

Cambridge University Press

978-1- 107-10982-7 - Hemingway, Style, and the Art of Emotion

David Wyatt

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## Introduction

### Hemingway Unbound

In mid-summer of 1961, a shrimp boat left Havana harbor and headed for Tampa. The boxes in its hold contained handwritten and typed manuscripts, galleys, letters, postcards, photographs – even a few stray bullfight tickets. After arriving in Florida, the boxes eventually made their way to a storage facility in Waltham, Massachusetts, and, in 1980, to the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston. The contents of those boxes were to effect a sea change in our understanding of the achievement of one of America's greatest writers.

Fidel Castro had come to power in Cuba a few years earlier, in 1959. While Ernest and Mary Hemingway were on good terms with Castro – he won a fishing contest sponsored by Hemingway in 1960 – they quickly saw that life in a revolutionary Cuba might become untenable. They began to make plans for a permanent relocation from their home in the hills above Havana, the Finca Vigía, a move interrupted by Hemingway's suicide on July 2, 1961, in Ketchum, Idaho.

The United States had attempted to invade Cuba at the Bay of Pigs three months before Hemingway took his own life. At this extreme low point in Cuban-American relations, Mary Hemingway was faced with the challenge of re-entering Cuba in order to recover her husband's belongings. Her friend William Walton had strong ties to the Kennedy family; Walton spoke to President Kennedy, passage was quickly arranged, and Mary and her assistants returned to the Finca in late July.

The Cuban government had already informed Mary that it intended to appropriate the Finca Vigía and convert it into a museum. It was agreed that Mary could remove papers and personal effects from the Finca and from a Havana bank vault. In a steel file in the library, she found an envelope on which was typed: "IMPORTANT To Be Opened in Case of My Death Ernest Hemingway May 24, 1958." The letter inside directed his executors not to publish any "letters written by me during my lifetime." But the hoard of paper argued otherwise, testifying to a concern for

posterity, and the instructions were disregarded. Mary and her team attempted to separate “the worthy from the worthless,” consigning bank books, check stubs, old magazines and newspapers, and unanswered correspondence to a bonfire below the tennis courts.

As a result of the haste imposed upon Mary’s rescue mission, virtually all of Hemingway’s library of 9,000 volumes and a significant number of letters and manuscripts had to be left behind. Among the most valuable items later discovered in the basement of the Finca was a pencil draft of an epilogue to *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.

In April 1962, Mary was invited to a White House party for Nobel Prize winners; a photograph of the occasion shows her beaming up at an elegantly dressed president. Two years later, she offered the Hemingway papers to the Kennedy Library. A 1968 exchange of letters between Mary and Jacqueline Kennedy sealed the deal, and, in 1972, the papers began arriving at the library’s temporary storage facility in Waltham, Massachusetts. The papers were first opened to general research in 1975 and found their permanent home in Boston when the library building was dedicated in 1980.

When school is on and I am teaching at the University of Maryland, I spend Tuesday and Wednesday nights with Howard Norman and Jane Shore in their home in Chevy Chase. Howard’s insomnia has made him especially susceptible to Elizabeth Bishop’s daunting admonition, “Read ALL of somebody.” On any given morning Howard greets me with a cup of coffee and the fruits of his nocturnal reading, a line from Max Frisch, an anecdote from Conrad, a letter by Siegfried Sassoon.

One morning early in the fall of 2011, Howard adverted to my recent summer reading project. At the age of sixty-two, and finding myself between books, I had cast about for something to do and had decided to work my way through the thirty-eight plays in *The Norton Shakespeare*. “OK – you like these big reading projects,” Howard said. “Why not spend a summer reading Hemingway?” He likes to give me these assignments as much as I like to fulfill them, and, since I had been writing about and teaching Hemingway’s work for more than forty years, I decided to give it a go.

By the end of my summer of reading, I had come to believe that the Hemingway reader must inevitably fare forward, as I had, under the sway of three emotional states: anxiety, embarrassment, and remorse. One is anxious about what will happen to a character; one is embarrassed by how a character behaves; or one is remorseful for what a character has done or

become. These emotions are not easily separated and can often coexist – they could, indeed, be said to comprise a “Hemingway-complex.” By virtue of emphasis and consistency, however, they are experienced as sequential and belong successively to the early, the middle, and the late career. Catherine Barkley’s “I see me dead in it” gives way, in the early thirties, to Robert Wilson’s feeling “very embarrassed,” which is then supplanted in *The Garden of Eden* by an aging writer’s looking back on the story of his early life with feelings of “terrible remorse.”

*For Whom the Bell Tolls* stands apart from this pattern as the one work in which Hemingway summoned each of these feelings in order to greet them with a motion toward forgiveness. Admiring this novel as I do, and acknowledging that it marks only the end of the middle of the journey, I would like to believe of it, and of the man who wrote it, something written on a “manuscript fragment” from the novel in Hemingway’s hand: “People are not as they end up (finish) but as they are in the finest point they ever reach.” The novel he is now writing, Hemingway ventures, can be likened to an “altimeter which registers the ultimate height that is reached.” In this lovely fantasy, the finest thing a man does along the way matters more than how he might “end up.”

What I had discovered in my reading is that Hemingway’s writing engages in a career-long struggle with emotional vulnerability. Given the obvious resistance to expressed emotion in the early work, the claim may seem counterintuitive. But, even during the period when Hemingway appeared to be most devoted to not talking about thoughts and feelings, his “theory” of “the omitted” worked, as he himself argues, to make people “feel more.” The early style does not embrace emotional reticence but sets out, instead, to measure the cost of it. As Hemingway’s characters build defenses – their necessary fictions – in order to protect themselves, Hemingway the author remains at once empathetic toward and critical of these strategies.

My book, therefore, challenges a number of long-held beliefs about the structure of Hemingway’s career. I argue, in brief, that, as a writer, Hemingway changed; that his attempt to work through the “Hemingway-complex” required a shift away from his early art of omission and toward an art of inclusion; and that this development was, in many ways, a change for the better.

The veneration of the iceberg principle has worked to obscure the outlines of this development and has encouraged an overinvestment in the features of Hemingway’s early style. But Hemingway’s ongoing act of self-revision requires us to give equal weight to the nonfictional

Cambridge University Press

978-1- 107-10982-7 - Hemingway, Style, and the Art of Emotion

David Wyatt

Excerpt

[More information](#)

experiments of the 1930s, to the often-undervalued *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and to the late, unfinished projects, *The Garden of Eden* and *A Moveable Feast*. *Revision* itself becomes a major subject and feature of the career, with Hemingway's continual rewritings and eventual not-finishings becoming a big part of the story.

By the time I finished re-reading Hemingway, the count of his published works had risen to thirty-five. Although he has been dead for more than fifty years, books by Hemingway continue to appear, with the latest additions to the canon being the Hemingway Library Edition of *A Farewell to Arms* (2012), the second volume of the Cambridge edition of *The Letters of Ernest Hemingway* (2103), and the Hemingway Library Edition of *The Sun Also Rises* (2014). Eighteen of Hemingway's thirty-five published works have in fact been issued posthumously, including such beloved books as *A Moveable Feast* (1964) and obscurities like *Dateline Toronto: The Complete "Toronto Star" Dispatches, 1920–1924* (1985).

Once I had assembled my stack of books, I read straight through the list in the order of publication. Of course, the order of publication does not reflect the order of composition, not, at least, with the books published after the Second World War. Up through *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940), Hemingway wrote a book and then published it. During the twenty-one years of life left to him after 1940, however, only four books by Hemingway were published – *Men at War* (1942), *Across the River and into the Trees* (1950), *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952), and *The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway* (1954) – and the two novels on this list were themselves quarried from an ongoing and unfinished work. Books brought to market out of the manuscripts Hemingway left behind have appeared and will appear, it perhaps goes without saying, with no regard to when they may have been composed.

To re-enter Hemingway's vast achievement was then to find myself carried back to my early fascination with how things end and begin. My 1977 essay "Hemingway's Uncanny Beginnings" had opened with the following sentences:

Hemingway had a hard time imagining beginnings but an easy time inventing ends. Middles challenge him most of all. His works constantly anticipate, when they do not prematurely achieve, the sense of an ending.

While the deficiencies of such unqualified assertions may announce themselves all too obviously, the operative terms – beginnings, ends, middles – continue to govern my sense of the Hemingway project. Despite my tone

Cambridge University Press

978-1- 107-10982-7 - Hemingway, Style, and the Art of Emotion

David Wyatt

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## Introduction

5

of youthful certainty, the claims made then still appear to me to be more or less accurate. There is no need to turn upon an earlier formulation, however much I might now put it differently. One of the central arguments of the present book is that a writer's achievement acquires its meaning and force in respect to prior work he refigures but does not renounce. The meaning of such an achievement, as Robert Penn Warren maintains, is not to be found in any one writing event but in "the motion through the event." Like every ambitious artist, Hemingway wanted to control the shape of this motion, and what made beginnings "hard" and endings "easy" for him – the two adjectives are borrowed from the final exchange in "Indian Camp" – was his acute awareness that how things end was something over which the self has far more say than it does over how they begin.

Given that Hemingway's endings are usually either sad, or bathetic, or downright tragic – and that they are *entailed in his beginnings* – his reader is therefore called upon to fare forward with an almost crushing burden of awareness. Insofar as the word "courage" has its place here, it is to the reading experience that it should be applied. The kind of courage Hemingway demands of his reader is, however, no more and no less than the kind of courage anyone must summon in order to live in a world where, as he wrote in *Death in the Afternoon*, "all stories, if continued far enough, end in death."

That so many of Hemingway's books have been published posthumously has become one of the most arresting and ambiguous features of his story. The two initial gifts to readers from beyond the grave, *A Moveable Feast* and *Islands in the Stream*, issued in 1964 and in 1970, did not, however, draw particular attention to this fact. But with the opening of the Hemingway Papers to research in 1975, a new Hemingway began to loom into view. The archive revealed a post-Second World War productivity giving the lie to any sense of Hemingway as a late-life burnt-out case. As these papers were then edited into books by various hands and brought into print, the obvious obsession with endings *in* the work became the central question *about* the work. When could Hemingway's writing be said to have actually ended?

In *A Second Flowering*, Malcolm Cowley argues that it ended with *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and that Hemingway lacked the capacity for "growth after middle age." Rose Marie Burwell has written the most compelling rebuttal to Cowley's claim. In *Hemingway: The Postwar Years and the Posthumous Novels* (1996), she recovers fifteen years of imaginative work

Cambridge University Press

978-1- 107-10982-7 - Hemingway, Style, and the Art of Emotion

David Wyatt

Excerpt

[More information](#)

from the neglect to which it can all too easily be consigned. It is not true, Burwell's research shows, that Hemingway stopped growing after the war. What he did do was to stop publishing. As early as 1931, he wrote in a letter to a bibliographer: "The first right that a man writing has is the choice of what he will publish."

During "The Final Years," as Michael Reynolds calls them, Hemingway became a master of looking back. By 1944, according to Reynolds, "Hemingway's life was becoming his story." Not in the obvious sense that a man's writing forms a sort of spilt autobiography. The "life" that was becoming the "story" was Hemingway's prewar life, and Hemingway returned upon it not so much in order to renarrate it as to judge it. The "sizable component of melancholy" Earl Rovit and Gerry Brenner locate in the postwar writing arises from this ongoing ordeal. When Hemingway decided against the publication of his postwar findings, he did so in order to protect both himself and the people he loved from the harsher consequences of his ongoing act of last judgment.

In deciding not to bring to market the vast and interconnected writing projects of the postwar years, Hemingway left behind a work steeped in "the most terrible nostalgia anyone has ever had." It is Marita who says to David Bourne "you write with the most terrible nostalgia anyone has ever had," and she says this to him in the manuscript of *The Garden of Eden*, on page four in Folder 21, Box 34. Only someone who has read through the full manuscript of the novel, one abridged and published as *The Garden of Eden* in 1986, will have seen these words. The existence of this manuscript, along with the many others donated by Mary Hemingway to the Kennedy Library, has converted the Hemingway Room on the fifth floor of the black-and-white building overlooking Boston Harbor into a site of pilgrimage. Early on in my researches for the present book, I knew I would have to go to Boston and to spend some time in that room.

On the first Thursday in July 2012, I parked my car in front of the Kennedy Library and walked across the sizzling parking lot. Once inside, I was taken to an elevator where a guard punched the button for the floor marked "Research." After signing in, I was then ushered upstairs to the Hemingway Room. The room is kept locked, so whenever I exited or entered it, I had to be accompanied by a librarian.

The room is triangular in shape, with a wall of windows overlooking the harbor forming the hypotenuse. A researcher works at one of the three cherry tables that run alongside the windows. In the middle of the room lies the skin of the lion Mary shot on safari in 1953. Next to a couch are two

Cambridge University Press

978-1- 107-10982-7 - Hemingway, Style, and the Art of Emotion

David Wyatt

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## Introduction

7

armchairs, and, between the chairs, on a small table, sit two glasses filled with fake ice cubes and an empty bottle of Pernod.

In this quaint and cozy room of only five hundred square feet, what really matters are the contents of the two interior walls. These walls contain 3,000 linear feet of shelf space. On one wall is gathered a collection of the books published by and about Hemingway. On the other wall sit more than one hundred green boxes. The Ernest Hemingway Personal Papers contain forty-five boxes labeled “Manuscripts” and thirty-four boxes labeled “Correspondence.” The remaining boxes contain newspaper clippings and “other material,” copies of material still being held at the Finca Vigía, and incoming correspondence.

Once admitted, a researcher need only reach for any box he wishes to examine. The boxes contain photocopies of all the Hemingway manuscripts held by the library; the originals are held in “the vault.” To open a box is to find a letter, a handwritten draft, a typescript, galleys, notes written by Hemingway to himself, and, on the front and the back and in the corners of many pages, the scribbled sums of figures – usually of accumulating word counts – Hemingway was in the habit of adding up. Each manuscript is given an identification number, with items varying in length from one page to a complete draft of a novel.

The contents of the boxes destabilize virtually everything bound in covers on the facing shelves: Hemingway Bound faces Hemingway Unbound. The boxes reveal a canon unbound in two important ways: first, because the books published during Hemingway’s lifetime were heavily revised by the author himself and so exist in a multiplicity of forms; and second, because the thousands of pages left unbound at Hemingway’s death continue to solicit the attentions of editors who continue to gather them between covers. Given the riches contained in the boxes, then, there appears to be no foreseeable end to the process of processing Hemingway.

Two examples may suffice. *A Farewell to Arms* was published in 1929 and became justly famous for its ending, in which Catherine Barkley dies in childbirth and Frederic Henry walks home alone in the rain. By the mid-1970s, as the Hemingway papers became widely available to scholars, it was then discovered that this ending was by no means the original one. Hemingway worked toward it by trying out and rejecting more than forty variant endings, and, as Bernard Oldsey and Michael Reynolds drew attention to this effort, the alternatives considered and rejected became the seven-eighths of the iceberg shadowing the meaning of the published ending. It was perhaps inevitable that Hemingway’s grandson



Cambridge University Press

978-1- 107-10982-7 - Hemingway, Style, and the Art of Emotion

David Wyatt

Excerpt

[More information](#)

would bring out in 2012 *A Farewell to Arms: The Hemingway Library Edition*, a volume containing forty-seven “alternative endings.” The question of which edition of the novel to read or to assign to students suddenly became an open one.

When I speak of the work Hemingway left behind as “unfinished,” I mean to refer to the writing he did not choose to submit to publication. Burwell numbers the unfinished works at four. At the time of her writing, in the mid-1990s, three of these works had been published, *A Moveable Feast*, *Islands in the Stream*, and *The Garden of Eden*. “Half of the fourth work, the African book,” Burwell writes, “was excerpted in magazines; but it remains unedited, and there seem to be no plans for book publication.” Three years after the appearance of her study, the African book was published, as *True at First Light*.

Then, in 2005, the African book was published again.

The two scholars who brought out *Under Kilimanjaro* did so with the intention of providing “a complete reading text of Ernest Hemingway’s manuscript based on his second East African safari.” Describing *True at First Light* as “an abridged version of the work,” they attempted to come “as close as we could come to what we think its author might have hoped to publish.” Seán Hemingway’s 2009 “Restored Edition” of *A Moveable Feast* attempts much the same thing. But the ongoing publication of books never finally edited by their author argues rather for the possibility of an unending series of *re*-editings, as Hemingway relatives and scholars vie to impose upon the career their preferred version of “closure.” A respect for what an author might have hoped to publish appears to have its limits, however, since neither edition of the African book chooses to end with the ending Hemingway actually wrote, a sentence stopping with a preposition: “‘That’s too bad,’ I said, and I remembered the old days and how you looked forward to the one one beyond all price in.”

“One one,” Hemingway writes. Surely, in revising, he would have separated these two words with a comma and have found a way to end his sentence and his story. But he did not do so. The unfinished sentence at the end of the African manuscript serves as a reminder that none of the endings of Hemingway’s posthumously published books was supplied by Hemingway himself.

In *The Sun Also Rises*, as Jake Barnes instructs Brett Ashley in how to watch a bullfight, she comes to see it as “something that was going on with a definite end, and less of a spectacle with unexplained horrors.” Hemingway liked to give his stories a definite end. His endings have about them the sense of an expectation fulfilled. Such endings helped to



compensate for the uncertainties of setting out and for the unexplainable horrors encountered along the way.

The editors who have attempted to supply endings for the books Hemingway did not manage to finish have, for the most part, produced works of considerable beauty and power. Taken together, their achievements have supplied a new ending to the Hemingway story. Far from closing that story down, however, these posthumous editions have only succeeded in opening it up. Hemingway's devoted readers are now required to return, as the dying writer Harry Walden does in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," to "*the start of all he was to do*." To return to the start of Hemingway's career and to read forward in the full knowledge of how it ended is to honor what has already been learned in reading any one of Hemingway's extended fictions: that any sense of any ending is to be understood as the earned consequence of how it all began. So, I begin where Hemingway as a writer himself began, with the first sentence in the first story in his first strong book: "At the lake shore there was another rowboat drawn up."

Cambridge University Press  
978-1- 107-10982-7 - Hemingway, Style, and the Art of Emotion  
David Wyatt  
Excerpt  
[More information](#)

---