A Guilt-Ridden Father: *Islands in the Stream*

Because it was composed and revised at different periods in Hemingway’s life, was unfinished, and was left with several unresolved problems, *Islands in the Stream* can never be discussed with certainty. But its focus upon Thomas Hudson’s relationship with his three sons just before and after they prematurely die portrays a father so preoccupied with his children that his premonitions of, and subsequent grief over, their deaths unify the novel. A man whose remorse is as curious as his transformation from withdrawn artist to obsessive warrior, Hudson invites antithetical conclusions: he is either an exemplary or a guilt-ridden, filicidal father, a man who will get from us garlands or ashes.

“Bimini” sets the domestic context for the novel’s three sections. Its basic event, the five-week visit of Hudson’s sons, is framed on either side by the evening before their arrival and then by Hudson’s initial reactions to news of the two younger sons’ deaths. Their visit has five episodes: Tommy’s reminiscences of life with Hudson in Paris, David’s near-fatal attack by the hammerhead shark, his ordeal with the swordfish, Andrew’s rummy scene in Mr. Bobby’s bar, and, finally, the three boys’ crush on Audrey Bruce. Although Hemingway omits the homecoming scene and treats abruptly the sons’ departure, the five episodes lavish considerable detail upon the boys and Hudson’s relationship with them.

Tommy, born when Hudson was a struggling artist in Paris after World War I, is the weakest of the boys. A young man who wants his father’s approval, he gets it by reminiscing about things that show what a good father Hudson was. Astute enough to know that
his father likes to bask in memories of his famous artist friends, Tommy also knows that he dislikes being reminded of his first wife, Tommy's mother. Cued by Hudson's recitation of the route he took when pushing Tommy around Paris in a baby carriage, Tommy selectively recalls Hudson's biparental qualities. It was Tommy and Hudson who would bring home pigeons for dinner, Tommy remembers, Hudson killing them with a slingshot and Tommy cuddling them beneath the carriage blankets so they could sneak them home. It was when Tommy and Hudson were together that they would go to the circus and see "the crocodiles of Le Capitaine Wahl" (62), or sit with Joyce in a corner of a cafe with a brazier warming them, or visit with Pascin while he drew pictures of Tommy on napkins. Tommy tells Audrey Bruce that he went often with Hudson to the racetracks, walked the Seine so often with him that he remembers all of the bridges over the river between Suresnes and Charenton (188), even visited with him one of Audrey's stepfathers, Dick Raeburn, while he had been very ill. Roger Davis, Hudson's longtime friend, joins in the tribute, telling the boys that their father made up young Tom's bottles every morning and marketed, buying cheap but good vegetables (65). When David tells how Tommy exquisitely rebuffed a homosexual, he adds further testimony of Hudson's paternal virtues, for Tommy's fine manners resulted from life in France with Hudson (180). Tommy, the solicitous son, is perfectly typecast in the rummy scene as the worrying, responsible child, "patient and long-suffering" (167).

Tommy's equally limited counterpart is brother Andrew, innocent and enfant terrible. He enviously punctures Tommy's nostalgia, quizzing him about braziers, poireaux, and arrondissements. And he taunts both father and brother by resolving to become Roger Davis's protégé, planning to make up "vicious stories" like Tommy's (72). To Tommy's boast that he was Joyce's "youngest friend," Andrew mocks, "'I'll bet he misses you a lot'" (64). Tactless, Andrew calls Eddy, the hero of the shark episode, a rummy. And he's skeptical when David declares his love for the swordfish, saying that he is unable to understand it (142). Tommy cannot "keep his mouth off" David's fish, but it is Andrew's questions and statements—"'Nobody in our family's ever caught a broadbill'"—that make Hudson scold them for the bad luck that their statements implicitly wish David. Whatever Tommy's faults may be, he is superior to Andrew, for Hudson has not
spent the time with this son that he had with the other two (53). That is, he has obviously been a better parent to Tommy than Andrew's mother has been to him.

Unlike his brothers, David does not vouch for Hudson's superior parenthood. Nor does he share Tommy's supposed intelligence but actual fatuousness or Andrew's precocious athletic talent and "dark side." He wants to be self-sufficient, asking for no successful or famous adult to inflate his identity.

To this boy Hemingway gives special status. In the midst of his ordeal with the swordfish Tommy pronounces David "‘a saint and a martyr,' " adding that such a wonderful brother as David—"‘the best of us' "—is unknown to other boys. And after the swordfish gets away, Hudson tells David that he battled the fish better than any man ever did (141). This may sound like exaggerated parental consolation. But David's conduct, because dramatized, compels respect. He gets it from Roger, who reproaches himself for endangering David's life a second time, and from Eddy, who gets into countless brawls that night by boasting of David's bravery and perseverance.

David's life-endangering episodes with shark and swordfish—the biggest ones ever seen by Hudson (86, 137)—suggest that David is a young Santiago. Like the old fisherman, David admits his goggle-fishing error with the hammerhead: "‘I just went too far out' " (90). And he expresses the same ambiguity and love for the swordfish that Santiago has for his marlin, saying that when he was most tired he could not differentiate the fish from himself, that he "‘began to love him more than anything on earth,' " that he is happy the swordfish is all right and that they are not enemies (142-43). Another echo of Santiago is in Tommy's comment, "‘He's a strange boy' " (127). David's biblical namesake, his welted back, and his injured hands and feet do not damage his claim to special status.

Hemingway seems to have intended David to represent a heroic youth whose death significantly impoverishes the world. If Santiago's virtues inspire emulation, David's approximation of them should too. But his potential is cut short. And when to the death of this "‘king of underwater,' " as Tommy calls him, Hemingway adds that of horseman Andrew and aviator Tommy, their collective deaths seem to lament man's loss of control over three of the classical elements. Hemingway gets the fourth element by having Hudson die "by fire."

I would not push an allegorical reading were it not for the nov-
el's apocalyptic motif. Hudson's personal losses animate the novel as a whole, but they are part of a general lament for cosmic losses, as a chorus of events and allusions imply. And Hudson seems an appropriate figure to mourn the forthcoming doom. Intimate with great artists and unheralded guerrillas, with princesses and movie stars, with cats and the archipelago of small islands off Cuba's coast, his cosmopolitanism and experience in the double roles of creative artist and destructive warrior let him express the collective grief mankind will feel for the forthcoming loss of its world, portended in the loss of its sons. Coupled to the bizarre crew he captains in "At Sea," his pursuit of an invisible German submarine crew has a haunting anxiety that exceeds fear of personal annihilation. And "Cuba's" nostalgic, erotic, therapeutic, and horrific images emerge from a cold, windswept, intoxicated winter landscape that prophesies bleakness.

These two sections, however, are less overtly apocalyptic than "Bimini." The most conspicuous of its allusions are the canvases that Mr. Bobby verbally sketches. Reading like some colloquial addendum to the Book of Revelations, the pictures he asks Hudson to paint expand from a canvas with one waterspout to one with three of them, to a full hurricane, to the disaster of the Titanic, to a combined Breughel-Bosch canvas of "The End of the World." Even though Hudson completes only the waterspouts, "'a small subject'" in Mr. Bobby's view, it suggests Dies Irae.

The narrator's mention of the hazards of night swimming and hurricanes in the beginning chapter of "Bimini" seems irrelevant until Hudson's houseboy, Joseph, startlingly compares the forthcoming visit of Hudson's three sons to a big fire in the past, a memorable event that Joseph ranks "'along with the Second Coming'" (11). Other events on the eve of the boys' arrival have equally destructive implications. On Hudson's way to Mr. Bobby's, the little Negro boy, Louis, tells him of the "'Big man from up north'" who's been throwing "'anything [in the hotel] he can get his hands on'" (13), whose havoc contributes to Mr. Bobby's visions of catastrophic canvases. Even the banter that evening among Hudson, Johnny Goodner, and Roger Davis includes Johnny's mock reproach that after dark it is unwise to talk of God slightly. "'He's liable to be right behind you with his bat poised'" (27).

The "two worthless sporting characters," Fred Wilson and Frank Hart, add to the apocalyptic mood. Frank shoots flares at Mr. Bobby's place, at Brown's dock with its drums of gasoline,
and, encouraged by the natives, at the commissioner’s house, repeatedly conjuring the image of a conflagration like the one Joseph had mentioned earlier in the day. Roger’s fight with Mr. Bobby’s havoc-causing yachtsman interestingly ends the judgment-day violence. Both the yachtsman and Frank Hart, troublemakers, deserve comeuppance. But rather than set them against each other, Hemingway has the yachtsman, for unknown reasons, abuse Roger. Roger’s excessively brutal beating of him indicates that the yachtsman ignites some malaise in Roger, some guilt and vengefulness that originate in other causes.

Tommy’s reminiscences of Paris in chapter 3 seem to militate against the apocalyptic motif, but they underscore the doomsday atmosphere, for Hemingway ends the chapter of reminiscences with Hudson’s mention of Pascin’s suicide and begins the next with Roger’s recall of his younger brother’s drowning while canoeing with him. Roger’s memory of that accident and his feeling of guilt is not the only thing that portends a comparable fate to the Hudson son who shares Roger’s brother’s name, David. Numerous references to suicides, deaths, and near disasters collect as a refrain in “Bimini.” Mr. Bobby’s “‘old Suicides,’” a man who had suffered from “‘Mechanic’s Depressive,’” (158) is only the more conspicuous example of corpses. Others are one of Roger’s sadomasochistic lovers, one of Audrey’s stepfathers—killed by a runaway bobsled—and, of course, David, Andrew, and their mother. This panorama of disorder also includes the comic images of Ezra Pound and Ford Madox Ford, both rumored mad and pictured in Tommy’s eyes as having “‘that awful lather dripping down’” their jaws (64). Even the death of the hammerhead shark makes an image of horror that Eddy cannot shake. “His belly was shining an obscene white, his yard-wide mouth like a turned-up grin, the great horns of his head with the eyes on end” (86). Eddy insists that for the rest of his life he will “‘see that old evil son of a bitch’” (89).

The rummy scene at Mr. Bobby’s is intended to frighten tourists with a glimpse of a perverted world. And David’s ordeal with the swordfish presumably contains something that frightened Hudson. But whether they effectively contribute to the apocalyptic motif is questionable. Still, Hemingway reiterates it in “Bimini’s” coda: “The end of a man’s world does not come as it does in one of the great paintings Mr. Bobby had outlined. It comes with one of the island boys bringing a radio message up the road from the local post office and saying, ‘Please sign on the detachable part of the envelope. We’re sorry, Mr. Tom’” (194–95).
Had Hemingway sufficiently amplified David's character, had he given him Santiago's mythic dimensions, the youth might have resonated the apocalyptic strings tied to him. But as "Bimini" stands, it appears that Hemingway decided against making David a world-redeeming hero or a demigod whose premature death, like Adonis's, blights the surrounding world. In his struggle with the swordfish David invokes a mythical hero trying to slay the dragon and thereby release "the vital energies that will feed the universe." But Hemingway denies David victory over the huge fish. He diminishes David's role as hero to spotlight the mourning parent. The apocalyptic imagery, then, bears on Hudson's grief, partly to imply, I think, that since disaster and havoc are rampant, a good father can do little to protect his sons from premature death.

Hudson appears to offer his three sons simply a five-week vacation on a lovely island. But he actually exhibits himself as an ideal parent. Though once involved in the affairs of the world, he has now retired to an outpost. And his renunciation of women, minimal contamination by the sweep of modern life, and disciplined work routine show how responsibly he husbands esthetic values and the gift of his talent. The stability and orderliness of his island home and his loyal and dependent friends show also his domestic reliability. He bears no resemblance to Bimini's "bad fathers": "dignified" Uncle Edward, satirized by an unseen child because his gifts are rotten candy; the anonymous yachtsman at Mr. Bobby's who abuses his wife and children; the authority-defiant adult pranksters, Fred Wilson and Frank Hart; the self-indulgent, chili-pepper-eating Johnny Goodner; and the flesh-seeking stepfathers of Audrey Bruce. Least of all is he the father who corrupts his offspring by letting them drink alcohol, as the rummy-child joke at Mr. Bobby's presumes to prove.

As ideal parent, Hudson also provides his sons with a pair of substitute fathers who, along with himself, give them a range of adult models to fashion themselves upon. Unlike Hudson, contemplative and passive artist, Eddy is the fanatic father, the man of action who responds violently to events. Although Hudson, for example, deliberately aims but ineffectively fires his rifle at the hammerhead, it is Eddy who impulsively grabs the submachine gun and extravagantly sprays bullets that save David. An intensely emotional "father," it is Eddy who is so distraught over the near calamity that he pours down drink upon drink after it is over. It is he who futilely dives after the swordfish, gaff in hand, having coached and cared for David during the six-hour ordeal. And it is
he who carries out the role of the proud father, boasting David’s feat and fighting any scoffers.

Between the famous and the fanatic father Hemingway puts Roger Davis. The prostitution of his talent with Hollywood writing, affairs with faithless or sadistic women, and a lack of discipline have made him an artist manqué who cares more for people than for art. He becomes the Hudson boys’ companion, swimming, deep-sea and goggle-fishing, and rehearsing practical jokes with them. Susceptibility to erotic and aggressive temptations, Audrey Bruce and the anonymous yachtsman, shows another facet of his humanness. Another is his deep sense of remorse: for his younger brother who died, for the two men his fists have bludgeoned, for his self-assigned irresponsibility in David’s near disasters, for the women he’s been stupid about.

These two outflanking “fathers” help show Hudson’s unpossessiveness. He lets his sons emulate any combination of himself, Eddy, and Roger. He is not jealous when Andrew says he intends to claim Roger as his good friend, imitating Tommy’s appropriation of Joyce as his. Nor does Hudson interfere with Eddy and Roger as they coach David during his ordeal. Just as he stands confidently aloof on the flying bridge during this episode, so too does he keep to his porch, painting, while Roger teaches the boys how to relate with women during the Audrey Bruce episode.

A broad-minded father, Hudson of “Bimini” does not square with the deeply grief-stricken Hudson of the “Cuba” and “At Sea” sections of the novel. Hemingway never accounts for Hudson’s remarriage, recommitment to the world, and patriotic role in the war as captain of a Q-boat. But Hemingway has developed David’s special status, “a well-loved mystery” (143), so that I accept that his death could significantly alter his father’s life. After all, David’s and Andrew’s deaths obliquely indict him for not being a normal father. His virtue of unpossessiveness indirectly causes their deaths and—as “Cuba” slowly reveals—Tommy’s death, too. Other factors may explain Hudson’s drastic change of character in the years that separate “Bimini” from “Cuba,” but Hemingway’s refusal to suggest them isolates the cause in Hudson’s remorse over the deaths of Andrew and David. Consistent with that is the remorse that Tommy’s death causes. Hudson tries to repress it in “Cuba” and, as “At Sea” indicates, still grieves morosely some fifty days later.5

In “Cuba” Hemingway withholds the cause of Hudson’s grief, divulging it only indirectly. Hudson’s relationship with the cat,
Boise, whom he talks to and treats as though it were a child, reflects the cause, for if Boise were to die, Hudson “did not know what he would do” (208). Like a son, Boise is distressed whenever Hudson is gone for any length of time. After one sea stint Mario tells Hudson that Boise suffered more than ever before (233). This relationship seems uncanny until Hudson remembers Boise’s origin: the son about whom he thought no more, presumably David, had asked that they take home the orphaned kitten as a “Christmas gift” (210). The cat’s role as substitute son is clear from Hudson’s abbreviated name for him, “Boy.”

Hemingway also uses different landmarks to convey the cause for the sorrowful cast of Hudson’s mind. En route to the Floridita bar Hudson sees a bridge that recalls a girl dismembered by her policeman lover; a hill that recalls the execution of Col. Crittenden and one hundred twenty-two American volunteers (246); an old barque that recalls Chinese victims of a submarine shelling; a lean-to by the railway tracks that recalls the old Negro couple who, with money Hudson’s third wife gave them, bought a white dog, now dead. The landmarks culminate at the waterfront. The old Pacific and Orient docks recall the French ship that returned all of the whores of this part of Havana to Europe: though a lot of people regarded it as a source of amusement, to him it was sad (251).

The characters in “Cuba” uniformly reflect Hudson’s sorrow. His chauffeur, Pedro, is unhappy because of the scarcity of food, Marine Warrant Officer Hollins because of shore duty, Lt. Commander Fred Archer for unspecified reasons: his healthy looks did not betray his unhappiness (255). Ignacio Natera Ravello is unhappy because of the ambassador’s rudeness, huge Henry Wood because of his unrequited desire for a small girl, Willie because of much suffering (275). The Alcade Peor is unhappy because of political corruption, Honest Lil because of her waning beauty and waxing weight, and Tommy’s mother because of his death. When placed beside Hudson, however, none of these characters has as significant a reason as Hudson to be unhappy. Not even Tommy’s mother. Still “‘the most beautiful woman in the world’” (310), she has her career and a man in love with her who can assuage her sorrow. And, as “Bimini” had indicated, she had not been much of a mother to Tommy anyway.

To alleviate Hudson’s sorrow, Honest Lil keeps asking him to tell her happy stories. Hudson never tells her that the death of Tommy, whom she fondly regards as though he were her grand-
son, is the specific cause of his sorrow. But she eventually intuits that only one thing could cause such grief to him. He tells her that although he has been " 'desperately,' " " 'unbearably happy,' " with women, never has he been " 'as happy as with my children when we were all happy together' " (286).

Honest Lil's mothering, Boise's childlike anxiety and jealousy, the erotic visit of Hudson's first wife, and his reminiscences of erotic pleasures with princesses and exotic women—neither can these domestic comforters nor countless drinks anesthetize Hudson's woe. Its depth shows how a truly devoted father regards his children. He will not affront their memory by wanting more. He will find consolation in patriotic duty curiously free from vindictiveness toward the nation responsible for Tommy's death or, later, the representative of his enemy, the German commanding the submarine crew Hudson pursues. Obedient to his role as exemplary father, Hudson commands a Q-boat to capture as many Germans as possible for interrogation purposes, hoping to help end a war that brings death to other men's sons.

"At Sea" fittingly concludes Hudson's relationship with his sons. That is, his crew is more a family than a military patrol. There are responsible men like Antonio, cook and chief mate, and Ara, a reliable, strong Basque, as well as inconspicuously obedient men like Gil, George, and Juan. But its most conspicuous members are Henry Wood, Peters, and Willie. Henry Wood is the diffident, questioning child who defers to Hudson's authority. To his request that he be forgiven should he ever behave stupidly, Hudson paternally replies, "'You were forgiven when you were born. . . . You are a very brave boy, Henry, and I am fond of you and trust you' " (341). Peters is the refractory, rebellious son. A radio man on loan from the Marines, he is the ship's rummy, a possible traitor, and the only crewman to be killed. Hudson's "other problem child" (401) is Willie, an ex-Marine. His marginal recovery from a mental breakdown, undefined but severe sufferings and aggressive traits make him the unpredictable, violent child. Though there is bad blood among him, Peters, and Henry, Hudson keeps sibling rivalries from breaking out, showing his parental expertise.

Hudson's parental role in "At Sea" is also see in the mission he must carry out. He must hunt down the remains of a submarine crew, tracking and second-guessing their movements through the hazardous archipelago of islands along Cuba's shallow north coast. This is certainly not as heroic as sinking or capturing a
German submarine. But Hudson’s enemies commit domestic crimes. After they destroy a small island village and kill its inhabitants to pirate boats, they execute an apparently treacherous crew member. “‘Family trouble’” (339), Hudson calls it. They abandon a young sailor dying of gangrenous legs. And they leave a wounded third sailor aboard their grounded turtle boat, presumably to ambush Hudson and his crew. Although, for some unexplained reason, this wounded sailor does not fire upon Hudson, Willie, and Peters when they board the turtle boat, later he does kill Peters with a short burst from his machine pistol. It clatters “like a child’s rattle” (425)—the most incongruous simile in the novel.

The fate of these three German sailors indicates why this section of the novel offers more than impressive “descriptions of physical action” or “pure childhood fantasy, a modern Huck Finn or Tom Sawyer adventure.” Their deaths indirectly condemn Hudson’s antagonist, the German commanding the fleeing submarine crew. In domestic terms his execution and abandonment of the sailors show him to be a filicidal father, Hudson’s antithesis. So to pursue him and to die in the act of exterminating him completes Hudson’s characterization as the self-sacrificing good father. By administering this retribution, Hudson also avenges the deaths of three other young men: Andrew, David, and Tommy.

The crimes of Hudson’s German counterpart are tailor-made to show Hudson to advantage, but they also allow an antithetical reading that sees Hudson and him as doubles—as filicidal fathers.

Whether indebted to Conrad or not, “At Sea” is about Hudson’s relationship with his “secret sharer.” Hudson decides early that his adversary is a “methodical bastard” (339), a trait that also applies to Hudson, a careful tracker. He realizes that although his adversary’s acts against the three sailors appear ruthless, in each case the German leader has shown considerateness. He cruelly shot the treacherous young sailor at the base of his spine. But, Hudson notes, “‘Afterwards whoever did it was kind and shot him in the neck’” (339). For the abandoned second sailor Ara tells Hudson that he had been left in a shelter with a good bed, water, a crock of food, and a ditch in the sand for drainage (364). Of the wounded third sailor, apparently abandoned on the grounded turtle boat, Willie concludes that his crewmates must have been fond of him. Hudson agrees: “‘Probably. Or they wouldn’t have let him
take up space’ ” (442). Kindness toward, and admiration of, subordinates characterize Hudson as well as his adversary. And Hudson’s compliment of his adversary’s intelligence and navigational skill—“‘They must really be sailors’ ” (412)—does not go unanswered, Willie later congratulating him, “‘...you chased pretty’ ” (451).

The nearer Hudson gets to the fleeing German crew the more intense grows his “feeling that this had happened before in a bad dream” (414), “that it had all happened before” (416). He senses that the experience “was happening with such an intensification that he felt both in command and at the same time the prisoner of it” (414). To this recurrent-dream motif, common in Conrad, Hemingway also adds the slow pursuit, island by island, of Hudson’s quarry. Such Conradian prolongation adds to suspense but even more to the impression that the journey is as much internal as external. So when Hudson’s and his adversary’s crews turn out to be the same size, there can be little doubt that the elusive man Hudson chases is his shadow self, that “the repugnance that I feel toward meeting [the Germans]” (376) mirrors his repugnance for his own dark side. And the parallel between the deaths of Hudson’s three sons and the three sailors, two of whom are young, is not a coincidence, objectionable in realistic fiction, but a convention, obligatory in psychological fiction. A man responsible for the deaths of three young men, Hudson’s adversary objectifies the repressed guilts that Hudson must annihilate. At the least Hudson wishes to deny that he had been a bad father to his sons, that any irresponsibility of his contributed to their deaths. At the most he wishes to deny that he had filicidal feelings toward them. But events expose him. He repeatedly tells his crew, for instance, that they must capture some portion of the German crew for interrogation purposes. But they recognize the gap between what he says and what he wishes and make sure that no Germans survive.

Unlike his Conradian counterparts, either the anonymous young captain of “The Secret Sharer” or Marlow, Hudson is not preoccupied exclusively with his secret sharer. Nor does Hemingway ever let Hudson see his double, denying the recognition scene so common to literature of “the double.” But like Conrad and Dostoevsky, Hemingway populates the novel with a phalanx of doubles, be they contemporaries, children, or adversaries. Some of them, of course, are conventional, like David’s swordfish, evoking as it does his hatred and his love, or Hudson’s ship, a Q-boat that passes for a scientifically equipped pleasure craft. But others are
psychological doubles who fulfill their role of enacting repressed wishes and so reveal Hudson as a father who unconsciously wants his three sons dead.

Besides the German captain, Hudson’s most conspicuous double is Roger Davis. Their lives have intersected in Paris, Cap d’Antibes, and now on Bimini. Artists, boxers, and deep-sea fishermen, they are also “stupid with women.” Virtual brothers, almost interchangeable, they both easily attract the love of Audrey Bruce and the admiration of Hudson’s sons. And Mr. Bobby’s question of whether they are kin points to their visual likeness. An even stronger similarity, which has precipitated Mr. Bobby’s question, is their affliction with remorse. Hudson has done nothing that we know of for him to feel guilt like that which Roger feels over the accidental death of his younger brother, David Davis. But Hemingway rests Roger’s recall of that event and David Hudson’s near disaster next to Roger’s awareness that he is responsible for the near repetition of the childhood calamity with this second David. And that, in turn, suggests the deeper cause of his guilt. He feels responsible for his brother’s death because it gratified his unconscious wish to kill his brother or see him killed. The recurrence of Roger’s brooding guilt after David’s struggle with the huge swordfish confirms the strength of his fratricidal wish.

The two fishing episodes also show that Hudson shares Roger’s repressed wish, modified in him to filicide. He knows, for instance, that Roger is a failure, that he is cruel to women, that he had nearly killed two men with his fists recently, and that he may well be envious and hostile because of Hudson’s success. Yet when to these traits that incriminate him as dangerous Roger also adds his fratricidal guilt, Hudson seems oddly deficient in parental precaution. Before letting his boys goggle-fish with Roger, he merely asks that David be careful (79). Not only does Hudson leave David under Roger’s surveillance, but his lack of paternal diligence alarms another double, Eddy. Eddy insists that they anchor closer to where the boys are fishing; he urges Hudson to take his rifle topside and look for sharks; and he sprays the bullets that save David. Once the danger is over, Eddy tries to obliterate the event with drink while Roger broods over it in morose silence. Their repressive and obsessive responses suggest an unconscious reason Hudson values the presence of these two violent men during the fishing episodes. They are accomplices to his filicidal wish. After all, Eddy’s beatings the night after the swordfish epi-
sode partly reflect a desire to be punished for having such a wish and for having failed to execute it. And the agony of David’s ordeal, like all initiation ceremonies, exposes the sadistic, filicidal wish beneath his father’s benign motive of assisting his initiation into adulthood.

Hudson tries to safeguard his own image by standing passively upon the flying bridge all during David’s ordeal. He lets his two doubles, Roger and Eddy, coach David, fail him by letting the fish escape, and permit his injuries—“bloody hands and lacquered-looking oozing feet and . . . welts the harness had made across his back” (136). Andrew appears to be the only one who wishes David ill, for David construes his inability to “keep his mouth off” the swordfish as secretly wishing him bad luck. But when Tommy declares, “‘I don’t want any damned fish to kill him,’ ” and Hudson responds, “‘Neither do I and neither does Roger and neither does Eddy’ ” (114), it is clear that no one “keeps his mouth off” David’s fish, that all secretly wish him ill.

If proof that Hudson is a hypocritical, filicidal father depends wholly upon his doubles, my antithetical reading may be tenuous. But Hudson himself verifies it. For all of his artistic success, he is a domestic failure, as his broken marriages confirm. He compensates for his failure by gathering to him other failures and rejects, Roger and Eddy here, motley crews later. And though the novel’s apocalyptic imagery may suggest that his failures merely coincide with impending cosmic disaster, it is as easy to conclude the reverse, that the imagery externalizes his wish to see others fail, to see disaster strike them. We can grace his premonitions of disaster by calling them an artist’s sixth sense or uncanny intuition. But they are, quite simply, a masked wish whose extreme form is filicide.

The clearest indication of Hudson’s wish for his sons’ deaths follows David’s swordfish ordeal: sitting in his chair and trying to read, Hudson thinks about the day, “from the beginning until the end and it seemed as though all of his children except Tom had gone a long way away from him or he had gone away from them” (143). The thoughts of this sentence would not occur unless Hudson wished that David and Andrew would indeed go “a long way away from him.” The motives for such a wish are not hard to find. In part Hudson knows that he exerts little influence on his sons, and he fears their rejection of him. Of course he asserts that he wants David to get as much as he can from Roger and that he is happy the two so well understand each other (143). But his sense that “something about today frightened me” (144) has several
translations. To the reading that he was frightened that something *would* harm David can be easily added the reading that he was frightened by his wish *that* something harm David. He is also frightened by the prospect of David’s rapid coming-of-age and his own obsolescence, for never once during the six-hour ordeal does David ask for Hudson’s help. And because the huge swordfish symbolizes the father, Hudson would be most frightened by the parricidal wish latent in David’s action. Andrew’s and especially David’s deaths, then, are propitious. They relieve Hudson from being frightened by them ever again. Tommy is spared, for the time being. He pays proper court to his father and does not frighten him.

In “Cuba” Hudson withholds the fact of Tommy’s death. That seems to indicate his dislike of pity. And as the fact becomes known to Ignacio, Willie, and Honest Lil, his dislike is justified. Formal, tough, or lachrymose, their pity is inadequate to Hudson’s needs, if not Tommy’s memory, only magnifying the discrepancy between a man bereft of his children and those who had none to begin with. But Hudson’s behavior actually indicates his repressive traits. Even more than pity, he dislikes unpleasant facts, preferring the pleasures of various narcotics: double frozen daiquiris, erotic fantasies, or the maternal consolations of Honest Lil, who continually asks to hear his happy stories. Hudson even gives narcotics to Tommy’s mother. He tells her that a flak ship shot Tommy down in a routine firing off Abbeville. But when she asks whether his parachute burned, he tells her that it did not, deliberately lying because he is sure he has told her enough for one day (332). His lie may be justified as trying to protect Tommy’s mother. But when aligned with other repressive traits, it makes Hudson vulnerable to the suspicion that his grief over Tommy’s death is also a lie. Although the lengthy Floridita Bar episode seems intended to show Hudson’s ability to contain his grief, it also has a celebratory air, exuded by the number of relatively carefree characters who populate the bar. They collectively merge into yet another of Hudson’s doubles and mirror his repressed wish to rejoice in Tommy’s death. Ultimately even duty serves Hudson as a narcotic. It lets him flee Tommy’s self-pitying mother and fill his mind with the pleasurable vision of discharging his murderous impulses, sanctified as they are by war.

It is tempting to say that Hudson’s depression, so prevalent in “At Sea,” simply conceals his pleasure in having his filicidal wishes gratified. But his depression is more complicated than
that. Forebodings of his own death figure in it. When he acknowledges that the grounding of his ship "had come to him as a personal wound," his immediate remark about "the feeling of reprieve that a wound brings" (416) also expresses relief at a temporary delay of his death sentence. And his strategy in finally confronting the enemy shows strong suicidal impulses. Ara, anxious that Hudson's behavior jeopardizes their lives and mission, had earlier exhorted him, "'Now that you have ceased to be careful of yourself I must ask you to be, please'" (358). But Hudson, ignoring his repeated worry of being ambushed, does not anchor at the head of the fatal island and disperse his crew. Instead he sails headlong down "the narrow brush river of the channel" (454) and conspicuously invites the "three chickenshit bullets" that cut him down. His decisions to attack a second time, to have Willie and Ara look for survivors, and then to go back to detrap the turtle boat are suspicious delays that lessen his chances of getting the medical attention his wounds require. Rather than praise his self-abnegation, we must suspect neurosis.

His depression, minimal desire to cling to life, self-reproaches, sleeplessness, unwillingness to interest himself in anything but duty, and even his refusal to accept his standard source of nourishment, alcohol, mark Hudson a melancholiac disguised as a mourner. After all, like Roger's remorse, Hudson's mourning for Tommy exceeds its ostensible cause. Neither Tommy's character nor his relationship with Hudson justifies the duration or intensity of Hudson's grief. Little more than a worrying bundle of reminiscences, except in his earliest Paris years Tommy was left to mama, nurse, and boarding school as were his two brothers. So Hudson's grief must entail more than a guilty admission of his deficient fatherhood. Indeed its genuine cause is not whom he has lost but what he has lost in Tommy. Hudson's tendency to remember Tommy only as an infant, a physical extension of himself, shows Hudson's narcissism. And though Tommy's reminiscences supposedly vouched for Hudson's love of Tommy, they also reflect, narcissus-fashion, Hudson's self-love. Just as Hudson's earlier grief over David's death mourned the image of himself as hero, here then he mourns the image of himself that Tommy best recalls, the artist.

Mourning what he loves about himself also gives Hudson, as any melancholiac, opportunity to punish himself for desiring the deaths of his sons. Proof of this is not only in his suicidal wish but also in the pleasure he gets from pursuing and punishing his fili-
cidal counterpart, the German pilot. Hudson insists that he does not desire the pilot’s death (419). But clearly he does. Why else is he so careless about his own safety? He knows that any injury he gets will inflame his crew to vindictiveness, as Ara shows by shooting “a man walking toward them out of the smoke with his hands clasped over his head” (460). And Hudson can be certain that the pilot will be killed when he sends the murderous Willie on the island “‘to have a look’” (460).

Since suicides inflict upon themselves the homicidal feelings they have against others, it is propitious for Hudson to be able to obscure his suicidal wish by chasing a German pilot at whom he can obliquely aim his murderous impulses. Even more propitious is the final exoneration of his filicidal wishes, for he aims them at those who deserve them. After all, his assailant is not his German double. Rather his assailant is plural. The three bullets that fatally wound Hudson are fired by the men Willie identifies as the “three deads” of the first fight (465). The novel asks us to wonder whether Hudson will survive his wounds. But his conduct after his wounding leaves little question about his chances of survival. And there is even less question that three men who liked underwater diving in “Bimini” surface as part of a submarine crew in “At Sea,” or that doubles of Andrew, David, and Tommy avenge their deaths and succeed in parricidal ambush, even though they pay with their lives and are assisted by the suicidal wish of the man they slay.

Santiago and Hudson’s shared need to be exemplary men and their equally shared unconscious hostility toward their “sons” partly corroborate my antithetical reading of *Islands*. So does the fact that the books were composed within the same period, Hemingway having conceived of *Old Man* as an epilogue or fourth book of *Islands*. Biographical information also supports my reading, even though it already props too much of the criticism on the novel. Scarcely veiled are the parallels between Hudson and Hemingway; between Hudson’s and Hemingway’s sons, John, Patrick, and Gregory; between the car accident that kills the younger Hudson boys and one that occurred in April 1947 injuring Gregory’s knee and giving Patrick a delayed, serious concussion. But let me add that the three German sailors are heavily veiled portraits of the same three sons, both Hudson’s and Hemingway’s. The son deserving execution is the malicious, treacherous Andrew-Gregory, the son whose complications and difficult
behavior always bothered his father. The abandoned son who stoically resists interrogation and asserts that "nothing is important" (362) earns Hudson's admiration (363). His attitude would mirror both Hemingway's and Hudson's feelings toward David-Patrick, the favorite son. The third sailor had been made a mess by Willie's grenade and a short burst from Hudson's submachine gun. But Hudson examines the body and finds that the sailor had suffered from two wounds, one "in the fleshy part of his left shoulder" (426). This so closely corresponds to John Hemingway's World War II injury, "in the right arm and shoulder by grenade fragments and six rounds from a high velocity carbine," that equating them seems reasonable. Hudson's refusal to give Tommy's mother the precise details of Tommy's death suggests some hideous or disfiguring wounds that would be as gruesome a sight as the "mess" beneath the "blasted forward hatch" of the turtle boat (429, 434).

To explain why filicidal wishes surfaced in 1947, when Hemingway began composing "Bimini," requires looking at some biographical details that seem to refute such wishes in Hemingway. In May 1945 Hemingway was informed that his oldest son—who had been missing in action, badly wounded, and then moved from one POW camp to another—had been liberated. It is likely that this news would heighten Hemingway's thoughts about his relationship with that son and with his other two sons as well. But a more serious event in mid-August of 1946 stimulates the question that Islands literally addresses: How should a man conduct himself when he loses those he is closest to? I refer to Mary Hemingway's near death. She and Hemingway were driving to Sun Valley to resume the annual autumn vacations he had begun in 1939, to meet the three boys, and to give Mary a "lying-in" period. Her pregnancy turned out to be tubular, and when it ruptured in Casper, Wyoming, had it not been for Hemingway's resourcefulness, reports Baker, she would surely have died. Both of these near losses, along with the aforementioned April 1947 car accident, could have precipitated the narrative Hemingway began composing.

If we also ask why Hemingway places "Bimini" back in the thirties, makes his main character a painter, and provides him with a companion who strongly resembles John Dos Passos, then still other factors seem to have coalesced in Hemingway's mind. Childless, Dos Passos had an especial fondness for two boys with the same first name, Patricks Hemingway and Murphy. Patrick
Murphy was the second son of well-known expatriates, his father, Gerald, being a painter with some talent. More importantly, both of his sons, Boath and Patrick, died young. While fishing with Dos Passos in March 1935, Hemingway learned of Boath Murphy's death, and both men wrote letters of condolence to the Murphys. Two years later Patrick Murphy finally died of tuberculosis, Dos Passos having posted Hemingway on Patrick's condition in four of the six letters he wrote Hemingway between May 1935 and July 1937. Though Hemingway was not particularly fond of Gerald Murphy, a father with three sons could easily empathize with Murphy's situation.

These biographical matters would seem to argue only the existence of Hemingway's fear for his sons, only his anxiety that some unforeseen harm would assail them. And it also seems likely that his sons' growing independence of him during 1950-51 would increase his guilt rather than spur filicidal wishes. Like any parent he would feel remorse for things he had done and not done for them. And he would feel especially culpable for having been only a part-time father to them. Yet their independence would also breed parental resentment to accompany the guilt, for their independence, their rebelliousness, or their acquisition of values different from his would be tantamount to rejecting or abandoning him. And though the normal way a father deals with his maturing sons' rejection is by accepting it, he does so with a measure of hostility.

Hemingway's hostility would be fueled by the uncanny feeling that he assigns Hudson, the "feeling that this had happened before in a bad dream" (414), "that it had all happened before" (416). Hemingway's sons' abandonment of him had indeed "all happened before": it had happened when he had abandoned his father. And because Hemingway's affiliative wish, his need for male companionship, was so strong, his maturing sons' departures would be a repudiation of his needs. So, like his father before him, Hemingway reacts, albeit unconsciously and fictitiously, by committing suicide (himself-as-Hudson), directing upon himself the filicidal wishes he has against his sons.

Hemingway corroborates this inference in his letter of 13 June 1951 to his old World War I friend Gen. E. E. "Chink" Dorman-O'Gowan. Writing about "At Sea," he says: "I had to write a long part of the book that I hoped I would never need to write and which I dreaded writing. But I wrote it, liveing in it, and I hope you will like it because there is one good fight . . . except that in this fight
the other people, the enemy, are being pursued and they out-class those who pursue them” (Letters, 730). Hemingway’s sense of compulsion (“I had to write a long part”) and of dread (“I hoped I would never need to write” that part) expresses here a fear that none of his available letters elsewhere expresses. That fear has no external cause—no fear of libel, no fear of being caught imitating some dead master, no fear of governmental reproach for revealing top-secret information about his World War II activities on the Pilar. So the cause of that fear must be internal, must reveal neurotic or moral anxiety that signals to him that he was writing about forbidden wishes.23 Were Hudson genuinely resolved to bring the Germans back alive, his behavior would have fewer neurotic symptoms than it has. But those symptoms indicate that he hunts down his adversaries to kill them and so to kill those doubles they represent. Hemingway’s anxiety, his dread, then, was due to his uncanny sense that in Hudson were his own filicidal wishes.

A final reason for these wishes is Hemingway’s fixation on his father. The strong return of Hemingway’s repressed guilt for having abandoned his father and for being partly responsible for his suicide demands that he compensate for it. And so through Hudson he wishes for the death of his sons, hoping that his disaffiliation from them will somehow affiliate him again with his father. And he agrees through Hudson to abandon also his interest in art and women, both of which lured Hemingway from his father early on. Surely that will prove Hemingway’s rededication to his father. For by making Hudson a patriot, a man who endangers and loses his life for the land of his father, Hemingway asserts the primacy of his love for his own father.