end of the story call his dad a crook, Hemingway lets those who are more discerning than Joe realize that the two men are the crooks. And when crooks call a man a crook, naturally they testify to his honesty. In this concealed story Hemingway gains genuine, not sentimental, sympathy for Joe, a gently satirized boy who mistakenly believes that his father was a crook and so is blind to his father's virtues.

Hemingway's habit of creating subtle concealments, cultivated in those early Paris years with sheer technique, warrants, I believe, digging for equally subtle concealments of potential sources,
formulas, and precursors in the books of the thirties and forties. It warrants, further, the view that Hemingway’s craft, apparently a compound of technical skill and talent, also has a sizable ingredient of craftiness, of sleight of hand, of cunning and duplicity that conceal him and his art.

An image, a statement, and a theory—all expressed by Hemingway—support such a view of his artistic deviousness. The image is an iceberg, the dignity of whose movement “is due to only one-eighth of it being above water” (Afternoon, 192). The statement is from Hemingway’s acceptance speech for the Nobel Prize: “Things may not be immediately discernible in what a man writes, and in this sometimes he is fortunate, but eventually they are quite clear and by these and the degree of alchemy that he possesses will he endure or be forgotten.” The theory is Hemingway’s “theory of omission.”

The image of the iceberg interests me because of its immodesty and its challenge. Outdoing his American predecessor, Samuel L. Clemens, whose pen name rightly implied that his writing was two fathoms deep, “mark twain,” Hemingway’s image boasts that his is seven times deeper than its surface height. And it implies that his writing intentionally hides from ready view those other seven-eighths. It also notifies serious readers to bring special equipment or vision if they hope to see many of those eighths below the water line.

Referring to things not “immediately discernible in what a man writes” and so extending the iceberg image, Hemingway’s Nobel Prize statement invites two conclusions, both curious. If a writer’s permanence rests partly upon readers eventually seeing previously undiscerned “things” in his writing, then it should follow either that such things were unintended and thus unconsciously found their way into an author’s text or else that they were consciously included but so disguised as to make them immediately undiscernible. If the former, then an author’s permanence depends partly upon elements over which he has no conscious control—obsessions, drives, and anxieties he is unaware of. He can claim no credit for the effects of these elements, for they operate independently of his conscious artistry. If the things are, on the other hand, consciously included but disguised to prevent immediate detection, then their belated detection should augment an author’s stature much as we applaud an adroit magician. Or to use Hemingway’s image of the alchemist, surely we will applaud the craft that beguiles us to regard as brass those things that are truly gold.
I find these conclusions curious, because Hemingway’s career-long concern had presumably been with the real, the true, the actual, and the honest: “I was trying to write then and I found the greatest difficulty, aside from knowing truly what you really felt . . . was to put down what really happened in action; what the actual things were which produced the emotion that you experienced” (Afternoon, 2). It is even more curious that a writer would feel sometimes fortunate in not having things discerned. Since undiscerning readers are likely to misunderstand his writing, to misjudge it and him, it seems more probable that a writer would feel unfortunate—with two exceptions. Spared the exposure of being shown unconscious drives he did not know existed in his works, a writer might feel fortunate that they were opaque. And a writer who did not wish his readers to discover things he had consciously concealed in his writing would also feel fortunate, perhaps even smug, that his surreptitious efforts had gone undetected: “I was learning very much about [Cézanne] but I was not articulate enough to explain it to anyone. Besides it was a secret” (Feast, 13).

Hemingway’s theory of omission was “that you could omit anything if you know that you omitted [it,] and the omitted part would strengthen the story and make people feel something more than they understood” (Feast, 75). Hemingway’s gains by applying this theory are impressive and shrewd. The omission of Butler’s honorable motives in “My Old Man” shows that theory in practice. Perhaps a few other examples will show just how well-rooted that theory is. “Big Two-Hearted River,” for instance, is satisfying as an amply detailed fishing story. But Nick Adams’s excessively methodical behavior and his peculiar reluctance to fish the strangely named “tragic” swamp hint that something has been omitted. When we learn the omission, that Nick is trying to recover from war-caused psychic wounds, then the story’s shadows deepen and we read more closely as a psychological cripple carefully exercises his healing psyche. Likewise, “Indian Camp” is properly admired for its economical treatment of Nick’s initiatives into birth and death processes, balanced as they are by two incisions, in a woman’s abdomen and a man’s neck. But the omission that Nick’s Uncle George has fathered the child that Nick’s father delivers makes for one of Hemingway’s richest early applications of his theory. In a less well known story, “The Mother of a Queen,” Roger’s dramatic monologue defames a homosexual bullfighter and former friend, Paco. Here the omission is that the self-righteous Roger is not only an unreliable narrator but also a
jealous and thus vindictive “closet” homosexual. His peremptory dismissal of Paco’s defensible values richly earns Hemingway’s implied scorn.¹⁶

Hemingway sometimes uses his theory of omission in simple ways, or so it seems. He will omit, for instance, the single word that a story surrounds. This is the case in “The Sea Change,” which omits the word lesbian, and in the better-known “Hills Like White Elephants” and its missing word, abortion. Still, both stories are not “solved” just because we reel to the shore their missing words. Indeed, Hemingway cunningly gulls us into thinking that once we have discovered the omitted words there is little left to the stories. The omitted words, however, prod a more thorough reading of those stories. Instead of expressing contempt for a perverse young lesbian in “The Sea Change,” Hemingway generates admiration for her. She is considerate of Phil, the man she is leaving, and she is courageous to act upon the discovery of a new dimension of her sexual makeup. And rather than spurn for unreasonableness Jig, the pregnant girl in “Hills Like White Elephants,” Hemingway mocks her nagging, selfish, infantile mate for being insensitive to her needs and unwilling to allow their relationship to develop beyond hotel-hopping. Hemingway also omits the end of the story: Jig’s abortion and separation from her companion.

What these stories, and many of Hemingway’s best fictions, have in common is doubleness. Ignorant of their omissions, we can, of course, appreciate them, analyze their techniques, and extract sustainable readings of character, theme, and affects. Attuned to their omissions, we usually come away with contrasting readings. Rather than nullify our “ignorant” readings, which may have felt “something more than [we] understood,” they should enrich our pleasure by affording simultaneously antithetical or at least alternative readings. I give a more sustained defense of this idea in my revisionary readings of Hemingway’s books in the chapters ahead. But Hemingway’s own penchant for doubleness pervades his work and reveals him to be, as Theodore Roethke defines the type, “A poet: someone who is never satisfied with saying one thing at a time.”¹⁷

Hemingway’s penchant for doubleness may be difficult to accept, if even to tolerate. And my notion of his craftiness, his artistic duplicity, may appear misguided, perverse, or as proof of over-exercised ingenuity. After all, Hemingway’s most salient public trait was self-exposure. Far more than most artists he seemed addicted to sporting and military events that would give him high
public visibility. And he was never loath to broadcast his tastes, opinions, and views, in interviews and in his many articles as war correspondent and journalist. As testimony to his lack of secretiveness, he openly declares in the foreword to *Green Hills of Africa* his intent: "to write an absolutely true book to see whether the shape of a country and the pattern of a month's action can, if truly presented, compete with a work of the imagination." Such candor surely denies any concealments, any double-dealing.

As Carlos Baker tells, however, Hemingway was a "man of many contradictions." Beneath his masculine swagger lay puerile diffidence. An advocate of courage, he was fear-ridden. Given to exhibitionism, he highly prized the solitude of his morning hours, practicing his craft. Rigorously self-disciplined, he is better known for his self-indulgence. Seemingly profligate, he was actually a compulsive collector, as the innumerable papers and items in the John F. Kennedy Library's Hemingway Collection verify. As a child, "he shouts out 'fraid a nothing with great gusto'; as an old man his paranoia finds him "fraid a plenty." A personal library of over nine thousand books suggests "Ernest-the-bookworm," at odds with the popular image of "Papa Sportif." And Professor Michael S. Reynolds's *Hemingway's First War: The Making of "A Farewell to Arms"* gives good reason to be suspicious of the kind of openness Hemingway presents in his foreword to *Green Hills*. Reynolds's excellent scholarship proves that Hemingway's early novel was not the product of mere autobiography and fiction. Rather it was also the product of considerable research and was deeply indebted to others' writings. For Hemingway had neither been present during, nor had he even visited the area that was the scene for, the central event that he chose to write about with such first-person authenticity: the retreat from Caporetto.

Hemingway's attraction to concealments and doubleness is most visible in his one formal attempt as a playwright, *The Fifth Column*. Like many a failure, it is artistically and autobiographically revealing. Its main character, Philip Rawlings, is an espionage agent whose public image as a hedonistic roustabout hides his courageous cloak-and-dagger activities. When he falls in love, the usual melodramatic dilemma assails him. Should he give in to the rewards of a private life of pleasure by marrying the beautiful Dorothy Bridges? Or should he continue to serve the cause of humanity, reject pleasure for duty, fatal though it is sure to be? Hemingway fails to make credible or compelling his stereo-
typed hero, situation, or problem. He manages only to set up several antitheses: a hotel manager whose comic role collides with the disasters of a bomb-torn city, a stage set whose two rooms and connecting door symbolize Philip's double life, as do his two missions and the pair of romantic triangles that entwine him. Hemingway handles the problem of double identity awkwardly, even having a young idealist, mistaken for Philip, murdered. Nevertheless, Philip's reluctance to divulge his identity to the woman he presumably loves is significant. It expresses his and Hemingway's anxiety that detection of their secret identities will jeopardize their well-being.

This anxiety and its accompanying wish, for an undetectable second identity, recur throughout Hemingway's life and his writing. Naturally they were acquired early, many factors urging their development. His mother assigned Ernest's first double identity, frocking him out as his older sister's twin sister and continuing to have both children's hair Dutch-bobbed to make lookalikes of them through Ernest's sixth year. The androgynous qualities of his parents must have confused his sense of their identity and, consequently, his own. Mother Grace, strongly promasculine and aggressive, spent more time giving voice lessons than in housewifery: her only culinary accomplishment was a teacake (89). It was she who took on the design and furnishing of the North Kenilworth Avenue home, a telling instance of her dominance in running the lives of the Hemingways. It was to father Clarence that such normally female, domestic duties fell: marketing, cooking, and canning. Moreover, this dignified, fastidious, suburban obstetrician and general practitioner in Illinois would transform himself during summers in Michigan into a woodsman with patched trousers, stained hat, and old flannel shirt. "It was," Hemingway's older sister Marcelline concludes, "as though he lived two lives" (45). It must have been perplexing to have a father whose forceps delivered new life one day and whose shotgun dispatched it the next. Certainly it perplexed his children to witness or be victim of his rapidly shifting moods, as Marcelline noted:

My father's dimpled cheeks and charming smile could change in an instant to the stern taut mouth and piercing look which was his disciplinary self. Sometimes the change from being gay to being stern was so abrupt that we were not prepared for the shock that came, when one minute Daddy would have his arm around one of us or we would be sitting on his lap, laughing and talking, and a minute or so later—because of something we had said or done, or some neglected duty of ours he suddenly thought about—we would be ordered to our rooms and perhaps made to go without supper. [31]
The different inflexibilities of Dr. and Mrs. Hemingway unwittingly encouraged duplicity. Marcelline recalls secretly slipping a sheet of ragtime piano music to her younger sister, Sunny. Surrupitiously she learned to play the forbidden item, a musical obscenity to their mother, who had thrown over a promising career in opera by marrying Dr. Hemingway (124). Marcelline also confesses that several times she snooped on young Ernest, presumably practicing his cello in the family music room. He would be bowing away on open strings with his right hand. But in his left hand would be not the cello’s fingerboard but a book he would be reading (124). Moral absolutist though Dr. Hemingway was, Marcelline even tattles on him, smuggling fish from Michigan into Illinois one time, poaching birds out of season another (42, 82). Small wonder that a son might practice comparable deceptions in matters marital or literary.

By the time Hemingway was only two or three he was already engaging in one form of double identity that he never outgrew, adopting nicknames. Then he was “Bobby-the-squirrel” or “Carlogleaming-fiery-eyes-coming-through-the-dark,” after real or toy animals (11). Later he was Eoinbones, the Old Brute, Wemedge, Stein, Heminstein, and, of course, Papa.24 An innocuous practice? Perhaps. But when combined with his antipathy to his own Christian name and his deletion of the family-inherited middle name, Miller, it indicates a strong wish to hide his real identity, to be different from either the person he actually was or the person others thought him. And though fiction writing was clearly an adult way of trying to fulfill this wish, as a child Hemingway’s practice of adopting nicknames was a normal part of the process of formulating what personality theorists call a child’s idealized self, what Freud called ego ideals. Based on parental values, and therefore incorporations of role models, ego ideals answer “to everything that is expected of the higher nature of man.”25 Their creation not only instills religion, morality, and a social sense. It also helps one to avoid or to cope with the anxiety caused by feelings of parental disapproval or rejection and, in many cases, anxiety exacerbated by the parents’ own conflicts.

A number of details about Hemingway’s early domestic situation must have complicated his formulation of ego ideals and contributed to at least some contradictions, fluctuations, or instabilities in them.26 Along with the already noted characteristics of Dr. and Mrs. Hemingway, the house that Hemingway spent his first six years in must have been a perplexing place, for it was also home to widowed grandfather Ernest Hall and to Grandfather
Hall’s bachelor brother-in-law, “Uncle” Tyley Hancock. Which among this trio of father figures was his real father, a child might ask? And after which of them should he formulate his ego ideals? This question would be complicated by grandfather “Abba” (i.e., “Father”) Hall’s pronounced patriarchal ways and strong affection for the grandson named after him (5–6, 11), by “Uncle” Tyley’s unflagging gaiety and affection for his grandnieces and grandnephew (9–10), by Grace Hemingway’s doting on both father and uncle (15), and by her domineering role in the home. Such a cluster of “fathers” would surely complicate one’s ego ideals.

Still other factors during those early years might explain the inclusion of secretiveness in the ego ideals Hemingway formulated. During his early mental development Grandfather Hall annually wintered in California (13) and Uncle Tyley traveled as a salesman “all over the Middle West” (9). Young Ernest might have construed their disappearances and returns as proof of his “fathers’” omnipotence, their possession of some magical powers. This illusion might have been encouraged by Uncle Tyley, whose “sleight-of-hand demonstrations endeared him to all of us at one age or another.”27 A father with remarkable eyesight and secret powers to heal the sick—as a young child would regard a doctor-father—might also encourage the illusion. So too could the doctor’s obstetrical ability to deal with that monumental childhood mystery, where babies come from. Hemingway’s parents’ command of esoteric languages—music and medicine—might have further added to formulating ego ideals that would issue in at least a double self, one that would prize not only aggressive masculinity but also the passive pleasures of writing quietly, one that could be common and esoteric, public and private, tough and tender, visible and inscrutable.

Perhaps I labor biographical and fictional particulars. If so, I do it not only to help see consciously intended concealments that enrich Hemingway’s art, but to examine as well its repressed, unintended, but nevertheless potentially discoverable patterns. For such repressed patterns also enrich a work’s and a writer’s significance, even when they cause problematic effects and reveal counterintentions that clash directly with intended meanings. To be sure, repressed meanings and patterns can overpower a work’s artistically intended effects. But as Hemingway himself said, the eventual discernment of “things . . . not immediately discernible” contributes to evaluating whether a writer will “endure or be forgotten.”
Hemingway's esthetic of concealment serves well the affective and esthetic aims of his writing. But ultimately it also answered his psychological needs, which brings me to my last thesis. As reflected in his life, his esthetic, and his work, Hemingway was fixated upon his father, the chief emotional object of his life. In several works—clearly some Nick Adams stories and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*—Hemingway consciously fictionalized his relationship with his father. But more often Hemingway seems unconscious of how extensively father-son dynamics empowered his writing.28

As I have mentioned, Hemingway must have had complications in formulating his ego ideals. But his father's character and values most sharply affected that process. As a young boy Hemingway idolized his father's professional abilities, his interest in the out-of-doors, and his self-discipline. These constellated much of Hemingway's ego ideals. But his father's selflessness puzzled him, especially as it came out in submissiveness to a domineering wife. Clarence Hemingway's lack of assertiveness in the husband-wife relationship must have signaled to his son a sizable fear of woman. And it must have disturbed the stability that the formation of ego ideals tried to establish. An arresting episode in "Now I Lay Me," based upon an actual event in Hemingway's childhood, suggests the shock of witnessing a father's submissiveness.29 Suffering insomnia because of a battle injury, Nick Adams gets through the dark hours by remembering. One of his earliest memories is of his father's return home from a hunting trip to find that his wife has burned his collection of Indian artifacts—in the interests of "'cleaning out the basement, dear'" (Stories, 366). Hemingway does not have Nick register shock at his father's failure to scold, to protest, or to retaliate against his wife—this story's significant omission. But the scene is traumatic for Nick, for it influences his refusal to see marriage as a solution to any problems, indeed, influences his deep fear of women. Even more, Nick's recent trauma of being blown up at night and feeling his soul leave his body has activated his repressed infantile conflicts, ones that came to a head in the artifacts-burning episode. Nick's insomnia, then, mirrors at a distance those nocturnal fears and puzzlements that he had had after he witnessed his father's submission, an equally explosive event in his psychic life.

Like "Now I Lay Me" and "My Old Man," other stories record disappointment in a father whose treachery or betrayal—intended or not—undermines his virtues. "The Doctor and the Doc-
tor's Wife" studies Nick's weak father, who backs down before a taunting Indian and, worse, before an invalid wife. Nick does not enter the story until it is almost over. But his delayed entrance artfully shows that Hemingway focuses upon him, inviting us to imagine the inevitable scars a weak father will leave on Nick's psyche. Even "Ten Indians" turns upon betrayal, not so much a girl's as a father's. Hemingway laces the story's first scene with sexual innuendoes between the Garners, who are bringing Nick home from celebrating Independence Day in town. Those innuendoes carry over into the second scene, in which Dr. Adams tells Nick that he found Nick's girl, Prudie, "threshing around" with another man. Yet why had Dr. Adams chosen not to spend the holiday with his son? Had he dishonorable reasons? Had he gone off to the Indian camp to find Nick's girl for himself rather than to find her as he says he did? Nick's adolescent heartbreak screens Hemingway's omission here, Dr. Adams's intended sexual treachery.

The Nick-on-the-road stories fit the "family romance" pattern that Freud found common to fairy tales, heroic myths, fiction, and most children's development: the search for the "true" father. But they also verify Hemingway's fixation on, and disillusionment with, his own father. After all, the stories ask us to see that even Nick's surrogate fathers fail to measure up to the ideal father he seeks. In "The Battler" the "friendly" brakeman punches Nick, boyish Ad Francis turns vicious on him, and gentlemanly Bugs shows his gentleness by sapping Ad with a blackjack. The surly bartender, the homosexual cook, and Steve Ketchel—over whose love two whores bizarrely debate in "Light of the World"—again represent men who opaquely justify Nick's filial distrust. The strongest record of Nick's shock at paternal betrayal is "The Killers." Organized around a motif of mistaken identities, the story climaxes in Nick's stunned discovery that an aging professional fighter, a boxer, refuses to fight for his life, fails to be what he is supposed to be.

In still other stories Hemingway projects upon men the disillusionment and hurt that his own father's defects caused him. In "Fifty Grand" Jerry Doyle tells about an unheroic surrogate father, Jack Brennan, who boxes simply to make a living and whose main anxiety is economic, a disappointment that Jerry tries hard to conceal. In "A Simple Enquiry" Pinin discovers that his "father," the company major, has homosexual designs upon him. And in "In Another Country" Nick's surrogate father, the major, lacks the stoicism he preaches.
Hemingway's fixation upon his father is also evident in the many stories that are partly propelled by his wish to compensate for weak fathers. Admired men, who show their capability to do better or more than one could have expected from them, include the Jesus of "Today Is Friday," Manuel of "The Undefeated," Cayetano of "The Gambler, the Nun, and the Radio," and the old men of "A Clean Well-Lighted Place" and "Old Man at the Bridge."

Hemingway's fixation on, and ambivalence toward, father figures obliges me to draw the necessary inference, that Hemingway was latently homoerotic. Many things urge this. Mrs. Hemingway's unchallenged efforts to transform Ernest and Marcelline into look-alikes might well have made him feel at an early age that both mother and father preferred girls to boys, instilling in him a need to adopt some "feminine" tendencies. The successive arrival of siblings into the Hemingway household and young Ernest's disappointment at the failure of any of them to be boys would also have persuaded him that girls were a preferred commodity. If they were not, then surely his father would have exercised what a very young Ernest would have believed was in his father's power, the ability to choose the sex of his own children. Clearly Ernest's "fraid a nothing" motto asserted pride in his own maleness. But his delight in sewing "something for Papa to wear[,]... in mending Daddy's pants" would early note his desire to win his father's love through "feminine" means. So too might have been his pleasure in sharing his father's love of the outdoors, one highlight of his childhood being his fourth-year birthday present, "an all-day fishing trip with his father."

The recurrent domestic quarrels, conflicts, and tension between the doctor and the singer would have compelled Ernest to choose between them. Rather than develop a normal ambivalence of tender and hostile feelings toward both parents, he clearly distributed the larger share of hostility to his mother, tenderness to his father. And his hatred of his mother, offset though it was by his secret admiration of her Pilar-like dominance, was augmented by his view of her as the disruptive rival in his love for his father, thus fitting the classic outline of a homoerotic, "negative" Oedipal complex. Identification with, but disappointment in, his father partly explains Hemingway's lifelong ambition to prove himself superior to his father. It also partly explains his overdeveloped masculinity, the customary symptom of reaction formation, by which a man represses the wish to be the object of his father's or father-surrogates' love. To compete against mother and sisters
for his father's affection meant, then, that Hemingway had to adopt "passive," "feminine" traits.35 One sign that he did could be his lifelong career as a writer, expressing as it may an outward renunciation of masculinity and of active sexual rivalry with his father. A surer sign is the gallery of men his imagination and psychic needs created. The heroes in his fiction are more passive than active, feminine than masculine, either naive adolescents, "men without women," winners who "take nothing," or altruistic, maimed, or innocuous males.36 Hemingway's latent homoeroticism is categorically confirmed by the paranoia that afflicted him during his last years, paranoia invariably linked to homoerotic wishes.37

To be sure, Hemingway's latent homoeroticism does not prove him abnormal. Without a doubt he led a relatively normal heterosexual life, facilitated as it was by the several sisters who enabled him to transfer original erotic desires from his mother to women outside the immediate family, proof that a "positive" Oedipal complex accompanied his "negative" one. And certainly Hemingway's feelings toward his father were not exclusively "passive," "feminine" ones. His masculine aggression found many chances to vent hostility toward his father: parricidal motifs in his fiction repeatedly vouch for that. Nevertheless, because his father was the chief emotional object of his life, it is not surprising that his father's weakness not only shocked and distressed him but also ignited an accompanying wish to come to his father's aid. And that wish, to rescue the father, customarily contains homoerotic as well as parricidal wishes.

Proof of Hemingway's latent homoeroticism is best borne out by the number of short stories that deal with it. It is latent in the relationships between Nick Adams and a chum in "The End of Something," "Three-Day Blow," and "Cross-Country Snow." It is overt in "The Battler," "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot," "A Simple Enquiry," "The Sea Change," and "The Mother of a Queen." Moreover, any scanning of the short fiction I have not yet pointed at will find Hemingway most often writing about two men engaging in some activity together: Robert Wilson and Francis Macomber, Guy and the narrator of "Che Ti Dice La Patria," John and the narrator of "An Alpine Idyll," the anonymous pair in "Wine of Wyoming." I interpret this pattern as Hemingway's projected wish for fraternal experiences that would gratify his more deeply rooted wish for the approval and affection and relationship he earlier sought from his father. Surely Hemingway's lifelong pref-
ference for masculine activities and for comradeship with men—Ezra Pound early, General Charles Trueman (Buck) Lanham later—acts out his wish to ingratiate himself with his father. And by displacing virility from bedrooms to battlefields, by showing allegiance to father-approved goals, he would also, of course, deny his father any reason to perform on him that act every man, consciously or not, dreads—castration.  

Finally, Hemingway's father fixation and homoeroticism show up in the dominant wish in his fiction—affiliation. Common though it has become to see Hemingway competing for power or achievement, those wishes are less significant to him than his overriding need for association with others, even when such relationships subordinate him. Psychologists declare, for instance, that we can discover people's basic wishes—even their unconscious ones—by observing the recurrent concerns that emerge when people talk or write about their daydreams. If they daydream about improving or accomplishing things, then they wish for achievement. If they daydream about who is boss and how they can keep authority or wrest it from another person, then they wish for mastery, power. If they daydream about family, friends, and associates, then they wish for affiliation.  

(Although these same psychologists prefer to ignore the model from which their formulation derives, Freud's Oedipal triangle looms large. Crude ly put, normally the child pursues achievement [to woo a parent of the opposite sex and to challenge the parent of the same sex], the father seeks power [to intimidate a son, master a wife, and woo a daughter], and the mother strives for affiliation [to nurture for herself the nonsexual affection of her family's males].)  

Hemingway's fiction certainly allows scope to all three wishes. And in it I hear loudly the wish to achieve, even though its aim may be homoerotic, to woo his father. But I hear even more loudly the wish for affiliation, due, I believe, to his homoerotic aim to nurture for himself the nonerotic affection of his father. Consider briefly, for instance, the 1927 collection of stories *Men without Women*. Its unity depends not upon thematic issues or literary techniques. Rather its stories deal with affiliative situations, ones that ultimately sublimate homoerotic aims. "The Undefeated" comes closest to demonstrating a wish for power: Manuel's come-back attempt seems driven by his need to show that he is still a great matador, "boss." Yet this wish is complicated by his wish to achieve: recognition as a great matador will come by proving his ability in the plaza de toros. But success with the bulls will do
more than demonstrate achievement or mastery. It will gain him spectators' approval, aficionados' esteem, and, most of all, the paternal regard of Zurito, the father figure whose benediction will symbolize affiliation. (Little wonder that Manuel reacts strongly to Zurito's ambiguous, castrative gesture of cutting off his coleta.) Projected onto Manuel, then, is Hemingway's affiliative wish: to obtain his father's nonerotic affection and approval.

"A Simple Enquiry" and "A Pursuit Race" openly display homoerotic situations and the accompanying affiliative wish. Other stories in the volume do so too, but less openly. The unwillingness to marry, a motif dominant in "In Another Country" and "Now I Lay Me," responds less to the fears and complications of heterosexual entanglements than to the repressed aim of homoerotic relationships. After all, both stories reject confident, assertive men—the "hawks" in the former, the orderly, John, in the latter. They favor sympathetic, "feminine" men—the young man whose face was blown up and the diminutive major who breaks down in "In Another Country," the sensitive listener to whom Nick is telling "Now I Lay Me." By writing about Jack Brennan in "Fifty Grand," Jerry Doyle acknowledges his preference for a man whose domestic concerns—family and genuine relationships—are more important than retaining his title (achievement) or showing crooked fight-fixers who is boss (power). "Che Ti Dice" criticizes fascism, a manifestly political but latently personal story. It rejects, that is, the tyranny of powerful males and the fatherland, prefers democracy's fraternal governance. In "Today Is Friday" Jesus wins one Roman soldier's admiration for being "'pretty good in there today'" (Stories, 358). His behavior neither achieves anything nor demonstrates power, but it creates an affiliative bond. And in "Banal Story" the collective mourning for Maera (a cortege of 147 bullfighters accompanies his coffin) measures considerable affiliative regard.

Aware that I may overwork the evidence that the affiliative wish in Hemingway's fiction subordinates to it the wishes for achievement and power, let me end my case by simply pointing to the title of that 1927 volume Men without Women. Almost blatantly it declares the affiliative wish and homoerotic aim. And impelling both wish and aim, I believe, is Hemingway's fixation upon his father.

Hemingway's fixation, aim, and wish oftentimes lead to irreconcilable interpretations of his fiction. Intended meanings and artistic effects will be at odds with unconscious drives and sub-
versive implications. A conscious concealment will be contra­dicted or compromised by a repressed obsession. I hear, for in­stance, Hemingway’s intent to portray Robert Jordan as an epic hero who commendably sacrifices his life to shield Pablo’s fleeing band; to protect the life of his true love, Maria; and to serve mag­nanimously a country and a cause he loves. But I also hear the subversive desires of Jordan’s repressed wishes: to commit suicide now that he has redeemed that degraded father, Pablo; to punish Maria by abandoning her, thus driving her mad again, loathsome woman that she truly is to him; to have the chance to slay at least one more “brother” before dying.

These views of Jordan are irreconcilable, of course. But I think it is unnecessary to be drawn into the position of deciding whether this or another work’s unconscious implications and problematic effects either complement and enrich its intended meanings or damage and detract from them. I find no compelling reason to force literary criticism into such weary either-or alternatives. A work’s unconscious counterintentions, to put the matter plainly, always enrich it, for they insist on adopting an attitude of both­and. Surely our modern critical heritage has taught us to hallow ambiguity (and, alas, to ignore Freud’s richer term, “condensa­tion,” from which ambiguity sprang). And ambiguities demand a both-and response. Esthetic purists and formalists who insist upon beholding an objet d’art in isolation, immune from the artist’s inartistic, undesigned unconscious, will quibble, at the least. But their either-or modes of esthetic mentation dehumanize the very art upon which they practice their priestly craft.40

I expect to hear many conservative students and scholars of Hemingway scoffing at my three theses and the revisionary read­ings and afterwords that follow. I too scoffed when, fifteen years ago, I stumbled upon epic machinery in For Whom the Bell Tolls, a bit of pure happenstance that came of teaching Milton’s epic and Hemingway’s novel at the same time. And I scoffed again at the prospect that Hemingway could have attempted a tragedy; but I rooted away, pig after a second truffle, and found it. I scoffed even more at the notion that Hemingway was artistically deceptive, crafty, for I too had suckled on the belief that his autobiographical fictions were a clean, well-lighted place. I scoffed most at a col­league’s challenge that out-of-date Freudian theory could help me over the obstacles of why Hemingway concealed his experiments, of what was truly going on in his fiction. More scoffs will be noth­ing new to my ears.
But I write not to exercise scoffers. Much less do I write to convince Hemingway students and scholars that my perceptions and conclusions are correct, theirs flawed. For as with every book of literary criticism, this one too must settle for trying to be heuristic. Nevertheless, I intend it to probe some dimensions of Hemingway and his work that will let stand before us a more elusive Hemingway than we have yet looked at.