

Posing Renata : The “Accidents of Terrain” in Hemingway’s *Across the River and into the Trees*

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Allow me to preface this paper with some brief comments on the research that has been done on this novel. I do believe that much of the criticism has been almost incestuous in its attentions to Papa the writer and his infatuation with Adriana without consideration of the work itself by itself.¹ Critics have routinely cringed at the verbal exchanges between the Colonel and Renata, automatically exchanging the Colonel and Renata for Ernest and Adriana. This in spite of the fact that — as I believe — there is ample evidence that the text involved much more than Ernest and his infatuation with an eighteen year old girl. This incestuous obsession on the part of many Hemingway critics is manifest in the fact that they have routinely and even gleefully gone out of their way to attack Adriana on everything she ever created : not only her poetry and her personal memoirs, but her art work and especially the cover that she did for *Across the River and Into the Trees* : an area out of the range of expertise of most literary scholars anyway. The critics seem to be saying in effect : How dare this young upstart interfere with our Papa! And proceed to tear her apart. Martha Gellhorn had to go into a form of literary exile in England in order to try to survive a similar fate. And it was only thanks to her natural aggressiveness and willingness to suffer the strain that she was able to overcome her association with Hemingway to be herself and her own kind of writer.

By way of a preface to my next comments — and this will not take us too far afield... Robert Frost once received a small collection of poems from a young aspiring poet. And after giving the work some thought he wrote back pretty much in keeping with the Howellsian realist credo, say-

ing in effect that, "If you have never ridden a raft down the Colorado River, don't write poems about riding a raft down the Colorado River."

Hemingway — as can be seen in his criticism of Willa Cather's *One of Ours*² as well as numerous comments on literature in general — was of the same school of thought on this. He believed that the writer should write about what he or she knows and has experienced at first hand. If you haven't experienced something, don't write about it. And by extension, as I will argue in this paper, if Hemingway had never met Adriana he would have had to have met another titled young lady in Venice and create a symbol of Judeo-Christian tradition and Greco-Roman myth out of her. Adriana was a necessity.³ She was able and qualified to fit the role perfectly for Hemingway's purposes.

It's important, I think, to remember that as Burwell and others have pointed out, the ur-text from which *Across the River and Into the Trees* was extracted and developed, was begun in 1945, and a substantial part of it had already been written well before Hemingway even met Adriana. Burwell states that, "By 30 June 1946 the book had reached 1,000 pages" (57). Hemingway didn't meet Adriana until 1948.

This is not to say that no infatuation existed. There is far too much solid evidence to the contrary. But I would argue that the infatuation was genuinely fabricated, if you will, by necessity of the creative process and credo that Hemingway lived by no less than Robert Frost did. In fact, the evidence would seem to indicate that Hemingway became thoroughly swept up in what I believe to be his fabricated infatuation. Stanley Corkin argues that "Hemingway pushes language virtually into the realm of the concrete, as he only sparingly employs words with abstract referents, minimizes authorial comment, and reduces character to simple function. These works all but follow Howells's vision of the novel, while they revere objects in the manner of Dreiser" (161). More on the use of language in this particular novel in just a moment, but I just want to make the point that Hemingway was solidly in the Howellsian tradition here as elsewhere.

As is well known by now, Renata's name, which means rebirth, was

taken from the name of a d'Annunzio character in *Notturmo*. After noting this, Michael Reynolds points out that "the book that most impressed [Hemingway] after the war was *The Flame*, an autobiographical account of d'Annunzio's love affair with the famous actress Eleonora Duse" (212).⁴ Both of these have some part in the development of this novel. Furthermore, Monteiro demonstrates — with overwhelming evidence — Hemingway's debt to Fitzgerald's *Tender is the Night*. My point in reminding the reader of this is that if this intricate work is indeed that of a madman, as Mary and others have intimated, then it is the work of an awfully brilliant madman of great skill and sensitivity to his influences.

Peter Lisca has pointed out in his brilliant essay titled "The Structure of Hemingway's *Across the River and Into the Trees*" that,

...there can be no doubt that although *Across the River and Into the Trees* has not been accorded the recognition and appreciation that has come to his other work, it is, nevertheless, Hemingway's most complex and indirect novel, a mature work of art by a master who had moved into a phase where none could immediately follow. (250)

Furthermore, as Mandel points out in her discussion of Hemingway's "iceberg theory," in this novel, "Hemingway took his "craft of omission" to experimental extremes, relying more heavily than usual on his readers' ability and willingness to read according to the parameters which he had established in earlier books" (334). Adriana fit. And as with everything else in Hemingway's life and art, it was necessary that everything fit and become part of the overall creative task. The real grief in my opinion is that both Mary and Adriana had to put up with the consequences.

Most criticism on this novel focuses in some way on rituals of riddance. According to this line of criticism, the Colonel, accustomed to a life of military hardship and violence, is in the process of ridding his remaining days, and by extension his mind, of the patterns of violence which have taken some fifty years to calcify into who and what the Colonel is.

Father Crozier argues that,

Renata's approach to the moment of truth, to death, is... a three salient plan attack: (1) to purge her Colonel of the frustration and bitterness of his long ministry of death; (2) to give him control and mastery of the latent talent of gentleness within him, a calm, quiet, but profoundly active acceptance of the mystery of man's apparently transient reality (and of his abuse even of that); and (3) to enlarge his sense of life before and beyond death. (246)

To some degree, I agree with these interpretations. I think that for the most part they are right on the mark. In fact, I would add that Renata, who is usually placed in the role of Christian counselor, plays a dual role in this. Not only does she function as his confessor, but her role is also Aphroditic (or *Venetian*, if you will), especially in the gondola scene where the Colonel is caressing her with the fingers of his injured hand. In this scene she is countering the Colonel's "wild boar blood" with sensuality which is certainly not Christian. Annis Pratt points out that,

Lucretius... appeals to [Venus] at the beginning of *De Rerum Natura* as the only hope for peace, asking her to "grant that this brutal business of war by sea and land may everywhere be lulled to rest. For you alone have power to bestow upon mortals the blessing of quiet peace." Venus's effectiveness for peace consists in her sensuality as a counter to aggression. (115)

Certainly in the gondola scenes as well as elsewhere, this is the role of Venus at work. The problem arises, first of all, when critics try to complete the Colonel's absolution and transformation. Second of all, what is invariably missing from all of these investigations is a view of the Colonel as an American man.

It is important, I believe, to remember that as Corkin has pointed out

that, "Just as Howells had placed the author in the role of observing the world objectively and carefully, so Hemingway believed that an author of fiction should not intrude on the text itself but should observe the elements of the world from a distanced position and then select the appropriate elements for their universality" (166). Numerous scholars have universalized Renata, why then does Hemingway scholarship remain stubbornly unwilling to universalize the American who can do nothing particularly well. For Colonel Cantwell has been able to do nothing in particular... very well, and his heart is now failing him partially as a result. But more on this critical point later.

One of the most obvious comparisons made by scholars is between Renata and Botticelli's, "Birth of Venus." It is a comparison that the Colonel makes in his description of Renata; thus, we see Venus/Venice rising from the Adriatic Sea. And the portrait of herself that Renata gives the Colonel is reminiscent of the portrait: Venus rising from the sea with dry hair flowing down over her shoulders. Thus, Renata becomes universalized as one of the most European of European towns. Baker argues quite rightly in my view that Renata, "The Countess is more than Nostalgia, though the sense of the past is one of the gifts she brings to the Colonel." However, I must depart from him when he continues as others have done by saying that, "She is the figurative image of the Colonel's past youth, still living in the vision-city he once saw from a distance when he fought for Italy on the plains of the Veneto long ago" (283). On the contrary, Renata is Venice — and by extension all of the innocence of Western Civilization still clinging to Judeo-Christian traditions and Greco-Roman myths — protected and sheltered by the efforts of the pragmatic individual albeit tired American who must watch what he says so as not to hurt the tender thoughts which are at the foundations of that structure.

From Renata to Alvarito (the diminutive form of "the pale one" who will guide him across the River Styx) — each are attendant spirits of a past civilization from which the Colonel must separate himself once and for all. From the winds of death to all to the mythical bridge and boat imagery, the colonel is present as if in a lyrical dream in the arms of a

history which he must leave behind. And as Whitlow has said so beautifully and sensitively, "Cantwell has returned to Venice and the surrounding countryside as a dying person might walk over a familiar meadow or down a familiar street, to see things 'one last time,' firmly to place familiar scenes, people, and memories in their final positions" (43).

At one point, Renata asks the Colonel about those he has killed in battle, and she says,

"You had no remorse?"

"Never."

"Nor had dreams about it?"

"Nor bad dreams. But usually strange ones. Combat dreams, always, for a while after combat. But then strange dreams about places mostly. We live by accidents of terrain, you know. And terrain is what remains in the dreaming part of your mind." (97)

Herein lies the clue, I believe, to the mystery of the novel... at least from Colonel Cantwell's point of view.

Renata asks the Colonel if he dreams about her and the Colonel confesses that he tries to but can't. Even in his love for Renata, he is unable to populate this open terrain — this "dreaming part" of his mind — with her. Just prior to this, and unable to invite the real person into his dreams, he asks her to pose for him, making her, in effect, part of an impersonal terrain that he can admire, control, and internalize just as many American tourists do with Europe. And the text reads :

She turned her head and raised her chin, without vanity, nor coquetry and the Colonel felt his heart turn over inside him, as though some sleeping animal had rolled over in its burrow and frightened, deliciously, the other animal sleeping close beside.
(66)

This dormant animal, "the other animal sleeping close beside," is startled

into a recognition of beauty which is connected to his love for Renata/Venice/all of European Civilization which has cost him so much in battle. As the novel progresses, this love begins to prod the sleeping animal toward a better recognition of the real and his need to separate himself from that which, for himself, is not real.

Now what does this mean? If we can universalize Renata as Venice, then what is meant by the Colonel's request for her to pose? What is meant by her pose? And shortly after her pose :

"Richard," she said. "No I can't say it."

"Say it."

"No."

The Colonel thought, I order you to say it. And she said, "Please never look at me like that."

Then the text reads that the colonel apologized for slipping into his trade. Now what is his *trade*? On one level we think of the Colonel's trade as of course military. Certainly the Colonel is a tired warrior ; but he is also an American who has chosen to visit an ancient city deeply steeped in Judeo-Christian traditions and Greco-Roman myths just before his death. Near the end of the novel, as the Colonel is wondering what he could possibly give Renata, the text reads :

I better just give her my love. But how the hell do you send it?
And how do you keep it fresh? They can't pack it in dry ice.

Maybe they can. I must inquire. But how do I get that condemned jeep engine to that old man?

Figure it out, he thought. Figuring things out has been your trade. Figuring things out when they were shooting at you, he added. (225)

Posing Renata is a bit like trying to puzzle out the truth of the fifth stanza of Keats' Ode on a Grecian Urn or the smile of the Mona Lisa.

Both remain enigmatic in a civilization which believes in Truth, and has faith in definitions of Justice, Mercy, Faith, Hope, and so on. Renata would like the Colonel to recline in the Lotus Land of Western history and civilization. She would like to be Beatrice to his Dante, a game the Colonel is willing to toy with for a time. She would like him to stop trying to "figure things out" in his own way, and to rely upon her for sound Judeo-Christian/Greco-Roman judgment which, as we shall see below, the emeralds represent.

Numerous scholars have tried to make Colonel Cantwell into a direct descendant of Lieutenant Henry and other Hemingway characters who struggled with these issues. Well if this is so — and I say this guardedly because there are some critical problems with this notion — it behooves us to examine exactly what the nature of this descendancy is. After the first world war, we have *the lost generation*. After the second world war, we have what? The Eisenhower generation (an almost prophetic foreshadowing of it in this novel), the aspirin generation and on and on. But most important, Americans in Europe are no longer the *innocents abroad* that Twain describes. Hemingway, like Twain was deeply interested in American identity, and he had a lifelong interest in and admiration for Mark Twain. Colonel Cantwell is Hemingway's conscious answer to Twain. The Colonel is no clownish imitator of European culture and values. While — remaining truly American — he is unable to fully embrace the myths and traditions that are at the foundation of European culture, he has learned through experience and careful observation a deep appreciation for the culture. But he is not part of it. He is merely a distant descendant of it. And in fact much of the novel is about his separation from it, and his need to leave it behind. We see this struggle clearly when he stands in front of the mirror in his room :

He walked past portrait, only looking casually and looked at himself in the mirror. He had dropped both parts of his pajamas and he looked at himself critically and truly.

"You beat-up old bastard," he said to the mirror. Portrait was a

thing of the past. Mirror was actuality and of this day. (140)

Here he stands naked... posed in front of the mirror: not a colonel or lover or friend. Just an American man. And here he is reminded of the reality that one must ultimately live with things as they are. One cannot live in the past, by the myths and traditions of others; rather one must face who one is in the present reality. He must struggle with this terrain... this dreaming part of his mind... but again ultimately he must return to what he knows to be real. At the end of the novel when he thinks for a moment of murdering the man who is messing up the duck hunt for him, he first exhorts himself to calm down, but then he laughs at himself:

Who you feeding that to, he told himself. You going to run as a Christian? You might give it an honest try. She would like you better that way. Or would she? I don't know, he said frankly. I honest to God don't know. Maybe I will get Christian toward the end. Yes, he said, maybe you will. Who wants to make a bet on that? (225)

But all of this is stated half-heartedly. And when he does die all of this is quite forgotten as he crawls into the back seat of his chauffeur driven vehicle outside the town near where he had built his own monument to himself and to his memories.

In fact, the Colonel's citizenship in Venice is no more real than his membership in the Order of the Brusadellis which he shares with the *Gran Maestro* through trial under fire. And his claim to the land is in no way European; it is truly American through a ritual of blood, metal, excrement, and money. It is an American monument which he creates without the traditional attendant gods to oversee its construction and lend their blessing. After he has built his monument, the text reads:

"A poor effort," he said aloud to the river and the river bank that were heavy with autumn quiet and wet from the fall rains. "But

my own." (17)

The Colonel stands, and then making certain that he is alone, adds,

"Now I'll complete the monument," he said to no one but the dead..." (17)

And this is where he buries the money, where he had lost a knee cap in the war. Friedman comments about this that,

In this extraordinary passage, which echoes Bismark's "blood and iron" and Marx's conflating of death and money, Hemingway erects the perfect memorial to war's masculinist values. (176)

To which I would say "yes... to a degree" but more... because the important thing here is that he is alone : the vertical American in foreign lands defining the dimensions of his own world and creating his own monuments as he goes... and furthermore, that this is a defining moment in the novel. Hemingway, through the Colonel is signaling his readers that this novel is to be a world of images, as it proves to be : from Venice rising from the sea to the examining gazes in the mirror : the American as "beat up old bastard" easing away from European descendancy and dependancy with new myths of his own. Neither the monument nor the Colonel's death are actually in Venice ; they are outside of it in nature, in the wild. At the beginning and at the end of the novel, the Colonel is on the outside, looking in : an observer, an appreciative one, but an observer none the less.

Emily Stipes Watts in her wonderful book *Ernest Hemingway and the Arts* goes a long way to demonstrating the intricate care and skill which Hemingway employed in the design of this novel. Of all Hemingway's works, *Across the River and Into the Trees* is the most elaborate in terms of its use of color and description of objects and events. "Artistically," Watts says, "the Colonel's sensitivity to color and form is much like a

painters" (166). And later she notes, "Hemingway's use of color is a continual attempt at re-creating pictorial effects with pictorial techniques" (167). References to the arts abound in this novel: primarily painting, but also sculpture, architecture, literature, and music.

Williams notes that "Philip Young has written that in order to understand Hemingway's last novels, it may be necessary to find a new way of looking at them; this is a fundamental insight, and *Across the River and Into the Trees* is the first of the books to demand it. ...taken together, they represent an altered Hemingway aesthetic, and it is necessary to understand it before the works can be completely understood..." (156).

It may, in fact, take us years to come to unravel it all. For Williams, the new aesthetic requires reading the later works as fable. For me, the answer lies in language and what Hemingway seems to be saying about identity and sensuality. In this novel as a whole, Hemingway was doing something new with language again — language as an artist's tool — that deserves closer scrutiny before we cringe away in embarrassment at the list of horrors as Pearsall recounts them:

The adverb-adjective stunts that had become a sort of trade mark now became a parody of themselves. Renata is to "sleep good and well," and later "soundly and well"; her portrait may manouver [sic] "good and fast"; she is held "close and tight." Meanwhile Cantwell can ski "controlled and good" and kiss "good and sound," and, at the point of death, shut his car-door "carefully and well." Fantastic rituals of food and drink mount up, peaking in a wine bottle "which had been uncorked, and then re-corked, carefully, precisely, and lovingly," by one of the hotel staffmen [sic] who so love the Colonel. (239)

One of the problems is that we want our artists to stay the same. We don't want them to do new things. Once they become known for something — a particular style, a particular sound, a particular structure — we want them to continue doing the same thing. The first time Bob

Dylan walked up on the stage with an electric guitar, he had to play to boos and jeers. After that he wrote, "You say you are my friend/But you know it's not like that/You just want to be on the side that's winning."

Minter notes that,

In Hemingway's self-conscious style, including his practice of using simple words in economical ways, we... recognize a passion, both American and modern, for technique. Hemingway treats language as a tool or an instrument. He calls attention to new ways of using familiar words, much as modern painters call attention to their brush strokes and colors. (142)

But even more so, in the later work. While Hemingway's use of language continues to be very American in its instrumentality and very much like the brush strokes of a painter, the function of the stilted phrases are not the same in this novel as those in *A Farewell to Arms*, *The Sun Also Rises*, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and the Nick Adams Stories. Again, the basic function is different. Watts describes them as brush strokes on the page and I agree with her; but I think we arrive even closer to the truth of such phrases when we look carefully at what the Colonel is and what he is a product of. As we have noted already, the Colonel is a military officer, a demoted General who throughout his military career has been called upon to describe experience in simple uncomplicated language that all of his men can understand from the most to the least educated. Those of us who have been in the military, and especially those of us who spent our military years behind type writers, can attest first hand to the military's passion for succinctness, and often clumsy terseness.

If Colonel Cantwell can't communicate well, it is first of all reflective of his military training. Colonel Cantwell is not a product of the refined West Point elite tradition. In fact this is one of the many reasons why he was demoted after the War, not simply because of his losses at Hürtgenwald; though this is of course a lot of it. The second reason the Colonel can't communicate well is that he is, in fact, closer to Harry Morgan than

to any of Hemingway's other protagonists. The only difference is that he has educated himself substantially better. Nevertheless, his idea of good reading is Red Smith, a very simple, very American sports writer of the *New York Herald*. The Colonel is the American self-made man and, as Hemingway explains at the end of Chapter Thirty-three "his thinking was often un-grammatical" (194). Throughout the novel, his slipping back into adverb-adjective stunts, as Pearsall calls them, is a constant reminder of this fact.

Even Kazin misses the brilliance of his own words, when in his 1950 review of this novel in the *New Yorker*, he states that,

In fact, what the Colonel represents is the flesh — the flesh in its most automatic impulses, with the sensory machine dying down, the heart threatening to burst at any moment, the brain throbbing weakly on old obscenities. ...one of the most curious sides of the Colonel is his constant effort, "remembering to be kind, to hold himself in check, to be less brutal. As he says, he has usually lost women because of his brutality. So he tries very hard to be good, or at least to speak more nicely. ... He has always lived by sensations ; death is the last sensation, and so he waits for it — the flesh seeking to end the satisfaction of each appetite, and indignant that it must die. (381)

From Kazin's point of view, however, the novel is a failure because of what he has observed in it, but much of what he has observed — aside from his uncharacteristic mis-readings — is the very point of the novel.⁵ The Colonel — the post-Second World War American man — is only fifty years old — half of a century ; symbolic of half of a full existence — and already he is worn out. He is unhappy with almost everything American : but he is an American unhappy with what America has become, hardly new or unusual in American literature from Mark Twain, Hamlin Garland, Theodore Dreiser, and the list goes on. And, further there is the fact that he is satisfied only with his own individual perspec-

tive on what an American man should be. America is, after all, a nation filled with individuals from all nations standing vertical to the world announcing with full conviction that, "I represent the genuine American article. Follow me!"

Stephens notes that,

In his interview with Harvey Breit, after *Across the River and Into the Trees* had become a best seller, Hemingway explained what he thought the book was about by telling for whom it had been written. "The last book was written for people... who had lived and would die and would be capable of knowing the difference between these two states. It was also written for all people who had ever fought or would be capable of fighting or interested in it. It was written, as well, for people who had ever been in love or were capable of that happiness" (299).

This is a brutal statement because the notion of death here has little to do with physical death; the notion of fighting has little to do with wars between nations; and, the notion of love has little to do with romance between lovers. Rather, the death that is spoke of here has to do with dying to past culture and knowing that one is dead to it — a death which Colonel Cantwell's death symbolizes. Fighting has to do with the struggle to retain one's own identity in spite of the holds that others would place upon one. And loving has to do with retaining a love for those myths and traditions while remaining separate from them. What all of this points to is that Colonel Cantwell's death symbolizes Hemingway's notion of the break between America and European Civilization. The American may visit the heart of European Civilization; he may form temporary bonds of friendship and romance with it; but ultimately, as Henry Adams discovered, the American is separated from it — the bonds of ancient myth and former traditions permanently broken as it was for the student of history in the Gallery of Machines.

In *Across the River and Into the Trees* this is demonstrated in images

rather than in the usual Hemingwaian key. *The Old Man and the Sea* is a return to the use of sound... perhaps because Hemingway saw that no one recognized the transition between aural and visual imagery in his earlier novels; but as early as *To Have and Have Not* the signs are there that the transition is taking place. While a full discussion of this is well beyond the limitations of this brief paper, allow me just to say that much of that novel is starkly visual rather than aural; but it is only in *Across the River and Into the Trees* and *The Garden of Eden* and to an as yet experimental degree in *Islands in the Stream* that it becomes apparent that Hemingway desired to examine a new way of looking at the world that involved the other senses.

Of all Hemingway's novels, *Across the River and Into the Trees* is an explosion of the senses. For example, more than in any of Hemingway's other novels, food suddenly plays an enormous role — in fact, one cannot read the novel without growing hungry. The connection with Renata and Venus is found here as well, since as Annis Pratt points out, "Venus was originally a goddess of vegetation and of the market" (115). Turner notes that "Hemingway often associates eating and drinking with the basic life force, and it is psychologically appropriate that a man in Cantwell's hypersensitive mental state should devote special attention to such seemingly mechanical actions" (192-93). The visual arts as Watts has pointed out are of primary importance. The language as I have argued is true to what the Colonel is. The Colonel tells Renata that she always smells wonderful; the market place is filled with smells; and the Colonel asks the *Gran Maestro* to "Produce a few smells... from your off-stage kitchen...." And then, of course, there is the feel of Renata.

But then there is a desperate incompleteness about all of this isn't there... a separateness... an emptiness that can only be explained by the Colonel's isolation from even the most intimate experiences of the novel. The most intimate scenes are between the Colonel and himself: talking to himself at his memorial, talking to himself in front of the mirror, talking to himself as he walks through Venice, talking to himself at the duck shoot, and on and on. In fact, all of the internal monologue which has re-

ceived such criticism for taking up so much of the story, it seems to me is at the very heart of the novel: the American in Europe struggling with his own identity in a montage of myths and traditions all of which attempt to stake their claims upon his heart.

Renata is unable to fulfill the Colonel because of her menstrual cycle... it is her time of the month. This is one of the most telling images of the novel, for as an American, the Colonel is restrained by the natural order of things from culminating any degree of oneness with European existence.

It is noteworthy that while the Colonel cannot even populate the dreaming part of his mind with Renata or European values, Renata not only dreams of the Colonel but transforms his twice shot hand into "the hand of our Lord." The Colonel strenuously resists this transformation of his hand into a religious image. Consistently throughout the text, the Colonel despises the hand. For him, it is merely a sign of weakness and deformity. Nowhere in the text does the Colonel give in to Renata's romanticizing about it. In spite of this, scholarship has stubbornly clung to the notion that Hemingway was trying to transform Colonel Cantwell and by association himself into a Christ figure. Comley and Scholes in their otherwise excellent *Hemingway's Genders* write, that "The apotheosis of Colonel Cantwell (or at least his hand) can scarcely be seen as anything but embarrassing, even if we take 'our Lord' to refer not to God himself but to Ernest Hemingway, who is the Papa of this little universe" (69). But the fact of the matter is that it is Renata who is attempting the association, neither Cantwell nor Hemingway as intrusive authorial presence are doing so.

In bestowing emeralds upon the Colonel as healing stones, Renata becomes Venus/Aphrodite — at once, as Paul Friedrich (102) explains, wife, mother, mistress, errant female relative (ie, daughter in this case), which explains why Renata as Venus can — as Adriana complained of Renata's character — "drink all day like a sponge and be in bed at the hotel" (456-57). In ancient times the emeralds which Renata gives the Colonel were the birthstone of the month of June; however, in more mod-

ern times and at the time the Colonel was given the gems, emeralds had become the birthstone of the month of May. In Europe, spring time is February through April, but in North America spring extends from March through May. Venus is the goddess of gardens and spring time. While Renata insists that she is a modern Venetian, making May the month of the healing stones, the connection is with an American springtime ; not a European one.⁶

Furthermore, Emeralds are found in the Bible where they are on the Breastplate of Judgement worn by the High Priest in Exodus 28 : 18 ; and they are within the foundations of the wall of the Holy City in Revelations 21 : 19. From the Bible to the Wizard of Oz, then, the emerald is a symbol of judgement, foundations, and the hope of transformation. But the transformation and the return to Venus — as wife, mother, mistress, arrant female relative — is never completed. For while Renata functions as a Venetian priestess after the Greco-Roman tradition, she also functions as Judeo-Christian counselor attempting to lead the Colonel to confession and repentance ; and in order for the full healing to take place — that is, for the Colonel to become transformed into a true Venetian — he would have had to confess to all of his crimes against humanity.

Mandel writing of Cantwell's litany of complaints against the top brass, states :

"Brusadelli, Meyers, and their fictional counterparts... Cantwell's harsh, bitter disapproval of such men reveals the intensity of his need to justify himself. Cantwell is deeply troubled by the military disaster in which he was involved. Hütgenwald cost many lives, and Cantwell's only defense — that he had to follow orders — was discredited at the Nuremberg trials. Dealing with the memory and guilt (the guilt of the survivor, if nothing else) is difficult.... (341)

John Limon in his book *Writing After War* notes that "Everyone dies' is

the definitive close of a war narrative" (91), and shows how that in each of Hemingway's novels there is some mention of this fact, its high point in Frederic Henry's conversation with Catherine where he says that nothing ever happens to the brave followed by Catherine's comment, "They die of course." "But only once." Frederic says. My point here is that in *Across the River and Into the Trees* we watch the Colonel die again and again as the memories of his war experiences tear away at his heart.

As Whitlow explains, "There was a lack of sensitivity and justice on both sides that invalidated the nobility of their missions. There was untold human suffering on both sides caused by men like Cantwell who unquestioningly carried out the foolish and devastating orders of others" (42). Thus significantly, the Colonel does not make a full confession.

In *The True Gen* Denis Brian asks Malcolm Cowley what he thought of the book, and Cowley responds :

Very little. Actually, it was a rite of confession and absolution, but the confession stopped short. It didn't finish for the fictional character, because if you look at the book again, one thing Colonel Cantwell never tells is why he lost his star. If that had come in, it would have been a complete confession to Renata. Hemingway's imagination stopped there. If that had gone in, I think the book would have been rounded out. (225)

On the contrary, if that had gone in it would have destroyed the novel. Cowley wants a full Roman Catholic confession ; however, the Colonel's refusal to make a full confession is a major point of the novel. Colonel Cantwell may not be able to do anything well, but he does not give in. He does not return to the Greco-Roman/Judeo-Christian womb. And the remarkable thing here is that the late acknowledgment as the Colonel emerges from the barrel is so obvious and so clear and so intentional that it is impossible to see it as a failure of the imagination as Cowley claims. The Colonel is not only trying to protect Renata from the brutality of the Darwinian reality of the universe but also saving himself as a modern

American man in the process.

What is left for the Colonel in this novel, is an appreciation of the senses. For him, God is dead. There is no order beyond the imaginary one he creates with the *Gran Maestro* : an order of comradery and human relationships. *Across the River and Into the Trees* stands in sharp contrast to Stoneback's well-known mis-readings which try to Catholicise Hemingway's work. Civello has properly argued that,

In the work of Hemingway... human beings are denied the consolation of a philosophy predicated on the existence of an absolute... and must therefore discover a new means of reconciliation. To this end, the self turns inward : to the human consciousness and its ordering unifying power. (66)

Remarkably, Peter Hayes and others seem to miss this point when they complain as Hayes does that, "The novel is full of talk, rather than action..." (100). The point is that this novel is psychological. As in James, the action is found in the psyche rather than the outer world because in this novel, it is the psyche which determines identity.⁷

Civello goes on to point out that,

To Hemingway, the natural world was still largely Darwinian, a world of material force devoid of a moral and spiritual order and therefore of an ostensible purpose or meaning. He was, however, working off a new conception of humanity. The rise at the turn of the century of the psychological and social sciences, of both pragmatic and Nietzschean philosophy, and of a new "modern" aesthetic, all pointed toward the efficacy of the human consciousness in confronting and ordering an otherwise meaningless universe. (67)

The term *Terrain* is generally used to describe an area measured for its physical features or configuration. While this measurement can be

done from within the terrain, it is most often done with aerial photos or from some high distant vantage point such as where we find the Colonel at the beginning and end of the novel. The term is generally used by geological survey or military personnel. It is not used by anyone to describe lived space.

Hemingway's Cantwell is in a world without home, always in search of one but never finding one. Carlos Baker says of the Colonel that, "he knows the armor that will clothe his nakedness, just as he knows the clean, well-lighted bars and hotels of Venice where a man can be at home even while the north wind [that is, the wind of death] blows" (282). But the Colonel is not really at home. And the almost sleepy repetition of "the Colonel was really home, if a hotel room can be so described," and "where a man can be at home," and "He was in his home where he had made it," and so on only serves to underline the fact that the Colonel is in fact not at home at all. For all but an American perhaps, home is not considered something made all at once, nor is it found in a hotel. Home is made up of a world that is grown into like Renata's emeralds which have been handed down from generation to generation.

Renata's moor which she pins to her shoulder is a mere borrowing even if paid for with the Colonel's savings. Othello was an outsider from start to finish; there was never any sense in which he could have been considered at home. The point of this novel is that Beatrice does not lead Dante to salvation. She tries; but ultimately she fails, and the Colonel crawls into the back of his own universe; where the text reads "...he shut the door. He shut it carefully and well" (237). What the Colonel finally does well at the end is to carefully shut himself away from Western myths and traditions where he dies alone on a country road with only the driver and the other dead whom at the beginning of the novel he has addressed at his war memorial as his only witnesses.

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Notes

1. Some, like James Mellow have gone even further than that, trying to make other scholars who deal with the text alone to be little more than flattering buffoons. Mellow, for example, says of Carlos Baker, a Princeton scholar and one of Hemingway's most respected biographers, that: "He wanted to set the record straight, Baker informed him in flattering terms." And in the next paragraph, "...[Hemingway] seems to have been particularly responsive to the seriousness of Baker's approach and the flattering things he had to say about his work." Then on the very next page, "Baker launched into a lengthy and serious discussion (with flattering queries) about *Across the River* unwittingly the perfect move..." And then half way down the same page, "Baker's full, flattering praise of *The Old Man and the Sea* manuscript, which he received promptly enough to suggest that Hemingway was eager for his opinion, caused one of those baffling responses in Hemingway" (570-71).
2. See, *Ernest Hemingway : Selected Letters, 1917-1961*, p. 105.
3. Kenneth Lynn (see citation below), who has been kinder than most, notes that "Play acting also marked his courtship of Adriana Ivancich" (534). The difficulty arises, I believe, in books like Bernice Kert's *The Hemingway Women which* — while it is an otherwise very helpful text — focuses the readers attention far too much on the life of the author and away from the text.
4. Another excellent discussion of this relationship can be found in "Hemingway's Poetry : Angry Notes of an Ambivalent Overman." by Nicholas Gerogianinis. See Works Cited for a full citation.
5. An anonymous reviewer in *New York Times* who had written glowingly of the novel in 1950, wrote another review in 1996, taking it all back. See works cited under Anon.
6. Both Malcolm Cowley and Philip Young have argued that Hemingway's numerous allusions to myth and legend in his fictions were accidental, and that he probably had no conscious knowledge of either influence. K.J. Philips (66-67 : see full citation in Works Cited below) has argued convincingly that Heming-

way's use of myth and legend was far too overt to have been accidental. While it is true that Fitzgerald and others had *dangerous friendships* with Hemingway, it is also true that Hemingway had his share of equally dangerous friendships with those who preferred to see him as an ignorant boor who happened to write two or three books and a number of short stories passingly well.

7. Roger Whitlow makes this point about the psychological level of the text, but makes no comparison with Jamesian literature.

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