THE ARISTOTELIAN PHASE
A Classical Tragedy: To Have and Have Not

" 'No matter how a man alone ain't got no bloody fucking chance' " (225). These words, Harry Morgan’s last, are his anagnorisis. They make that utterance required of any classical tragic hero, his recognition, and so they establish the genre for correctly assessing this novel: tragedy. Hemingway generates neither a Shakespearean nor a Sophoclean catharsis. But this is due partly to his creation of a questionable hero, someone whose actions seem too saturated with villainy for us to discern tragic qualities in them. It is also due to our expectations: the last thing we expect to find in Hemingway’s realistic canon is a tragic protagonist. Our unpreparedness, then, may thwart a purging of our emotions of pity and fear. Inclined to regard the words spoken over Harry’s dead body as ironic, we overlook the diction that points at that quality every tragic hero shares, excessive suffering:

“He didn’t suffer at all, Mrs. Morgan,” the doctor said. Marie did not seem to hear him.

“Oh, Christ,” she said, and began to cry again. “Look at his god-damned face.” [256]

Customarily cited as the novel that signals Hemingway’s thematic shift from individualism to brotherhood,¹ To Have and Have Not better signals his artistic shift from the autonomous forms of his earlier fictions to the prescriptive form of tragedy. The novel deserves to be faulted for its structural flaws, perhaps caused by its interrupted gestation.² But its problems wane and its achievement waxes if, with formulas of tragedy in mind, we look at its species, its protagonist, and its dramatic structure.³

Let us speculate upon the novel’s species: the characteristics of “common” tragedy seem tailor-made for it. Harry Morgan is con-
cerned with a most rudimentary human problem—economic survival in a society that offers him debasing options. He can starve, dig sewers for relief wages, operate a filling station with one arm, or make money by unlawful means. A "conch," by definition Harry has a place in the social order—among its "dregs," its "sediment," its "leftovers." Proud and resentful of such status, he struggles to slip no lower. And though superficially adventurous, Harry's actions are domestic, pragmatically concerned with providing for his family without injuring his self-esteem. Commonplace though he is in this regard, he has what Arthur Miller defines as the "flaw" shared by all tragic heroes, an "inherent unwillingness to remain passive in the face of what he conceives to be a challenge to his dignity, his image of his rightful status." And the catastrophe that ends Harry's life also reveals his dignity because, citing Miller again, his "destruction in the attempt [to evaluate himself justly—that is, as more than the negligible means to others' ends] posits a wrong or an evil in his environment." Hemingway emphasizes Harry's commonness by having him die by a stomach wound, thereby focusing upon Harry's major concern—that his wife and daughters have enough to eat (96). Inasmuch as the novel dramatizes several forms of "starvation"—social, sexual, political, and psychological—Harry's lethal stomach wound is the common denominator of those hungers.

Several of the novel's features also show its kinship to Renaissance tragedy. Particularly apt is the "tragedy of blood," that variation of revenge tragedy that specializes in murder, mutilation, and morbid excitement as means to bring about revenge and retribution. An inheritance from Senecan tragedy, one of this species' traits is amply present: the blood-and-lust motif of sensational scenes and "unnatural" crimes. Harry's actions and the supposedly digressive episodes on the Gordons, the vets, and the yachters show adultery, perversion, brutality, and sadomasochism. But revenge motivates most of the novel's action.

Harry's murder of Sing, the go-between for illegal Chinese immigrants, is usually read as an unmotivated, cold-blooded act. But it is an act of revenge that Hemingway carefully prepares. After all, the novel begins with Harry watching the Chicago-style gunning down of three Cubans who have just solicited him to boat them to the States and threatened him with the fate of lengua largas, betayers. The novel indicates that their deaths were politically motivated, for they were antigovernment rebels, as their conversation with Harry establishes, telling him that later, when
things are different, his having served them now would benefit him (4). To this milieu of revenge Hemingway adds Johnson's treachery. He leaves Havana before paying the eight hundred twenty-five dollars he owes Harry for carelessly lost tackle and three weeks of chartered fishing. By the time Sing propositions Harry and tells him that he may land the Chinese wherever he wants, the odor of double cross is strong. So to prevent treachery to himself and subsequent Chinese, Harry, with some justification, murders Sing. No champion of the Chinese, Harry identifies with them since their naive trust of a profiteer mirrors his earlier trust of Johnson. Knowing Sing's deceitfulness, then, Harry murders him as a compensatory act of revenge, Sing being Johnson's scapegoat.

Sadistic though it seems, Harry's later killing of the four Cuban revolutionaries also fits a revenge motif. Even before Harry manages to knock overboard Roberto's submachine gun, Roberto has indicated that he intends to kill him gratuitously, justifying Harry's retaliation as self-defense. The loss of Harry's arm and boat, directly caused by Cuban officials who had been ignoring Harry's post-Prohibition rum-running operation only to shoot at him unexpectedly, also gives him reason to avenge a recent wrong by gunning down these also treacherous Cubans. And still alive in Harry's mind, too, may be the sense that their intent to betray him traces back to, and makes good, the early threats against him as a *lengua larga* (49). To the complexity of his motive must be added the wish to avenge Albert's, if not Bee-Lips's, death. In sum, like many a Jacobean hero, Harry has to grapple "with the question of how virtuous action can be taken in an evil world when that action itself must be devious, politic, or tainted with evil."7

The most compelling evidence of the novel's generic lineage is in the presence of so many of the elements that Aristotle found in classical Greek tragedy.8 Harry has all the qualities required of a tragic hero. His superiority to the novel's other characters gives him stature. For instance, people turn to him when they need something done well: Eddy and Frankie, Johnson and Sing, Albert and Bee-Lips, the Cuban trio at the novel's beginning and quartet at its end. Satiric butt though she is, even Mrs. Laughton instinctively responds to his stature, calling him "wonderful," "Ghengis Khan," her "dream man" (130, 136, 149). King of the conchs, Harry aptly dies upon a boat named *Queen Conch*. He is "not a paragon of virtue and justice," as well he should not be; but the "nobility" of Harry's actions is questionable only if we dis-
count the nobility of every man’s struggle for survival. Harry’s hamartia, “an ignorance or mistake as to certain details” (i.e., that he had slain his assailant), is “a ‘big’ mistake, one pregnant with disaster for the hero” (Else, 383), for his hamartia dramatizes his “overweening pride” that he alone can handle the four Cuban revolutionaries. As it should, Harry’s hamartia causes the peripety of events, the sudden reversal of fortune necessary to his ultimate downfall. And his hubris, proud belief in his self-sufficiency, is precisely what his anagnorisis sees as his blind spot: “‘No matter how a man alone ain’t got no bloody fucking chance.’” Proairesis, or the belief in choice and free will, is also here. Harry thinks fatalistically about transporting the Cubans: “I don’t want to fool with it, but what choice have I got? They don’t give you any choice now” (105). Still, he does choose to transport them, conscious of the potential calamity that can result from his voluntary decision.

To add a word about catharsis, the novel’s catastrophe should arouse pity and fear: fear because Harry “is like the rest of us” (Else, 365), his struggle for economic wherewithal replicating ours; pity because Harry “suffers undeservedly” (Else, 370). Certainly he must suffer punishment for murdering the Cubans. But the slow agony of his twenty-four-hour death exceeds justice. Moreover, he has done nothing to deserve the promise of being shot by the Cubans. His acceptance of the inevitable confrontation requires him to fire upon them first and exculpates his “motive from polluted intent” (Else, 447). Because of circumstances, then, Harry’s act is neither morally repugnant nor a cold-blooded act, and he deserves our pity for his excessive suffering.

The novel houses other elements of classical tragedy too. Setting aside for the moment the structural problem of Hemingway’s inclusion of the Gordons, the vets, and the decadent yachters, I find the novel otherwise meeting the Aristotelean criterion of unity. Its plot is “complete and a whole” (Else, 282), not episodic, for it follows the rise and fall of Harry’s fortunes. The seasonal sectioning of the novel (spring, fall, winter) also suggests this completeness to me, despite the omission of summer, a season whose bounty seems properly deleted from the novel’s bleak landscape. The novel even has the spatial magnitude required of tragedy, literally encompassing not an Aegean but a Gulf archipelago, from Cuba to the Florida Keys. The novel’s events also show the “logical sequence, continuity” (Else, 297) required of tragedy. For as Johnson’s double cross causes Harry to transport
the Chinese and to murder Sing, the economic depression causes him to transport rum. The loss of arm and boat—the means for Harry’s normal employment—causes his dangerous exploit of transporting the Cuban revolutionaries for a mere two hundred dollars. The consistency of these variations upon the single action of Harry’s occupation as transporter underscores the novel’s unified action. So does his transporting Cubans at the novel’s beginning and end.

The novel seems flooded with unexpected events—the sudden deaths of the first Cubans and Sing, the abrupt defection of Johnson, the unanticipated gunfire that Cuban authorities give Harry and Wesley, the untoward arrival of Frederick Harrison, the swift reconfiscation of Harry’s boat, and the unforeseen bullet from Harry’s assailant. Yet these further accord with Aristotle’s inductive conclusion that a tragedy’s events must “happen contrary to our expectation” and “possess the quality of surprise” (Else, 323). Though Hemingway rejects the dramatic mode of tragedy, the dramatic monologues by Harry, Albert, and Marie approximate the methods and the effects of the chorus in Greek drama. The digressive chapters might even be there as choric commentary upon the environment within which Harry must fulfill his destiny. And Hemingway’s decision to end the novel in Marie Morgan’s consciousness might also conform to some choric function: “the chorus,” Aristotle says, “should be considered as one of the persons in the drama; should be a part of the whole, and a sharer in the action.” In any event, her thoughts provide a fitting kommos, the lamentation with which a classical tragedy often concludes.

As readers or spectators of a tragedy, ultimately we are concerned less with its obedience to a prescribed formula than with its ability to generate those complex emotions that only tragedy can. And those emotions occur only when a hero performs an act that paradoxically “runs counter to man’s deepest moral instincts” but is “purified” because its motive is not morally repugnant (Else, 420, 439). This criterion lets us justly dismiss For Whom the Bell Tolls and A Farewell to Arms, although both are often called tragedies. Robert Jordan is too admirable a lover and patriot to cross the bridge of that criterion, and his martyr’s death is neither a terrible deed nor a consequence of one. Similarly, Frederic Henry performs no morally repugnant act, unless we wish to so regard his shooting of the engineering sergeant. More a victim
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of—rather than an agent in—the world’s manifold irrationality, he elicits only pity. And neither Colonel Cantwell’s nor Thomas Hudson’s suffering approaches Harry Morgan’s, leaving him as Hemingway’s only novel-length hero who undergoes the violent death necessary to tragedy, the sole hero whose acts are steeped in, but purified of, moral repugnance.

It is, of course, tempting to label a work “tragedy.” An honorific label, it often confers status upon an otherwise negligible piece of writing. Worse, specious elevation of a negligible work harms the whole concept of tragedy, reducing it to an intellectual pradigm or using it as a label for any pathetic situation. So I set aside the prescriptive formula of classical tragedy and look instead at what finally matters in tragedy, the quality of life invested in the tragic hero. Despite assessments of Harry Morgan as an amoral tough, I find in him those qualities that any hero who asks to be dubbed “tragic” must have. He is divided and intelligent.

The three episodes of part 1—the Cubans’ solicitation, Johnson’s defection, and Harry’s murder of Sing—chart Harry’s rapid change from law-abiding charter-boat fisherman to ruthless murderer. This change might be too swift for credibility or easy proof of Harry’s basic villainy. But the change outlines Harry’s dividedness. He has a strong sense of decency and morality, but he also inclines to let circumstances lure him into lawless acts. Harry’s past activities indicate this dividedness. He boasts about the exact number of cases of rum his boat will hold and so tells of experiences as rumrunner. But he also admits he was a policeman in Miami. Again, greed seems to prompt him to smuggle a dozen Chinese into the States. But he had earlier refused to smuggle in three Cubans for considerably more money. And again, he appears to relish the death of Sing: “He was flopping and bouncing worse than any dolphin on a gaff . . . . I got him forward onto his knees and had both thumbs well in behind his talkbox, and I bent the whole thing back until she cracked. Don’t think you can’t hear it crack, either” (53-54). But because Harry mentions his former employment as a policeman in Miami (44) while preparing for this job, it is Harry’s desire for justice, not homicidal glee, that surfaces in the situation. Sing’s death, that is, compensates for his indirect murder of countless Chinese whose betrayal has provided him for two years with the means to wear, as Harry observes, a white suit, a silk shirt, a black tie, and a one-hundred-twenty-five-dollar Panama hat (30).

Harry’s treachery to Sing, congruent with the novel’s world,
seems to be Harry’s basic character trait. Yet it is at odds with his trustworthiness, the trait that Johnson exploited by pulling out before paying Harry. And deaf Frankie’s loyalty to Harry and the first Cubans’ request that he be the one to ferry them to the mainland also speak for his trustworthiness. Even Sing testifies to it. After all, he is surprised that Harry is willing to smuggle his compatriots, beginning to ask what circumstances have made Harry consider the assignment (31). And he knows Harry’s reputation well enough to trust him with a two-hundred-dollar down payment. So when Harry asks, “ ‘Suppose I went off with the two hundred,’ ” Sing replies, “ ‘But I know you wouldn’t do such a thing, captain’ ” (34). Sing’s unpreparedness for Harry’s murder of him confirms Harry’s guess, “Maybe he just trusted me” (60). Traitors, criminals, and commoners respect Harry’s moral responsibility.

Emphasizing his dividedness, the several episodes of part 1 converge upon Harry’s dilemma of whether to kill Eddy, witness to his killing of Sing. Tempted also by his assumption that Eddy is not on the crew list and so will cause complications with customs officers when he reaches Key West, nevertheless Harry dislikes doing something he would regret later (60). No inveterate killer, Harry has already dismissed the notion of massacring the dozen Chinese, realizing that only “a hell of a mean man” could “butcher a bunch of Chinks like that” (57). He even ignores the impulse to silence the Chinaman who keeps calling him “ ‘God-dam crook’ ” (58). Nor does heavy drinking on the return to Key West skew Harry’s dilemma. Waver though he does, Harry’s interior debate makes unlikely a homicidal intent, even had Eddy not been saved by being on the crew list.

The seeming sensationalism of Harry’s masculine action and lawless self-expression in part 1 creates the distorted mug shot many readers see. Yet Hemingway draws a balanced and complex portrait, for the rest of the novel dramatizes Harry’s equally strong obligations to domestic security and moral decency. Like Hemingway’s fine counterpointing of Jack Brennan’s fisticuffs and tightfistedness in “Fifty Grand,” here Harry’s violent actions play against his middle-class values, his domestic pleasure. After all, upon his return to Key West at the end of part 1, he spends the evening as many a domesticated man does. He sits in his living room, smokes a cigar, sips on a whiskey and water, and listens to Gracie Allen on the radio (64).

The motive common to all of Harry’s hazardous exploits, to pro-
vide for his family, may seem a sleazy rationalization that allows him to indulge his penchant for violence. But the novel’s setting during the depression and the frequency of Harry’s financial anxieties authenticate his motive. Thinking of the dangers of transporting the Cuban revolutionaries from Key West, he considers not getting mixed up with them. But he promptly chastens himself with the idea that there would be no money to feed and support his wife and daughters (147). The narrative silence about Harry’s motive for smuggling rum in part 2’s fiasco seems again to focus the view of him as merely an outlaw by nature. But since this is a post-Prohibition run, Harry’s venture will not bring in a huge profit, even though it will avoid import duties. And to testify that Harry does not run rum for the criminal thrill of thwarting the law, Captain Willie Adams correctly defines his motive. Belittling the idea that Harry is a “lawbreaker,” he declares that Harry is simply trying to earn money to feed his family (81). Essentially a homebody rather than an adventurer, before Harry leaves his home for the last time, he sits at the oak table and looks at the objects in the room—piano, sideboard, radio, pictures on the wall, table, chairs, and window curtains—and thinks, “What chance have I to enjoy my home?” (127).

Lying in the cockpit of Queen Conch mortally wounded, Harry also wonders what his wife will do. He hopes that she will get some reward money or some of the bank money on the boat (174). Besides showing Harry’s monogamous loyalty, his wondering also shows his considerateness of others, an odd quality for someone regarded as an amoral tough. Thinking about the driver who will taxi the Cubans to the boat, he earlier tells Bee-Lips to get one who has no “kids” (134). And when he comes home late one night, he leaves the light off, removes his shoes, and quietly climbs the stairs in his stockings (112). Just as Harry tolerates Wesley’s whining, he rejects Albert’s help in transporting the Cuban quartet, silently trying to shield him from foreseeable danger: “I’m sorry, Albert, I can’t use you,” Harry said. He had thought it out that far already” (122).

Harry’s dividedness, in tune with the novel’s paradoxical title, also reflects the intelligence required of a tragic hero. To convey Harry’s intelligence may well have prompted Hemingway to begin the novel with his dramatic monologue, articulateness a corollary of intelligence. “You know how it is there early in the morning in Havana,” Harry begins his story, demonstrating his doubleness as a man of words and a man of action. His role as
narrator of part 1 is particularly crucial to its moral ambiguity and accounts for the sparseness of his moral reflectiveness, even though these subtleties have gone unnoticed, the habitual fate of Hemingway’s first-person narrators. When Eddy asks what he had against Sing, Harry answers, “‘Nothing,’” and adds that he killed him “‘to keep him from killing twelve other Chinks’” (55). Ruthless as both statements sound, Harry is telling this conversation, as the idiom makes clear, to a chum. Because he is, then either he is modestly muting his real motive, or he is indicating that he sees little point in revealing his motive to a rummy, or he knows better than to bore a friendly, lower-class listener with the niceties of Jamesian moral desiderata. Neither vainglorious nor defensive, Harry is justly proud of the exploit that let him recoup his loss and serve up justice. And he knows well that his listener is interested in the “what” of the adventure, not in its “why.” His intelligence is also evident in his implied reason for turning away the Cuban trio at the novel’s beginning. His fear of having U.S. customs officials catch him and seize his boat is legitimate enough. But equally important is his desire to avoid the cross fire of Cuban political warfare. By being unruffled by the fates of both the trio and lengua largas, Harry silently indicates the commonness of such events and the wisdom of his refusal to charter the Cubans.

Unlike Hemingway’s usual hero, who says he does not want to think, Harry enjoys thinking, especially about difficulties, be it landing a marlin, unloading sacked liquor with one arm, double-crossing Sing, deciding Eddy’s fate, or planning for the contingencies of his last exploit: “Suppose they figure about me and Albert. Did any of them look like sailors? . . . I have to find out about that because if they figure on doing without Albert or me from the start there’s no way. Sooner or later they will figure on us. But in the Gulf you got time. And I’m figuring all the time. I’ve got to think right all the time” (106-7).

Despite the outcome of this last episode, it fully brings out Harry’s shrewdness. Wary of its dangers, he conceals from the Cubans his knowledge of Spanish, hides his submachine gun, bumps Roberto’s gun overboard, and ingratiates himself with Emilio to better surprise him. When Harry realizes the murderousness of the foursome, the now-omniscient narrator observes that he “had abandoned anger, hatred and any dignity as luxuries, now, and had started to plan” (159). He has even concealed from friends his knowledge of the specific job. Pretending to be chartering just
another fishing party until commandeered by the Cubans, Harry causes the sheriff and Coast Guard retrievers to regard him as a victim. But Harry victimizes himself as tragedy demands. For he has guilefully nudged overboard Roberto’s machine gun and so has inflamed the Cuban’s resolve to kill him. And he begins the fatal shooting. Most important, he makes that error in judgment expected of all intelligent tragic heroes: he ignorantly assumes that his assailant, the shoulder-wounded Cuban, is dead. Linked to his earlier mistakes—trusting Johnson, anticipating no difficulties running rum, and overlooking the visibility of his stolen boat from a tall truck—this error contributes to the inevitability of his tragic death.

More evidence of Harry’s tragic stature sifts out of the sociopolitical matter that seems to clutter the novel. Hemingway does not paint a backdrop of war vets and Cuban revolutionaries, of Marxist portraits and depression-era weltanschauung so that we can facilely catalogue another social protest novel. Rather he paints it to objectify Harry’s dilemma, that being another yardstick for measuring any candidate for tragedy. Harry’s impulse is for individual freedom and independent action. However, it butts up against an imperative, whether we see it as family duty or as the call to be his brother’s keeper. Indeed, Harry’s dilemma mirrors clearly the dilemma on which the novel’s social problems pivot. And so, loner though Harry would like to be, his dependence upon such “dregs” as deaf Frankie, rummy Eddy, whining Wesley, and wife-nagged Albert makes him admit early that loners are doomed. Thinking about whether to enlist Albert to help him transport the four Cuban revolutionaries he registers, “It would be better alone, anything is better alone but I don’t think I can handle it alone. It would be much better alone” (105). Although Harry denies the label of “radical” (97), he refuses to endorse existing social or political structures, for they strip Cuban, conch, and vet of dignity, rather than serve them as brother’s keeper. Even the revolutionists’ pragmatic rationale—that the end justifies the means (166)—serves self rather than others, to Harry’s way of thinking: “What the hell do I care about his [Emilio’s] revolution. F— — his revolution. To help the working man he robs a bank and kills a fellow works with him and then kills that poor damned Albert that never did any harm. That’s a working man he kills. He never thinks of that. With a family” (168).

Harry does think of Albert, his attitude toward Albert further clarifying Harry’s dilemma. Given their discussion of family ob-
ligations (95–96), Harry’s decision to reject Albert’s help expresses conflicting wishes: to act independently and so be beholden to no man, and to protect a family provider and so be his brother’s keeper. When Harry later reverses this decision, he does so not as an act of betrayal. Rather in preparation of his last words, he admits that just as Albert needs money, he himself needs help, that he alone may not be able to cope with the hazardous voyage. Those fears confirmed by subsequent events, Harry understands the obsolete and fatal luxury of autonomy, aptly comparing it to “‘trying to pass cars on the top of hills. On that road in Cuba. On any road. Anywhere’” (225). And Hemingway understands the artistic need to make ambiguous Harry’s final illumination: “‘No matter how a man alone ain’t got no bloody fucking chance.’” Harry’s repetition of “man” nine times before this utterance italicizes properly its universal truth. And though the imperative of brotherhood lies at its core, it does not remorsefully exhort us to join ranks with our downtrodden brothers, thanks to its failure to specify how involved we must get. Nor does it guarantee that because men alone have no “chance,” collective efforts will—as the dead bodies of the four Cubans indicate. Finally, the rich imprecision of “chance” leaves open what “a man alone” will lack the opportunity to do: eke out a living? reform social inequities? express meaningfully his individuality?

Significant though Harry’s stomach wound is to seeing the representativeness of his economic struggle, the loss of his right arm is equally significant. It is a synecdoche of those personal and—as the novel’s maimed world insists—social handicaps all men must live with, handicaps that compel interdependency. The loss of Harry’s right arm, long a symbol of assistance, reliability, and dependence, shows Hemingway, like a latter-day Hardy, reprimanding Harry’s flagrant individualism, making compulsory his dependence upon others. Yet it is only by literally achieving his wish to operate single-handedly that Harry recognizes the limits of single-handedness and man’s need of assistance from either literal or figurative right arms, brothers.

Politically unsophisticated though his rude environment requires him to be, Harry’s illegal activities still amount to an individual protest against the social injustices of every age. Like Lear and Oedipus, who flout communal dictates, Harry’s actions similarly express his need for a measure of security, autonomy, and dignity. Indeed, Harry is the avatar of the Cuban revolutionaries, the downtrodden conchs, the betrayed Chinese, and even the dis-
possessed vets—of all societies' "leftovers." Their frustration with, or anger at, social injustice incites them all to violent, illegal, or impotent action. But Harry fails to recognize his brotherhood with such people. And that, unfortunately, muffles the novel's tragic resonance. Tragic pleasure, says Aristotle, best emanates from a horrible act performed by a hero initially ignorant of the kinship between himself and his victim (Else, 413–15). Harry's massacre of the Cubans is justified as an act of self-defense, to be sure. Yet both the terror and the pity of the act would have been heightened had Hemingway found a way for Harry to express a realization that he resembled the Cubans. After all, their claim to social justice echoes his. And their ethic (illegal means to achieve noble ends) is his as well. They are, in effect, his brothers. But Harry gives no sign that he has unwittingly committed fratricide.

One matter yet remains: the novel's digressions. To be bold about it, of all of Hemingway's novels, this is structurally his tightest. Its discrete episodes are fully developed, its sequence easy to recall, and its outline transparent, even to an eye not apprised of its generic roots. In fact, it obeys the conventional formula of a tragedy's "dramatic structure," dividing unequivocally into the seven components of the classical Freytag pyramid. It has an introduction, an exciting force that generates the rising action, a crisis or turning point, a tragic force that precipitates the falling action and, of course, the catastrophe. (I too was inclined to think that such a stock, dramatic structure would be totally alien to Hemingway's artistry. Then I remembered that the work that followed this novel is his play, The Fifth Column.)

The scene in the Perla cafe with the solicitous Cubans is the tragedy's introduction. It provides the setting of a world in the throes of social warfare and it quickly establishes the novel's tone or mood—distrust, treachery, and violence. Johnson's defection constitutes the exciting force. His double cross defines the "conflict of opposing interests" between the haves and have-nots, the trustworthy and deceitful, the brotherly and egocentric, the law-breakers and law-abiders. The episode also "sets in motion the rising action," Harry's murder of Sing. As the witches' prophecy stirs Macbeth into scheming for kingship, Johnson's betrayal motivates Harry's scheme to recover his losses and avenge himself on double-crossers. True to the pyramid, Harry returns to Key West "in the ascendancy." Part 2 is the crisis or turning point, "the point at which the opposing forces that create the conflict inter-
lock in the decisive action on which the plot will turn.” Harry’s fate as rumrunner shows an individual in conflict with collective forces. His conflict is duplicated in Captain Willie’s verbal tussle with Harrison, “‘one of the three most important men in the United States today’” (80), and in his defense of Harry as family provider against Harrison’s charge of “lawbreaker.” Prohibition over, Harry anticipates no genuine danger in transporting liquor. Yet “interlocking” with the Cuban government he loses his arm, and with the U.S. government, his boat. Inasmuch as in the rest of the novel Harry tries to wrest a living without boat or arm, this episode’s “decisive action” locates the “incident wherein the situation in which the protagonist finds himself is sure either to improve or grow worse.” Not to be confused with the climax (“the point of highest interest at which the reader makes his greatest emotional response”), this turning point results in events “which produce climactic effects without themselves being of compelling interest.” That is, Hemingway selectively ignores the three events of “compelling interest” in part 2—the escape from the Cuban harbor, the confiscation of the boat, and Harry’s amputation. He centers instead on the single event that contains them. The tragic force, the single event “closely related to the crisis,” is when customs officers reconfiscate Harry’s boat. The event also “starts the falling action,” Harry precipitously resolving to rent Freddy’s boat and to carry the Cubans across. “A moment of final suspense,” Harry’s stomach wound answers to the falling action, for that event “delays the catastrophe,” “seems to offer a way of escape for the hero,” and “often is attended by some lowering of interest since new forces must be introduced.”

Central to understanding the novel’s structure are the ancillary functions of falling action, since they explain the novel’s apparently disintegrating focus on Harry. If Hemingway did not sense the need to magnify Harry’s world, then one ingredient of falling action instructed him, for he “stress[es] the activity of the forces opposing the hero.” Into the novel, that is, Hemingway brings characters who represent those opposing forces: self-indulgent rich and violent poor, perverse egocentrics and self-deceiving incompetents. A grotesque version of Harry’s conflict, the episode in Freddy’s bar portrays the vets as creatures who have submitted to society’s dehumanizing forces. And so their sense of brotherhood enslaves them to a collective drudgery that allows them no more dignity than what they can express through the anarchy of their sadomasochism. Hemingway keeps tragedy’s proper focus by
dramatizing their self-victimization. Equally grotesque foils are the well-to-do. Hemingway’s catalogue of the rich on their yachts exhibits a social system that protects wealthy self-indulgence. The rich are targets of Hemingway’s scornful pity because they too lack the intelligence or courage to seek a dignified existence. That they mimic Harry’s conflict is seen in Hemingway’s juxtapositions of the perverse “brotherliness” of Johnson and Carpenter’s homosexuality and the destructive individualism of the sixty-year-old grain broker, of the domestic security of Frances’s family, the frivolous thirst for adventure of the Esthonians, and the narcissism of Dorothy Hollis. Further stressing “the activity of the forces opposing the hero,” Hemingway places in the center of these vignettes the family whose security comes from selling a three-cent liquid for a dollar a pint, fit analogue of Harry’s rum-running and indictment of government double standards.

One other trait of falling action helps explain the novel’s structure: “Relief scenes are often resorted to during the Falling Action, partly to provide emotional relaxation for the audience.” Mrs. Tracy’s farcical remorse for Albert is surely such a “relief scene.” Though it lacks tragedy’s proper dignity, its comedy has precedent in the scenes of Lear’s fool, Hamlet’s gravedigger, or Macbeth’s gatekeeper. And despite her fraudulent grief, she parodies the lament Harry deserves and receives in Marie’s novel-ending soliloquy. A finer relief scene is the brief chapter 20. Its matter-of-fact description of the damaged Queen Conch, drifting in the Gulf Stream, nicely modulates to a catalogue of the various fish feeding upon the blood that oozes from the boat’s splintered bullet holes and trails in the water (179). Only then does Hemingway turn to the phantasmagoria of Harry’s muted agony.

Avoid them though I would prefer, the “relief scenes” that ask for justification are those with Richard Gordon. Artistically indefensible, they show Hemingway trying to convey and unify the social and moral context of the novel by creating a character whose distorted resemblance to Harry will clarify the novel’s issues. To that end Hemingway parallels Gordon’s social protest novel and Harry’s protesting illegalities, Gordon’s impotence with Helène Bradley and Harry’s unsuccessful one-armed struggle with the Cubans, Gordon’s misreading of Marie and Harry’s misjudgment of Johnson, Gordon’s rejection of MacWalsey’s fraternal help and Harry’s strident self-sufficiency, Gordon’s rapid disintegration and Harry’s demise. If Hemingway intended these parallels, the bald contrast between a pathetic and a tragic
character excessively augments Harry's stature or, as the novel's reputation sadly confirms, severely detracts from its achievement.

Looking at *To Have and Have Not* harshly, I find that its obedience to ancient paradigms of tragedy and to rigid rules of dramatic structure suggests a derivative quality in Hemingway's imagination. Surely this novel catches him engaged in an epigonic act. Yet every writer who seriously courts the Tragic Muse must defer to her preestablished criteria. And the dearth of modern tragedies testifies to the difficulty of those criteria. So it is to Hemingway's credit that he silently accepted the self-imposed challenge to compose a tragedy. Equally commendable is his artistic integrity, refusing to justify his novel or to castigate disparaging critics by declaring it to be a classical tragedy. But the measure of his achievement is another matter. That Harry Morgan's tragic lineaments have been mistakenly interpreted as villainous ones shows that Hemingway skillfully wrought him. But whether Harry's dividedness and intelligence are enough to raise him even to the level of Macbeth, his closest cousin, cannot be decreed by critical fiat. For most readers they are not. Perhaps they need to hear again that cryptic statement in Hemingway's Nobel Prize acceptance speech: "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 he will endure or be forgotten."