

Hemingway's Iceberg Sinks: Interpreting the Critical Failure of *Across the River and Into the Trees*

Daniel C. Strack

Abstract

Although Hemingway's *Across the River and Into the Trees* received a cold critical reception upon its release, the novel, which recounts the events of a weekend spent by Colonel Richard Cantwell in Venice, is not without redeeming aspects. The plot is ambitious and thoughtfully designed, details of depiction are highly nuanced and intriguing, and the famous setting is replete with literary and historical associations. Furthermore, Hemingway has skillfully incorporated undercurrent metaphors that prefigure and parallel the narrative flow. Carefully elaborated metaphorical images include bridges, gondolas, the wind, and the tide. Nevertheless, critics have often noted that the grating portrayals of Cantwell and Renata distract from the narrative and overwhelm other positive aspects of the story.

In his next major work, *The Old Man and the Sea*, Hemingway takes many of the traits that had been negatively perceived in Cantwell's characterization and reverses them in his portrayal of Santiago. The influence of the 1950 novel on *The Old Man and the Sea* does not end there, however. Santiago's anguish at losing his marlin to the sharks perfectly mirrors Hemingway's own feelings at having *Across the River and Into the Trees* summarily dismissed by critics. In fact, interpreting the entire story in light of the metaphor CRITICS ARE SHARKS reveals both valuable insights into the author's creative processes and a surreptitious defense of his literary oeuvre. In retrospect, the critical failure of *Across the River and Into the Trees* provided Hemingway with just the insight and motivation necessary to produce *The Old Man and the Sea*, the work which secured the 1954 Nobel Prize in Literature for him and thereby solidified his eminent literary reputation.

Key words: metaphor, symbolism, Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea*, Cantwell, Santiago, Venice, gondola, bridge

I. An Overview of *Across the River and Into the Trees*

Across the River and Into the Trees is the story of 50-year-old Colonel Richard Cantwell of the US Army and his 19-year-old Italian girlfriend, Renata. The story recounts the last weekend shared by the couple in Venice, eating, drinking, traveling the city's canals, and most importantly, talking about the decisive events that had shaped Cantwell's life story.

Cantwell's past battles experienced both as a young soldier and later as a General, his injuries (especially his disfigured right hand), his tactical miscalculations, and his dissatisfaction with his demotion from the rank of General provide the couple with their main topics of conversation. References to Cantwell's three previous heart attacks also occasionally enter into the dialogue. As he regularly takes medication for his heart condition, both he and Renata are fully aware that his time remaining may be limited. Perhaps for this reason, or perhaps for some other reason of which readers are unaware, Renata has decided not to entertain any talk of marriage. The divorced Cantwell, although occasionally wishing that things could have been different between them, does not attempt to persuade her otherwise.

Cantwell's traumatic memories from World War II include an episode from his brief command as General in which the soldiers under his command unsuccessfully attempted to cross a river into a German-occupied forest area. According to the Colonel, by following bad orders from his superiors he managed to get every second man in his regiment killed (242). Ironically, it was his willingness to comply with unwise commands that led directly to his own demotion. The title of the novel at least in part alludes to this disastrous crossing.¹ Throughout the story, Cantwell alternates between resentment for the General who gave him the unreasonable orders and anger with himself for his own miscalculations, although the majority of the blame seems apportioned to the former commander.

Renata all but worships Cantwell's wound-disfigured right hand, a physical reminder of the suffering he has experienced during the course of his military career. As she requests to hear more war stories and he acquiesces, the hand is mentioned repeatedly and thereby expresses Cantwell's essential nature to the observant reader: he is still generally powerful but fragile in some ways due to the damage of his wartime experiences.

At the end of the story, the two say their goodbyes and Cantwell goes on by boat to take part in a Venetian duck hunt. He bags a few ducks but is disturbed by a boatman who makes the hunt more difficult for him by firing his shotgun before the majority of ducks come in range of Cantwell's blind. Upset, the Colonel takes his heart medication with gin. Soon after, on the road back to Trieste, he feels another heart attack coming and foresees that the trip will be his last. Moving to the back seat of the car, he does not tell the driver of his heart attack. In preparation for just such an event, he has given his subordinate orders to return a portrait of Renata that she had given him and some other things to her by having them dropped off at the Gritti Palace Hotel. So ends the life of Colonel Cantwell and so ends the novel.

II. Concerning the Bridges and Gondolas of Venice

Before examining some of the reasons for which *Across the River and Into the Trees* has been perceived to be a failure, it might be wise to mention a few successful aspects of the work. While the novel's poorly conceived main characters and a relatively uneventful plot have surely contributed to the negative appraisals it has garnered, the story might have been a total loss if not for Hemingway's intriguing atmospheres and hidden metaphorical artifice.

The setting of the story is one of the strongest aspects of the book. Depiction of the "word painting of the weathers and waters of Venice" (Hovey 178) is well-done and Hemingway's references to Italian culture are intriguing and create an appealing if caricatured ambience. Concerning Hemingway's cultural understanding of Italy, Italo Calvino gives the following generally positive assessment:

A long essay could be written on how much he understood about Italy, and how already in 1917 he was able to recognize the country's 'fascist' face and on the opposite side the people's face, as he portrayed them in his best novel, *A Farewell to Arms* (1929); and also on how much he still understood of 1949 Italy and portrayed in his less successful, but still in many respects interesting, novel, *Across the River and Into the Trees*; but also on how much he never understood, never managing to escape from his tourist shell. (Calvino 227)

Throughout *Across the River*, Hemingway writes so as to display his acquaintance with Italian literature and the noted authors who have depicted Venice before him. In the story, Cantwell mentions Dante (90, 246), d'Annunzio (49-51), Lord Byron, Browning (48), and Shakespeare (171, 230). In addition to literary references, Hemingway uses Cantwell's brusque yet urbane banter to emphasize the Colonel's erudition in the visual arts, as well. Francesca, Mantegna, Michelangelo, Brueghel (14), Goya (90), Tintoretto, and Velasquez (146) are all marched dutifully across center stage of the narrative. Undoubtedly, one goal of these allusions is to imbue the story with cultural and historical overtones. In this sense, the references have accomplished their purpose.

Of course, there is a danger in liberally alluding to Shakespeare and Dante in a single fictional work because, should the mood and literary quality of these renowned references seem sufficiently dissonant with the work in which they are embedded, the new work will suffer by comparison, as is the case here. Had Hemingway written the story differently, his depiction of Venice and references to its rich literary and artistic traditions might have received more posi-

tive attention. As it is, these classical references merely serve to highlight the novel's many un-classical shortcomings.

As in many of Hemingway's previous works, he deftly uses details of geography and idiosyncratic cultural references to reinforce certain aspects of the plot. It is difficult to imagine a story set in Venice which would not make some mention of the famous city's most unique features, namely the numerous canals, bridges, and gondolas. In fact, the ubiquitous waterways of Venice present a unique literary opportunity which Hemingway exploits to full advantage.

With respect to the story's bridges,² they are numerous and depiction is varied. Of course, the bridges that span the city's canals facilitate pedestrian travel from shore to shore, but they also serve as reference points as Cantwell travels through the city by boat. For this reason, the metaphorical implications of bridges in the novel change according to details of depiction. To adequately characterize the complex ways that bridges are depicted in *Across the River*, I will first analyze the depictions of bridges used in crossing, then comment on the depiction of boat travel in the city with special reference to gondolas. Finally, I will attempt to highlight how some of these aspects interact with one another to create a complex and highly nuanced metaphorical background that harmonizes with the plot.

When Cantwell crosses a bridge over a feeder canal on the way to Harry's Bar, he suddenly feels a twinge, apparently cardiac discomfort at the exertion of crossing. At this very moment, however, seeing two young women crossing as well, he keeps up his pace: "There's a lot of oxygen in this air, he thought, as he faced into the wind and breathed deeply" (79). From this comment, the reader understands that Cantwell's anticipation of being with Renata is helping him, at least temporarily, to overcome the physical difficulties he faces in life. His romance with the young woman is revitalizing him and keeping his health from deteriorating. In this way, the bridge draws attention to the episode and imparts significance to it that it otherwise might not have had. The physical stress experienced by Cantwell as he climbs the bridge is associated with a psychological form of stress he is experiencing, as well: the bridge causes him physical discomfort and yet also invigorates him, just as his relationship with Renata both tests him emotionally and provides him with a reason to go on living.

The particular bridge crossing just described may be seen as the first in a series of bridges that are emblematic of Cantwell and Renata's relationship. Every time one of them crosses a bridge, the psychological distance between them diminishes. As they become in-

creasingly close, he begins to share with her more and more intimate details concerning his past. While Cantwell reflects on the events that have defined his existence, his entire lifetime is collapsed into the brief time period depicted in the novel. The recounting of Cantwell's stories commingles the past and present in the narrative, infusing the essence of the couple's relationship with the details of Cantwell's life story. Consequently, the recurrence of bridge crossings parallels both the increasing level of intimacy the couple is experiencing and the way that the events of Cantwell's life are being compressed into a much shorter narrative timeframe through his storytelling.

The Colonel feels the twinge again while crossing the bridge as he is walking arm in arm with Renata. On this occasion, he simply reflects to himself, "the hell with that," and keeps walking (105). To the extent that Cantwell realizes that he is too old for the relationship but proceeds anyway, on a deeper level the twinges stand for the emotional distress he feels when contemplating the ultimately doomed nature of their relationship. Indeed, it is precisely because the Colonel is experiencing "heart" trouble that the reader even notices Cantwell's anxiety. If the Colonel were characterized as suffering from a liver ailment instead of a "heart" condition, all such metaphorical implications would be lost.

Through this metaphorical artifice, Hemingway expresses the perhaps uncontroversial idea that Cantwell is too old to experience the passion of "first-love" again. His paramour's name, Renata, accentuates the aspect of first-love by implying that Cantwell is meant to experience some sort of "rebirth" through his interactions with her. At the risk of oversimplifying the plot, the gist of the story may be summed up as follows: Cantwell is spiritually reborn through the relationship, but youthful passion proves too much for his old body (specifically for his "heart"). Cantwell dies because he has loved too truly, too late in life.

As already mentioned, the metaphorical implications of bridges in the story change when they are not crossed on foot but rather encountered while traveling in boats. In that Cantwell spends much of the story navigating the canals of Venice in boats of various kinds, Hemingway frequently mentions bridges as structures that must be passed under. In fact, the characters pass under bridges no less than nine times in the novel, exceeding even the eight references to bridge crossings. This idiosyncrasy of bridge depiction, while consonant with Venice's image generally, is markedly different from the way that bridges are commonly represented in literary prose. To the extent that the bridge's most predominant function in the story varies from the norm, the literary scholar must be alert for hidden meanings related to the

idiosyncrasy. In fact, Hemingway does seem to have used this alternative type of bridge characterization to his strategic advantage.

On one occasion, the narrator makes reference to various bridges of Venice as he travels along the canals into the city, describing each according to its color and the materials used in construction (46). The narrator's comments in this case reflect the observations of Cantwell, showing his awareness of fine distinctions to be made between the myriad bridges that will necessarily be encountered in Venice. These observations metonymically stand in for Cantwell's depth of knowledge of Venice as a whole. The Colonel's great familiarity with Venice is stressed repeatedly, but since the canals and bridges form such a crucial part of Venetian lifestyle and ambience, this particular type of sensitivity is especially telling.

At one point, he encounters a succession of bridges while moving towards a meeting with Renata but these "bridges were all the same" (198). This observation comes soon after Cantwell comments that the ideal way to appreciate small but still important details in the Venetian scenery is to remain attentive to one's surroundings. His foremost goal in traveling through the city is to be constantly aware of his location and "come out at the market without getting up any dead ends" (185). In terms of the couple's romance, he maintains a similar desire to approach it coolly and rationally so he can neatly extricate himself at the proper time, avoiding messy entanglements. As their relationship becomes more intimate, however, he repeatedly forgets to take notice of the scenery and rushes ahead, all but blind as he presses forward to meet his love. Unable to live up to his ideals for enjoying Venice, he fails in his goals with respect to his love affair with Renata, as well. Their relationship does indeed come out at a "dead end," so to speak.

As the tide is rising, there is some doubt that they will be able to successfully pass under each bridge (150) but they always do (155-156). Seen from the perspective of river travel, then, each bridge seems to function as a testing place for their relationship and the fact that they make it through each time despite the high tide indicates that their love has been strong enough to endure difficult circumstances. This interpretation is further bolstered by Hemingway's repeated references to the wind in the story: it is often a cold wind and they are inevitably moving against it.

The question of how to deal with gondolas is an unavoidable difficulty in writing a fictional story that uses Venice as its primary backdrop. These peculiar boats are representative of the city's image as a popular tourist destination and more or less vital to daily life there. In

this sense, they are objects with both romantic implications and commercial utility. For a literary author, this represents a dilemma. Include the gondolas and risk having the work seen as a clichéd popular romance; omit them and run counter to reader expectations for a story about Venice. Normally in such cases, Hemingway, whose main characters were generally knowledgeable insiders, tends to include the *gauche* cultural allusion but then allows the protagonist to mouth overt disapproval for any negative aspects of the artifact or custom that needs to be mitigated. In this specific situation, the narrator uses observations by Cantwell to downplay the gondola's importance in his own thinking while simultaneously adding a new metaphorical implication relating to the Venetian boats. After deciding to walk home, he thinks to himself, "Only tourists and lovers take gondolas [...] Except to cross the canals in the places where there are no bridges" (163).

While bridges tend to represent romantic and experiential thresholds to be crossed, the actual relationship of the two is not characterized so much by bridges as it is by boats. They cross bridges at first, then share a gondola briefly, but in the end, Cantwell's boat carries him off in a different direction, literally (on his way out of Venice) and figuratively (as he dies and thereby implicitly embarks on his chthonic journey). The comment concerning the association of tourists and gondolas, coming as it does before a sudden, frustrated outburst to end the chapter, intimates that Cantwell understands that their relationship has run out of bridges and only boats remain. The setting being Venice, they finally share a gondola. Very subtly, Hemingway has implied that Cantwell is a "tourist" as far as his time with Renata is concerned.

In terms of the general movement of the plot, the pinnacle of the couple's relationship is achieved on top of a bridge (201). In the scene, Cantwell requests that Renata stop at the top of a bridge and turn her head sideways, letting her hair blow "obliquely." He has asked to see her profile on a number of occasions. In this case, however, being on a bridge and, more importantly, being on "top" of the bridge, the simple event takes on outsized significance. The bridge itself is an object that focuses attention on whatever events happen to be transpiring on it. Moreover, while the word "pinnacle" is not used in the description, the fact that they are said to be "on top" of the bridge rather than simply "on" it emphasizes that they are indeed at the pinnacle of the bridge's arcing trajectory. From this passage, the reader may anticipate the fact that the couple's relationship will proceed "downhill" from this point.

In fact, while Cantwell and Renata continue to travel through Venice in the story, no bridges are mentioned after their time at the 'pinnacle' of the bridge. Their relationship has

been metaphorically strengthened using bridges and now Hemingway knows better than to mention them again. Soon the two will be parted and so bridges are no longer an appropriate image for their relationship. On the contrary, boats become the prominent conveyance within Venice for the remainder of the story.

Verifying that the falling action of the story is indeed under way, the narrator begins to comment on the now "outgoing tide" (205). The tide had been swelling throughout the first part of the book but now, just after the pinnacle bridge scene, it starts to fall. After this point, as well, Cantwell tells Renata of the painful memories he has of the war and his regrets over the mistakes he had made. To further reinforce this falling action, a reference is made to Dante's *Inferno*, a work that has already been briefly alluded to in the novel. In the passage, as the Colonel jokes about having the gates of hell guarded so his former General will not be able to escape and meet them, Renata reflects that Cantwell sounds like Dante: "And for a while he was [Dante] and he drew all the circles. They were as unjust as Dante's but he drew them" (246). These references to the *Inferno* in the denouement, no less than the other allusions already mentioned, hint at the Colonel's literary sophistication while simultaneously striking a resonance with the novel's Italian cultural setting.

Hunting dominates the final few hours of Cantwell's Venetian holiday. Revealingly, he sits in a "blind" and, perhaps unintentionally, shoots not at single ducks but at pairs, or more accurately, *couples* of ducks (279-282). First, he kills a drake and then its mate, both of which fall onto the ice. Then he shoots a drake which also drops to the ice at which point the "calling hen looked at him as he lay and shifted her feet" (282). Immediately following this slightly contrived description, the narrator's thoughts once again turn to Renata, metonymically linking the second pair of ducks with their own relationship. As Cantwell views the dying drake, his own demise is prefigured. Possibly recognizing the bad omen, the Colonel gets overly upset and, disregarding his health, washes his heart medication down with gin. In fact, Colonel Cantwell has already written a will ahead of time stating what should happen to the portrait upon his death; in a sense, with preparations for his own passing already completed, the winter duck-hunting expedition provides Cantwell with an optimal chance to finally bag himself, setting his poor, loving Renata free to fly on with her life as he thinks she should.

Nevertheless, much of the story's ending is chalked up to fate. The weather, in particular, is blamed for the disappointments of the hunt. Alvarito remarks: "It was a shame that it should freeze. The prospects were so good" (301). This comment on the unfortunate weather

is not the first reference to the capriciousness of fate. Cantwell himself has commented on how the outcomes of battles are often determined by uniquely coalescing incidents and unforeseen circumstances: "We live by accidents of terrain, you know. And terrain is what remains in the dreaming part of your mind" (123).

In that this book generally attempts to link up love and war, such a battle metaphor resonates deeply with Alvarito's comment on the weather and its implications concerning human relationships. In the final analysis, the couple was not inevitably doomed by Cantwell's age or even his health problems but by the onset of an unexpected cold front and the disturbing actions of another hunter. Echoing many of Hemingway's previous stories, *Across the River* does not lay ultimate responsibility for personal misfortune at the feet of individuals, but rather concludes simply that unforeseen circumstances dictated the regrettable outcome. Life may be worth living but, in the end, it is still unfair.

III. Hemingway's Celebrity and "the Iceberg": An Accident Waiting to Happen

It would be an understatement to say that Hemingway's novel did not meet with great success. The majority of critics (and a rather smaller number of literary scholars) seem to have arrived at the conclusion that it was an unmitigated debacle. Harold Bloom opines that the celebrated author's "indeliberate self-parody" in the novel reaches a "distressing" level. (Bloom 1) In his book, *Hemingway: The Inward Terrain*, Richard B. Hovey is sympathetic to the author generally and praises many of his earlier works; nevertheless, he calls *Across the River and Into the Trees* Hemingway's "worst failure" (Hovey 173). According to Hovey, "[the] book reads like one written by an aged adolescent recording his boyish dreams in a first novel" (Hovey 173). From a certain perspective, this assessment may not be far off the mark but there is an all-too-obvious reason for the novel's failure which the observation fails to take into account: Hemingway's celebrity at the time he wrote the novel.

Historian Paul Johnson notes how the trajectory of Hemingway's literary and financial status had changed his lifestyle dramatically by 1941:

By now he had acquired for himself a home, the Finca Vigia, outside Havana in Cuba, which remained his residence for most of his remaining years. The success of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, which became one of the great best-sellers of the century, brought him an enormous income and he wanted to enjoy it, notably in what was now his preferred sport, deep-sea fishing. (Johnson 158)

As often seems to be the case, the financial rewards and critical acclaim that came to him from his previous successes intoxicated his muse and dulled his ambition. That his earnings and achievements had negatively affected his literary output is all but acknowledged in his acceptance speech for the Nobel Prize for Literature of 1954. On the occasion, he remarked that a writer "grows in public stature as he sheds his loneliness and often his work deteriorates" ("Acceptance" 501). Although the extent to which Hemingway's skills had deteriorated is debatable, suffice to say that his experiences during the period leading up to *Across the River and Into the Trees* were very different from those which informed his earlier writing. It should not be in any way surprising that the overall quality of his work was affected.

The great amounts of food and alcohol that the Colonel and Renata so neatly absorb over a single weekend without indigestion or hangover are subtle indications that something is amiss. As for the food, the *Gran Maestro* (the head waiter at the Gritti Palace Hotel's restaurant) arranges full course meals of crab *enchillada* and choice cuts of steak especially for them. Furthermore, they are drinking during much of the time they spend together, imbibing Valpolicella at the hotel restaurant, champagne in the hotel room, and martinis at Harry's Bar. Concerning these carefully detailed depictions, Hovey rightly remarks, "Even Cantwell's pleasures can irk us. His delight in eating and drinking is that of a snob" (Hovey 178).

In a sense, the depiction of food and drink in *Across the River and Into the Trees* is crucially different from that found in Hemingway's previous works. While the readers of *The Sun Also Rises* probably understood Jake Barnes to be an opportunistic but none too picky eater and realized that he drank both to avoid thinking of his war injury and to forget his romantic troubles, Cantwell's eating and drinking strike one simply as evidence of a large and untamed appetite. Running counter to the Colonel's otherwise Spartan comportment which Hemingway emphasizes at every opportunity, the days depicted in the novel are characterized by an unabashed succession of exquisite culinary experiences. Nevertheless, the greatest problem lies not in the eating and drinking per se, but in the author's expectation that the reader will placidly accept the fact that an obsessive disciplinarian like Cantwell would be susceptible to such a cavalcade of indulgence.

To the extent that the "action" of the story takes place entirely in Cantwell's memory, *Across the River* comes across as a sort of nostalgia-ridden, epicurean memoir. Surely, creating such a self-absorbed and self-gratifying protagonist was not Hemingway's intention. In reading of an endless succession of superb meals for an ultimately doomed man, a gallows humor is

allowed to insinuate itself into the story, although this may not be entirely apparent upon the first reading. Retracing Cantwell's faltering steps through a smug succession of hotel and restaurant scenes, the skeptic will be even less willing to overlook Cantwell's extravagances the second time around. One can only wonder how Cantwell and Renata might have been portrayed had they wandered into a café during the bullfights in Pamplona and run into Jake, Brett and the rest of the expatriates. One suspects that the depiction would not have been flattering.

Concerning his generally successful writing strategy, Hemingway often mentioned that he wrote his stories so as to convey to the reader a solidity and depth similar to the great hidden mass of an iceberg. Hemingway remarks:

If a writer of prose knows enough about what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of movement of an iceberg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water. '(Death 192)

In *Across the River*, Hemingway has employed his usual strategy of taking insights from his own real-life experiences and using these to provide his protagonists with detailed insider knowledge of the true-to-life contexts they find themselves in. Concerning this, Hovey remarks that "Cantwell is Hemingway's own age, has had Hemingway's marital woes, has many of Hemingway's scars and concussions, has Hemingway's hypertension and his hobbies, and in general his experiences in both world wars parallel Hemingway's" (Hovey 181). Of course, Hemingway explicitly denies any and all connections with real people in a disclaimer that precedes the story (vii), but his persistent references to the 'iceberg analogy' strongly imply that his fiction was in fact closely tied to his own experiences. Throughout his career, Hemingway had used autobiographical insights to create the characters in his fiction. Nick Adams, Jake Barnes, Frederic Henry and, to a lesser extent, Robert Jordan all depended crucially on Hemingway's own background for their ideas and insights and never failed to fully inhabit settings that he himself had known. This being the case, if *Across the River* was simply the product of a characterization strategy that had been successful many times before, exactly what went wrong in the case of Colonel Cantwell?

This question can be answered by examining a number of subtle dissonances in the identities of the two main characters. How does an American military Colonel acquire such

casual familiarity with the luxuries of top tier Italian restaurants? Would an army Colonel really go in for such foreign delicacies? Not that there couldn't be exceptions, but by reputation, US military people would tend to be satisfied with much more traditional fare. And reflecting on Cantwell's personality, why would a beautiful, young woman like Renata fall for man of such obdurate disposition? Of course, a handsome and uncommonly charming officer might, in principle if not typically in fact, command admiration even from young women, but Cantwell does not seem to be such a man. And what aristocratic, cosmopolitan 19-year-old woman would truly be able to listen with rapt attention to no-nonsense observations about unsuccessful battles, brutal military power games, and failed previous marriages? The answer to these and other similar conundrums, at least according to the portrayals in the narrative, lies in the fact that neither Cantwell nor Renata fit the stereotypes associated with their respective ages, occupations, and social standings. Both characters represent rare exceptions to the rule.

Of course the informed reader does not buy this explanation because more intuitively obvious solutions to the paradoxes are readily available. The reason Cantwell frequents lavish hotel restaurants is that the rich and increasingly overweight Hemingway himself did. The reason Cantwell is on best terms with the head waiters at such establishments is that Hemingway, the famed novelist, was. And while Renata, the sophisticated, world-weary *contessa*, would have no good reason to fall for a divorced has-been like Cantwell, a spoiled, social-climbing *contessa*, like Renata's real-life model Adriana Ivancich, would have every reason to start an affair with a celebrity author like Hemingway, which is in fact what happened. Ivancich, whom Johnson (166) characterizes as "a chilly piece, snobbish and unresponsive, who wanted marriage or nothing", was 19 when she met the married Hemingway and the two became involved to the point where she actually influenced the original ill-conceived cover art for both *Across the River* and *The Old Man and the Sea*. (cf. Reynolds xi) Renata's stuffy characterization was at least partially based on the eccentric real-life personality of Adriana, and herein lay half of the problem readers would face as they attempted to identify with the odd couple.

Furthermore, in Hemingway's previous books, the protagonists were likable and easy to relate to because Hemingway himself had lived an interesting yet down-to-earth life and had yet to be spoiled by fame. In *Across the River*, however, Hemingway has entered his 'fat-Elvis period' and readers can only forge ahead in embarrassed bewilderment as the tone-deaf Hemingway drops one smug, unflattering detail after another. Hemingway's attempt to express his own experiences through the voice of the crusty Colonel Cantwell do not ring true because a

real Colonel Cantwell would never have thought and acted as Hemingway the world-famous celebrity author did.

Hovey notes that *Across the River* is "Hemingway's most self-indulgent performance" and that "the self-criticism that must be at work in any satisfactory artistic creation has been lulled asleep" (Hovey 77). While these observations were made with reference to the novel's tone and prose style in particular, the comment undoubtedly holds true for characterization as well. D'Agostino asserts that Hemingway may have simply failed to achieve the goals in characterization that he had set for himself:

Hemingway wanted to transfigure his eternal hero, making him a pathetic and solemn figure, a creature of bitter passions and childish goodness, whose solitary experience has brought wisdom, nobility, and peace. But the character he portrays is that of an embittered and bad-tempered old man, querulous and self-conceited to the point of parody, full of boring and depressing boasts. Indeed, there had never been such a striking contrast between Hemingway's intention and his results. (D'Agostino 41)

Certainly there were many miscalculations in details of characterization, but the greatest miscalculation may have been telling the story of Cantwell and Renata in the first place. In any event, the central figures that Hemingway portrays are neither likable nor believable, despite the author's apparently sincere expectation that the book would be regarded as one of his greatest successes (Hovey 190).

Hemingway's unreflective dedication to the iceberg principle, his oft-noted writing policy of mentioning key insider details to quickly and convincingly evoke authenticity, turned out to be a strategy not without risks. From the outset of his career, Hemingway attempted to write "a truer account than anything factual can be" (*Men* xv). Using this standard as the most important criteria for evaluating a novel, one should be able to assert the following: if partly biographical stories had succeeded by faithfully recounting the chaotic events of life's most difficult and trying times, then a novel that includes truthful depictions of life's more comfortable episodes ought to be even more successful. Why wasn't this the case?

Firstly, it should be noted that some aspects of life, when portrayed truly and accurately, have the potential to repel readers by the very nature of the people and actions depicted. To the extent that a great part of Hemingway's loyal readership had admired his writing for its

subtly proletarian outlook, reading such a capitalistic, militaristic, and generally pro-establishment novel was bound to be a shock. Furthermore, while Hemingway is obviously following his cardinal rule and writing only about what he knows, the various jigsaw puzzle pieces of things he had in-depth knowledge of at the time are somewhat incongruous: a war correspondent's insider knowledge of World War II battles, an international celebrity's appreciation for four-star hotels, a wealthy alcoholic's discriminating taste for fine spirits, a leisured and rather aristocratic perspective on Italian duck hunting, and a starry-eyed tourist's regard for Venetian gondolas. While all of these bits of insider knowledge were simultaneously present in Hemingway himself, they are nearly impossible to reconcile in the fictitious identity ascribed to Colonel Cantwell.

In the final analysis, the main characters encountered in Hemingway's last full-length novel suffer greatly in comparison with those who had appeared in the author's previous stories. While other subpar aspects of the work could be mentioned as well, flawed characterization strategy flowing directly from Hemingway's policy of accurately depicting insights gleaned from real-life experiences doomed the work before Hemingway had even written the first line. Hemingway's failure may be seen as the nearly inevitable outcome of a normally valid autobiographical writing strategy being applied to a lifestyle better left out of the public spotlight.

IV. Colonel Cantwell's Last Stand

Of course, as an author, Hemingway was always at his best when nursing a grudge. There is a bitterness of complaint in stories like *The Sun Also Rises*, *A Farewell to Arms*, and "The Short Happy Life of Francis MacComber" that gives these works their biting edge, whether served up dry or dripping with approbation. By contrast, in pieces where he attempts to help his protagonists find greater meaning in their unhappy destinies (e.g., *For Whom the Bell Tolls*), the overall coherence of and precision in characterization falls apart. In portraying Cantwell in *Across the River*, the surreptitiously autobiographical author Hemingway was at least partially attempting to validate distressing experiences from the war and come to terms with certain poignant aspects of his own past. For this reason, when unkind reviews surfaced and critics disparaged the supposedly fictional Colonel and his supposedly fictional taste for fawning, compliant women, such razor perceptions were bound to cut through the literary façade to find their mark in the author himself. Once again, Hemingway would be nursing a grudge.

It is no coincidence that Hemingway both started and finished his novelette *The Old*

Man and the Sea over a relatively short period of time and specifically during the calendar year immediately following the publication of *Across the River and Into the Trees* (Reynolds xii). This somewhat overwritten story about the heroic but failed exploits of an old man attempting to land a gigantic marlin salvaged Hemingway's literary reputation and helped him claim the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1953 and the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1954. Undoubtedly, it would not have been the same novel if *Across the River* had not been so poorly received. For in fact, *The Old Man and the Sea*, understood by way of its most global interpretation, recounts Hemingway's frustration at watching his recent novel get destroyed by literary critics who thereby denied it the chance to become a popular success.

Before making a case for the presence of this thoroughly instantiated extended metaphor, comparing and contrasting the characterization of Cantwell in *Across the River* and Santiago in *The Old Man and the Sea* will prove particularly revealing. The two protagonists are not without similarities. Santiago has "deep-creased scars" in his hands from handling heavy fish (8), similar to the scarred hand of Cantwell. Santiago is also greatly experienced and knows the "tricks" of fishing (11), just as Cantwell is well-acquainted with the strategies of war. And just like the Colonel, the old fisherman is still powerful despite his age (15).

While these similarities show a marked affinity between the two men, of much greater interest are their differences. While Cantwell disparages his divorced wife, Santiago has taken down the picture of his apparently deceased wife from its place on the wall because "it made him too lonely to see it" (13). Furthermore, while Cantwell is sophisticated and proud, the old fisherman "was too simple to wonder when he had attained humility" (11). And while Cantwell reminisces incessantly about his past battles and is consumed by his romantic affair with a woman less than half his age, Santiago "no longer dreamed of storms, nor of women, nor of great occurrences" but "only dreamed of places now and of lions on the beach" (22).

Perhaps the most telling contrast of all is the difference in their respective attitudes toward food. Hemingway emphasizes repeatedly how small a role food plays in Santiago's existence. First it is recounted that "eating had bored" the old man (24) and, in that he knew he would not be able to eat a whole bonito, his appetite was limited. Concerning the consumption of the fish while on the boat, the narrator remarks: "He picked up a piece and put it in his mouth and chewed it slowly. It was not unpleasant" (55). For Santiago, eating is not mainly a pleasure but a chore, something that must be done despite lack of appetite so that the necessary work of fishing may continue. He eats this bonito, as he does the other meals at sea depicted in

the story, without lime, lemon, salt, or any other kind of added flavoring. Indeed, the bonito is not even cooked. It would be hard to imagine two stories that treat food and eating more differently than *Across the River* and *The Old Man and the Sea*.

When viewed as a whole, it is difficult not to take Hemingway's new and improved characterization strategy in *The Old Man and the Sea* as anything but a direct and proportional response to the most stinging criticism he had received for *Across the River*. Furthermore, the strategy worked. If the protagonist in his previous failed novel can be summed up as unlikable and unbelievable, Santiago is Cantwell's exact opposite. The scarred hands, stubborn strength, and wiliness are the same, but the appetites are gone, as is the all-consuming pride and anger at life's injustice. If Hemingway learned humility by having *Across the River* critically torn apart, he has expressed it well through the actions and attitudes of Santiago.

Furthermore, Santiago's characterization is not in any way inconsistent, as Cantwell's was. He is disciplined because he has to be and because he has been so all his life. It does not matter if he has been "eighty-four days without taking a fish" and is considered by others to be "*salao*, which is the worst form of unlucky" (7): he knows who he is and cannot be anyone else. In this sense, while Cantwell's internal contradictions become more apparent as *Across the River* progresses, creating an ever-deepening paradox for readers to somehow come to terms with, Santiago's identity is built up slowly and steadily through the book until, at the end of the story, the reader's understanding of the old man includes no contradictions whatsoever. The only thing to be puzzled over is the cruel nature of life itself. In this respect, the ending of *The Old Man and the Sea* is classic Hemingway, and no different from the ending of *Across the River*. Life is not fair and, even for those who have skill and *aficion*, ultimate disappointment awaits. The difference between the two stories lies entirely in the respective characterizations of the vanquished heroes: Santiago's personality is likable and coherent, while Cantwell's is not.

V. The Old Man and the Comeback Novel

When Hemingway published *Across the River and Into the Trees* in 1950, it had been ten years since the publication of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* in 1940. To make matters worse, Hemingway had almost won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1941 when *For Whom the Bell Tolls* was unanimously chosen by the selection committee only to be vetoed by the President of Columbia University (Reynolds xi). After this bittersweet experience of enjoying popular success unaccompanied by a proportionate level of critical acclaim, Hemingway spent ten years without pub-

lishing a major work of fiction. Admittedly, these were busy and eventful years by all accounts. The time period included editing work, traumatic experiences as a war correspondent (Baker 266), a London car crash, divorce from Marsha Gellhorn, marriage to Mary Welsh, a move to Cuba, and a trip to Italy (Reynolds xi). Nevertheless, when Hemingway began writing *Across the River and Into the Trees* in 1949, he was undoubtedly hoping for a critically acclaimed, best-selling novel that would help him break out of his slump and secure his literary reputation for good. In fact, "[s]hortly before its publication, [Hemingway] had felt that *Across the River and Into the Trees* might be his best book" (Hovey 190). When his novel was so quickly written off, it must have been a great shock to the author.

Hemingway's disappointment with the poor critical reception of his newest story set the stage for *The Old Man and the Sea*. The novelette is ostensibly nothing more than the tale of an old Cuban fisherman who attempts to land a huge marlin against all odds and succeeds, only to have it eaten by sharks before he can get the fish back to land. At a deeper level, it is the story of an old American novelist who attempts to produce a truly great novel after experiencing an unlikely love affair, only to have it scourged by the critics before the book can reach a popular audience. This interpretation was quick to emerge but has been downplayed by many Hemingway scholars. For example, Carlos Baker remarks: "Those off-the-cuff allegorists who suggested that there was, for example, a one-for-one correspondence between Santiago, his marlin, and the sharks and Hemingway, his fiction, and the critics seem to have been content to rest triumphantly on this perception" (Baker 322; cf. Cooperman 31-32).

In this non-denial denial, Baker grudgingly admits that there may be some truth to the idea but nevertheless maintains that such a metaphor is ultimately unimportant and, from the average reader's point of view, he is right. To imply that understanding specific events in Hemingway's life which may have helped to mold the story into its final form are a prerequisite condition for appreciation of Santiago's struggle is simply wrong. From a literary scholar's, point of view, however, even so-called "off-the-cuff perceptions" may potentially lead in valuable directions. Unless one follows such leads, one will never find out exactly where they lead to.

Of course, it is possible to claim that Hemingway had the story in mind long before *The Old Man and the Sea* was even written. As evidence for this, one might note that Hemingway published an *Esquire* article in 1936 that sketches a rough outline of a similar story:

An old man fishing alone in a skiff out of Cabanas hooked a great marlin that, on the heavy sashcord handline, pulled the skiff far out to sea. Two days later the old man was picked up by fishermen 60 miles to the eastward, the head and forward part of the marlin lashed alongside. What was left of the fish, less than half, weighed 800 pounds. The old man had stayed with him a day, a night, a day and another night while the fish swam deep and pulled the boat. When he had come up the old man had pulled the boat up on him and harpooned him. Lashed alongside the sharks had hit him and the old man had fought them, stabbing at them, lunging at them with an oar until he was exhausted and the sharks had eaten all they could hold. He was crying in the boat when the fishermen picked him up, half crazy from his loss, and the sharks were still circling the boat. ("Blue Water" 31)

Given that Hemingway already had the basic idea for the story in mind many years before he had even written *Across the River and Into the Trees*, one might assert that interpretations showing the sharks to be literary critics are unfounded. Such an assertion, however, does not take into consideration the extent to which the story has been changed from its original form, as even Baker readily admits (Baker 295). Most noticeably, the rescued old man in the original story is despondent, "half-crazy," and could not get home by himself. In contrast, Hemingway's Santiago overcomes his despair, squarely shoulders the burden of his bitter defeat, and returns home with dignity intact.

It should not be surprising that Hemingway would adapt the story in such a way. Concerning the art of fiction, he once commented, "find what gave you the emotion; what the action was that gave you the excitement. Then write it down making it clear so that the reader can see it too" (*By-line* 219). Perhaps the reason he had waited so long to turn the story published in *Esquire* into a full-scale literary work was that he had not been able to sufficiently identify with the old fisherman's great joy at capturing the huge marlin only to have it eaten by sharks. Once the critics of *Across the River* provided him with the appropriate emotional state of mind for writing such a story, the previously published *Esquire* piece offered an exceptionally apt *objective correlative*³ for it. Hemingway's intense emotional response to what he perceived as unjust criticism of *Across the River* surely provided ample motivation for writing. The author's suddenly renewed ability to produce a complete and emotionally satisfying work in an exceedingly short period of time is difficult to explain in any other way.

At this point, however, some disclaimers are in order. To say that Hemingway has grounded much of his depiction of events in the CRITICS ARE SHARKS metaphor is not to intimate that there are no other possible metaphorical or symbolic readings for the story. Heming-

way always sought to embed meanings on multiple levels. Consequently, no claims can be made that the presence of a certain metaphor eliminates the possibility that other metaphors are at work. To cite just one example, many scholars have noted (and debated) the import of Christian symbolism in *The Old Man and the Sea* (e.g., Baker 319; Cooperman 50-51; Waldmeir 28-29; Bloom 2). In no way does accepting the instantiation of the CRITICS ARE SHARKS metaphor make alternative understandings such as this one impossible.

Furthermore, while some scholars might find it disagreeable or even embarrassing to delve deeply into an author's underlying metaphorical artifices, such unwillingness to examine the conceptual underpinnings of a famous literary work is difficult to understand, given their position. To the extent that readers, critics, and literary scholars are all endowed with the same basic psychological and intellectual makeup as authors, it is only natural that authors should attempt to disguise their tricks and that those who read the works will nevertheless sometimes uncover them. While the general public may allow magicians to keep their trade secrets to themselves, according noted authors similar deference goes counter to the very idea of literary scholarship. It is just such close scrutiny that will prevent serious aesthetic inquiry from descending to the level of unreflective promotion.

Joseph Waldmeir emphasizes this very fact when he asserts that "[i]n recent years, critics have become increasingly suspicious that it is necessary to read Ernest Hemingway's work on the symbolic as well as the story level in order to gain a full appreciation of its art" (Waldmeir 27). If this is true when surveying Hemingway's works generally, it is even more crucial in the case of *The Old Man and the Sea*. Thorough analysis of the minutely embedded CRITICS ARE SHARKS metaphor will not only bring to light valuable insights into Hemingway's views on literature and the role of the artist, but will even reveal a surreptitious defense of his oeuvre.

VI. Of Critics and Sharks: An Analysis of the Extended Metaphor

When the old man is introduced at the beginning of the story, he is portrayed as a once great fisherman who is down on his luck. There is an obvious parallel with Hemingway's own situation as an author in this formulation. When the boy asks him where he is going to fish, Santiago responds that he will go "far out" (11; cf. 25), a place where other fishing boats tend not to go. The old man hopes to catch a big fish there but the boy is skeptical, asking him, "But are you strong enough now for a truly big fish?" to which Santiago replies that he thinks so. At the end of the story, after the fish has been lost to the sharks, the old man feels "sorry that

[he] went too far out" (106), says to himself, "[y]ou violated your luck when you went too far outside" (106), and finally realizes that he was beaten precisely because he went "too far out" (110). Through these passages, Hemingway indicates that he has written an ambitious novel that includes ideas or subjects that other authors to that point had not yet addressed (cf. Cooperman 51-52). Indeed, in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech, he expressed his ideas concerning the literary author's role in just such a way: "It is because we have had such great writers in the past that a writer is driven far out past where he can go, out to where no one can help him" ("Acceptance" 501).

The above comment reveals clearly that Hemingway felt his great literary ambition had taken him outside of his previous safety zone and thus made him a target for critics. The moral seems to be that overly creative authors should not expect even-handed critiques of their best and most innovative pieces. This viewpoint, taken at face value, implies that criticisms which had been leveled at Hemingway's fiction did not stem from actual faults in specific works, but rather from the inability of critics to appreciate cutting-edge writing. While this rationalization shows an extremely defensive side of Hemingway the artist, the fact that he had already responded to the criticisms leveled and adjusted characterization strategies accordingly (as mentioned in section IV) shows that the "old man" was still capable of learning from the close scrutiny of the critics even if he could not bring himself to accept their ideas as legitimate.

The sharks portrayed in the story do indeed seem to be the merciless critics that attacked his novel in turn at the first scent of blood. In the introductory segment of the book, there is a brief description of a "shark factory" from which a foul odor emanates. In this gratuitously vivid passage, Hemingway seems to take special pleasure in mentioning how sharks there "were hoisted on a block and tackle, their livers removed, their fins cut off and their hides skinned out and their flesh cut into strips for salting" (9). Later in the book, as well, when Santiago attempts to protect the carcass of the dead marlin from a procession of sharks, he readies his harpoon and then hits the shark "without hope but with resolution and complete malignancy" (94). As the mutilation of the fish continues, Santiago reflects that "[w]hen the fish had been hit it was as though he himself were hit" (96).

The old man is also quick to insult the sharks, commenting that once they "had the scent and were excited" they would get caught up in "the stupidity of their great hunger" (100). Finally, Santiago has lost his harpoon and can only club at the vicious predators until the narrator comments, "The shark let go and rolled away. That was the last shark of the pack that

came. There was nothing more for them to eat" (109). Hemingway certainly felt the same way about the thorough and very personal criticism leveled at his previous novel. In reshaping the story as he does, Hemingway transforms sharks from fearless predators at the top of the sea's food chain into dirty, cowardly scavengers that will go so far as to steal a prize fish from an old man who had landed it fairly in an honest man-fish duel. Such a pejorative depiction is, of course, unfair to sharks, but perhaps puts the "scavenging" role of literary critics in the proper perspective.

That Hemingway, despite the disparaging reviews, felt his novel was of exceptional literary worth is evident from his frequent references to the high quality of the marlin he has caught. After Santiago eats a bit of it, the narrator remarks that "There was no stringiness in it and he knew that it would bring the highest price in the market" (99). In another passage, the old man wonders, "How many people will he feed[?]", an obvious reference to the enjoyment and enlightenment readers often experience when a new novel meets with popular success. Even from the outset, the old man estimated it to be over "fifteen hundred pounds" and begins to calculate his profits at "thirty cents a pound" (90). If *Across the River and Into the Trees* had turned out to be the exceptional novel Hemingway had thought it was, naturally it would have made a lot of money for him. A string of bad reviews from the literary "sharks" effectively extinguished any possibility of realizing such a windfall.

In one passage, Hemingway begins sharing some of his inner qualms about being a writer. After landing the great marlin, Santiago wonders if perhaps "it was a sin to kill the fish[?]" (97). He comes to the conclusion that it was a sin but that it could be justified by the way it provided for his own sustenance and fed many other people. After a bit more reflection, he concludes that he has killed the fish not only for food but "for pride and because [he was] a fisherman" (97). Later though, after the sharks have been feeding for a time, he reflects, "I wish it were a dream and I had never hooked him. I'm sorry about it, fish. It makes everything wrong" (102).

Of course, Hemingway had always drawn from his own background in creating his fiction and it is certain that many people he knew, both acquaintances and friends, had been hurt through his portrayals of them. In that much of his previous writing had been successful, Hemingway had been able to rationalize away any guilt that he may have felt in treating people he knew in such a way by asserting that the creation of a great work of literature makes any accusations of unfairness or bad feelings by those depicted worthwhile in the end. Besides, it

was his profession, after all. The people who had ended up written into his stories should have realized that it might happen. When such a novel comes to be seen as a failure, however, the usual rationalizations cannot assuage a guilty conscience so easily.

Hemingway even communicates a clear view of the metaphorical artifice used in his writing strategy. Through his explication of Santiago's clever technique for keeping multiple fishing lines in the water, Hemingway surreptitiously describes his habit of embedding metaphor at 'multiple levels' so as to create more chances for readers to happen upon it: "He kept [the lines] straighter than anyone did, so that at each level in the darkness of the stream there would be bait waiting exactly where he wished it to be for any fish that swam there" (24). Whether Hemingway expected readers to consciously recognize his metaphors as such is a question open for debate, but the fact that he relied on metaphor to add interest and create symbolic resonance in his works should be an issue beyond dispute.

Of course, metaphor cannot be characterized as a thoroughgoing set of strict correspondences that pertain without exception, but as a pairing of conceptual domains or narrative frames that display various compelling if limited similarities. In the case of extended metaphor, if the similarities that harmonize the two metaphorical domains are recognized to a great enough extent, the fact of the metaphorical instantiation in the text becomes nearly impossible to contradict. Many subtle details of depiction in *The Old Man and the Sea* have been offered as evidence for the claim that the CRITICS ARE SHARKS metaphor has been thoughtfully written into the story. While it is not the only metaphor, and may not even be the most important one depending on one's viewpoint, denying its presence is as futile as avoiding its interpretation is problematical. Certainly, Hemingway was well aware of the metaphors he consistently and inconspicuously embedded in his stories. That his admission of such a strategy is communicated metaphorically through the passage just mentioned is extremely fitting.

VII. Analyzing Hemingway's Metaphorical Appeal

If the marlin represents *Across the River* and the sharks are the critics that have destroyed it before it could be taken to market, why does Hemingway so consistently refer to the boy as he fishes and what can be made of the frequent references to "lions on the beach"? While it is possible that these metaphors have nothing to do with the CRITICS ARE SHARKS metaphor, attempting to interpret them as part of this overarching interpretation may be just what is necessary to make sense of them.

Santiago has caught great fish many times before and, on two memorable occasions has even succeeded in catching fish of more than a thousand pounds (59) but he did not do it alone. For this reason, he frequently wishes that the boy, Manolin, had been along with him on the voyage depicted (42, 45, 47, 49, 53, 58, 77). The references to the boy undoubtedly connote a strong desire on the old man's part to have the vigor of youth with him as he fishes. In terms of Hemingway as a novelist, his most successful works were written during his (relative) youth and often portrayed youthful protagonists such as Nick Adams, Frederic Henry, and Jake Barnes. Hemingway, who by 1950 was an older man with an older man's experiences, was trying to write stories without direct access to the fresh insights of youth.

The book's poor reviews had also revealed that his literary license to write about passionate love for a young woman had expired; Cantwell's romance, while technically legal, was deemed vaguely unhealthy by readers and critics of the time. As Hovey has suggested, when Hemingway wrote *Across the River and Into the Trees*, he was attempting to write seriously about love but, due to the protagonist's advanced age, the author had difficulty in accomplishing it believably. "If only the boy had been along," at least partly expresses Hemingway's wish that he had been better positioned to write the perfect love story from a young person's point of view. If only Frederic Henry or Jake Barnes had still been available, *Across the River and Into the Trees* might have succeeded.

Unfortunately for the novel, Hemingway's youth was already behind him. There is an intriguing quote at one point in the story in which Santiago casually observes that "The setting of the sun is a difficult time for all fish" (69). While it is not out of the question that an experienced sailor like Santiago might indeed be attuned to unusual aspects of the psychology of marine life, this flat assertion strikes the reader as too all-encompassing to be true. Surely there must be *some fish* that do not feel the sunset to be a difficult time. But Hemingway's sunset is a metaphorical sunset just as his fish do not really refer to fish at all, but to humans.

Nearly everyone is bound to experience discomfort at the sunset of life; that is, the idea of death will be disturbing, even to someone like Santiago, who would be unlikely to mention the subject directly but can nevertheless commiserate metaphorically about the fading of the day with the distressed marine life around him. Hemingway himself, 51 at the time he wrote *The Old Man and the Sea* and already afflicted with numerous chronic health problems, would be dead in ten years time, committing suicide as his physical condition steadily worsened. As he sensed the end of his life approaching, what were his dreams? What was he hoping for? A

few answers, not surprisingly, can be found in the narrator's comments concerning Santiago.

As has already been mentioned, the old man no longer dreamed of storms or women or great fish, but of places and "lions on the beach" (22). He had seen the white beaches of Africa when he was a boy and now, as an old man, they return to him in his dreams. "Dreams," when spoken of metaphorically, represent either prophetic insights or personal aspirations, or both. In Hemingway's case, what did he experience in his youth that now he might hope to encounter again? What would he be aspiring to? If he is trying to play the prophet here, what kind of prophecy do the lions in Santiago's dream represent? In fact, the old man makes the question explicit for the reader when he expresses it directly: "I wish [the marlin] would sleep and dream about the lions, he thought. Why are the lions the main thing that is left?" (62) To further emphasize this point and make the reader all the more curious about the unproffered answer to this tantalizing question, the book ends with the simple yet opaque observation, "The old man was dreaming about lions" (117).

This "lion symbolism," an extensively elaborated subtext of Hemingway's story, is undoubtedly a multivalent image that instills highly diffused yet evocative overtones into the text. Nevertheless, to make the observation that the image is complex should not discourage the scholar from attempting to detect the major facets that give it such great semantic power.

In literary terms, "lionization" refers to admission into the pantheon of great historical writers. Furthermore, lions have already appeared on a few occasions in some of Hemingway's earlier works, most notably "The Short Happy Life of Francis MacComber," a story that has been regarded as one of Hemingway's best. Aside from bringing to mind Hemingway's more memorable earlier works, lions also subtly recall Hemingway's reputation as a big-game hunter and adventurer. That this image had been carefully managed is beyond doubt. Nevertheless, Hemingway's lions cannot but bring to mind the unique public persona which had caused him to stand out from the more languid dispositions typical of the literati. In that Hemingway's heroes had always contained at least some personality traits and characteristics of the author himself, Santiago would already have been linked to Hemingway in the mind of readers who had followed his career to any extent. Now, through this new image, Hemingway has implicitly connected lions with his own identity, using Santiago's depiction as the means to accomplish the association.

Hemingway's lion symbolism reveals and evokes just what he hopes it will while thoroughly concealing conclusive evidence that such symbolism has been purposefully instantiated

or is even present in the story. Did the Nobel Prize judges notice the hidden meaning in *The Old Man and the Sea* or did the effects remain entirely subliminal? During the awards ceremony, presenter Anders Österling made the following comment:

Neither Melville nor Hemingway wanted to create an allegory; the salt ocean depths with all their monsters are sufficiently rewarding as a poetic element. But with different means, those of romanticism and of realism, they both attain the same theme—a man's capacity of endurance and, if need be, of at least daring the impossible. (Österling 499)

It is difficult to tell from such a statement whether the metaphor had been perceived or not. On the one hand, it is quite possible that members of the Nobel Prize committee read *The Old Man and the Sea* and never consciously recognized the metaphorical subtext for what it was. It seems equally plausible that they may have appreciated the extended metaphor, whether explicitly or implicitly, but chose not to admit it publicly. In either case, it can only be considered appropriate that Hemingway was "lionized" with the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1954. If this author, who had succeeded precisely by concealing his metaphor-rich semantic strategy, finally persuaded judges to select him using an extended metaphor hidden in one of the works they were judging, then Hemingway's talent was surely deserving of the award.

Hovey very correctly notes, "[w]ith *The Old Man and the Sea*, Hemingway surprised us that somehow he had regained control of his art. Out of his inner conflicts as man and artist he achieved a sweet harmony which makes this, in a classical sense, the sweetest and most serene of his works" (Hovey 191). That such "harmony" should have emerged out of the bitterness of watching a previous story fail is an irony, but there is nothing ironic about the success of *The Old Man and the Sea* itself, or in the awards that Hemingway's successful comeback novel apparently prepared the way for. Perhaps on some occasions, life *is* fair. Perhaps skill and *afición* do occasionally receive their fitting rewards, despite Hemingway's persistently pessimistic intimations to the contrary.

Notes

¹ The title of the story alludes to the dying words of US Civil War Confederate General Stonewall Jackson. Cantwell invokes Jackson's memory as he himself is dying in the back seat of a car at the end of the story (*Across* 307).

² At the outset, there is mention of the Tagliamento, a river that plays a key role in *A Farewell to Arms*, one of Hemingway's earlier novels. Recalling the battle mentioned in the story, the Colonel reminisces about his efforts in defending Venice in World War I (*Across* 12). During a brief dialogue between the Colonel and his driver, Cantwell recommends that one should never build churches 800 yards away from a bridge or, during wartime, the church will be destroyed in attempts to bomb the bridge. The bridges mentioned in this short passage seem to function mainly as previously important tactical landmarks, although metonymically they do signal that Italy is still recovering from the Second World War. In another depiction of a tactically important bridge, the narrator describes the taking of Paris and criticizes the incompetence of the German "office workers" that were left behind because they failed in their duty to blow the Porte de Saint Cloud bridge (*Across* 140).

³ The term "objective correlative" was coined by T.S. Eliot. The poet explained the idea to mean "a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of a particular emotion" (Chadwick 1).

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Hemingway's Iceberg Sinks: Interpreting the Critical Failure of *Across the River and Into the Trees*

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