



*Hemingway's Reading*  
*1910-1940*

AN INVENTORY

Michael S. Reynolds

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IN MEMORY OF PROFESSOR RUDOSLAV TSANOFF

*“But what about the soul, Dr. Tsanoff?”*

*“That, Mr. Reynolds, is metaphysics.*

*This course does not deal in metaphysics.”*

## *Preface*

THIS book is not a study of literary influences. Nor is it a compilation of Hemingway's literary allusions. What you will find here is an inventory of those books, periodicals, and newspapers that Hemingway owned or borrowed between 1910 and 1940. The inventory is not complete, but the substantial patterns are far-ranging with frequently obvious implications. Begun as a tool for prying open Hemingway's literary biography, this book should aid scholars on other bents. If nothing else, I hope to deflate the production of absurd source studies, at least temporarily.

Some books so stun us with their brilliance that nothing remains to be said on the subject. These books become classics, but so intimidate the less brilliant that we are speechless. *Hemingway's Reading* will not stun you with its brilliance. Conversely, it is not an end, but a beginning.

## *Acknowledgments*

There are these to be thanked:

Mary Hemingway, whose generosity has made the Hemingway Collection available, and who has graciously permitted me to quote from unpublished material;

Jo August, the archivist who has catalogued the Hemingway papers, and without whose interest, encouragement, and corrections this book could not have been written;

Helen Garrison, my research assistant, whose time, perseverance and ingenuity make her more a joint author than an assistant;

Martha and Robert Brinson, who provided me bed, board, and good company on my many Boston visits.

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The computer compilation could not have been accomplished without the superior programming of George Van den Bout and the assistance of the NCSU Computer Center. The travel required could not have been done without the support of the NCSU English Department and the summer grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and NCSU. My research in Oak Park was made easier by the assistance I received from the Oak Park and River Forest High School, the Oak Park Public Library, and the Village Clerk of Oak Park.

The best help a writer can find is constructive readers, and I have been blessed with several. My wife, who has proofed computer copy these last two years, always kept me humble. Joan Stewart, at NCSU, helped decode Hemingway's misspelled foreign titles. My colleagues at the College of William and Mary gave me encouragement and aid. Julia Epstein corrected the

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French entries and translated my letters. Scott Donaldson was particularly helpful in suggesting solutions to several unfound entries and in correcting numerous mistakes.

Thanks are also due my editors at Princeton University Press who found sympathetic and knowledgeable readers whose suggestions and corrections were a blessing.

Finally, I must be grateful to the Cubans for not allowing me a visa, for if they had I would be working on this book for years to come.

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*Hemingway's Reading 1910-1940*



## Hemingway's Bones

*Education consists in finding sources obscure enough to imitate so that they will be perfectly safe.*

Ernest Hemingway, Ms #489  
Kennedy Library

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THREE years ago, I said that Hemingway's reading was as important to his art as Coleridge's was to his.<sup>1</sup> My conclusion was inductive, based only on what he seemed to be doing in *A Farewell to Arms*. One reviewer somewhat archly allowed that he, for one, was not prepared to accept that statement. His skepticism was just, for no hard evidence supported my guesses. Now, after pursuing that hobbyhorse through dusty pastures, I must revise my original statement: *Hemingway's reading was more important to his art and to his life than Coleridge's was to his*. Here is the hard evidence to prove it.

In a self-portrait, Hemingway wrote that he would rather read than do anything else, except write.<sup>2</sup> His fiction is filled with readers in the midst of the strenuous life. Dr. Adams finds his son Nick under a tree with a book; Jake Barnes, drunk at Pamplona, reads Turgenev. Amid the green hills of Africa, Hemingway reads Tolstoi. That inveterate reader of newspapers, Frederic Henry, quotes Marvell to his pregnant mistress in Milan; Colonel Cantwell quotes Whitman. Robert Jordan, a professor of literature, remembers Quevedo behind enemy lines.

Those are the easy ones—the references one remembers without checking.

Hemingway's fiction and non-fiction, his interviews and his memoir provide lists of great books, critical commentary on authors living and dead, and numerous references to specific reading. In his "Bibliographical Note" appended to *Death in the Afternoon*, he refers us to the 2077 books and pamphlets that were his sources. No one, I think, took him very seriously. Perhaps we should have. Early heed would have led us to a more balanced view of Hemingway, the artist. This book is *not* a compilation of those published references, for they are available to any reader. What follows is a reconstruction of what Hemingway *probably* read between 1910 and 1940. This list is hard data. Books I sus-

pect, but could not prove, he read do not appear. My sources—book orders, book bills, library cards, letters, and inventories—are all public, if somewhat scattered.

During the three years of finding, checking, and double-checking each entry, the hunt has led to Charlottesville, Washington, Princeton, New York, New Haven, Boston, Oak Park, and back again. There were more nights on the road than my wife cares to remember, more pages of holograph than a man should have to read, enough dead ends and zero research to satisfy any masochist. Perhaps, as Hemingway told us, pursuit is happiness.

In the pursuit, this book has changed shape several times. It began with the need for a tool. To start Hemingway's literary biography, we must know what he read. Once I thought the published references enough, but his letters showed them to be only the surface of the matter. Then there was the unpublished fragment, which all of us should memorize. Hemingway said:

It is not *un-natural* that the best writers are liars. A major part of their trade is to lie or invent and they will lie when they are drunk, or to themselves, or to strangers. They often lie unconsciously and then remember their lies with deep remorse. If they knew all other writers were liars too it would cheer them up.<sup>3</sup>

If not cheering to the scholar, at least it is fair warning.

As geologists know, the relationship between surface terrain and subsurface strata may be slight. A literary biography must get to the subsurface. Not trusting what Hemingway said he had read, I resolved to search out the hard, primary data. In Princeton's Firestone Library, the Sylvia Beach and the Hemingway Collections are rich sources: Hemingway's Paris loan cards from the Shakespeare and Co. bookstore; his correspondence with his Scribner editor, Max Perkins. There I found numerous Hemingway orders for specific books, as well as books Perkins sent him unrequested. Then at the Kennedy Library in Boston, Jo August, the archivist, found a 1940 inventory for twenty-six crates of books that Hemingway took with him to Cuba. Ernest had typed and initialed each page.

The hunt seemed almost too easy, leading to delusions of grandeur. Why not go to the mother lode—Hemingway's library in Cuba? For two years I fished by that obstinate isle: Czech Embassy; Cuban Mission to the U.N.; State Department; Treasury Department; the Cuban Minister of Press Information and Cul-

ture; the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Canadian connections; private connections; the CIA. It was a learning experience. I reinvented the wheel.

## NOTES FROM A JOURNAL

APRIL 16, 1975

*"Enclosed please find 3 visa application forms which are to be filled in by you and sent back to this Embassy—together with 3 passport-size photos and a Money Order for US \$5.00, payable to the Czechoslovak Embassy."*

MAY 19, 1975

*The Czech Embassy is on Linnean Avenue, a beige and brownish-pink building three times larger than necessary. Visitors are confined to a tiny anteroom. Held there by the lower half of a dutch door, I make contact with Mr. Hromadka, who speaks excellent English and has been three years in Cuba. Trying to speed up the visa, I assure him there is nothing political about my research.*

*"Mr. Reynolds, in Cuba everything is political."*

*Were I a political militant or a radical journalist, it might be arranged in a matter of weeks, perhaps days. But to catalog a library? He shrugs. The expense to Cuba was great. So many arrangements to be made: a security man to be with me always; a hotel room; a translator; many arrangements. For what? Cuba would get nothing from my visit. If I could interest Educational Television in making a film, it might be a different matter. I should write when I had some offer. No, not directly to Cuba. Send the letter to the Embassy. He would send it down in a diplomatic courier pouch.*

JULY 9, 1975

Cuban Mission, U.N

*Señor Pila has yellow-brown skin and speaks softly, smiling. He wishes I had not come. Where did I get his name? From a friend. I cannot tell him from a Cuban exile condemned in absentia to die. I should not have come, for he cannot help me. It is not good even to talk with me. No, he knows no one in visas. No, he can tell me nothing of conditions or expenses in Havana. We do not go to his office, but speak in the foyer of the heavily barred brownstone that houses the Mission. Two impassive Cu-*

*bans in pointed shoes stare at us from across the room. The security man, sitting beneath a large picture of Che Guevara, makes no attempt to conceal the pistol beneath his coat. Please do not return, I am told. It will not help. It occurs to me that I may have jeopardized Señor Pila's security clearance. I wondered how he would explain me. Outside, I glance instinctively at the dark, empty windows across the street.*

AUGUST 14, 1975

Señor Jose Tabares  
Director of Information  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Havana, Cuba

*Dear Señor Tabares,*

*I am writing you personally on the advice of Mr. Hromadka of the Czechoslovak Embassy in Washington, D.C. In April of this year I made application for a Cuban visa from which I have heard no reply. . . . Richard Hatch, from UNC-TV, and I request permission to film "Hemingway's Cuba" at Finca Vigia. We will. . . .*

SEPTEMBER 23, 1975

*Thomas J. La Manna from the CIA is in my office. He has a file folder with my name on it. The CIA wants to brief and debrief me if I get the Cuban visa. I insist that there is nothing political involved in my research. With the CIA, everything is political. Castro may talk with me. He does things like that. Talks with some insignificant tourist, giving him a message to take back. The Agency would like to be the first to know. They would ask me to observe certain details: how Castro looked; the color of his skin; his eyes; his speech, was it slurred. As La Manna opens my file, he hurriedly turns the first page. I recognize my signature on the bottom of it. They have copied the Tabares letter I sent to Hromadka. In San Francisco, Patty Hearst has been captured and some crazy has taken a shot at President Ford. My paranoia begins to multiply like a cancer.*

NOVEMBER 4, 1975

*My Cuban visa application number arrives: 14476-75. It comes via Hromadka.*

NOVEMBER 11, 1975

MAILGRAM

Luis Garcia Peraza  
Chief Department of Press Information and Cultural Affairs  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Havana, Cuba

UNABLE TO MAKE PHONE CONNECTION STOP TELEVISION CREW AS  
FOLLOWS STOP NEW VISA APPLICATIONS TO FOLLOW STOP

DECEMBER 3, 1975

*Over the Thanksgiving break, my office was skillfully broken into. The brass chains on the transom neatly snipped close to the wall. Nothing is missing. Nothing disturbed. The transom was closed after entry. Call campus security. Nothing. No fingerprints on the desk. Not even my own.*

JUNE 17, 1976

*Still nothing. Called Havana. Mother Bell never severed connections. Probably taping it from both ends. Señor Tabares? There is no Señor Tabares. Comrade Tabares? Oh, certainly, Comrade Tabares is gone for the day. Call again tomorrow.*

JUNE 18, 1976

*Comrade Tabares will not return for a month. Comrade Garcia will talk. Yes, yes, visas, I understand. A difficult matter. Call back in a week.*

JUNE 28, 1976

*Comrade Garcia is not in. Call again tomorrow.*

JUNE 29, 1976

*We do not know of a Comrade Garcia. What is the problem? Visas? Yes, a difficult matter. Comrade Rafael Padilla will discuss visas with you. Call again tomorrow just at this hour.*

JUNE 30, 1976

*Comrade Padilla is out. He will not return this day. I try to call the Swiss Embassy in Havana. They will not accept any calls from the U.S., not*

*even prepaid. It is not possible. The Swiss Embassy speaks with a Cuban accent.*

JULY 12, 1976

*Early yesterday morning, Sunday, two men in the back yard with electronic gear. Said they were with Southern Bell Telephone, trying to fix water damage on buried lines.*

JULY 18, 1976

*Sunday morning. Same men in the back yard. Same story. Said there had been a maintenance call. I walked around the block, but no So. Bell truck anywhere. Men gone when I got back. Ann says she'd made no calls for repairs.*

JULY 20, 1976

*Phone is doing funny things. Noises we haven't heard before. When did So. Bell ever send out a repair crew on a Sunday morning?*

SPRING, 1977

*A group of Canadians plans to catalog the Hemingway library in Cuba. Am I interested in going? Yes, but . . . tell me more about it when you get the visas.*

SUMMER, 1977

*In two years I have not heard a single direct reply from Cuba. Cut the losses and call it "Hemingway's Reading: 1910-1940." Enough is, by God, enough. Let someone else go to Cuba.*

Had I gotten to Cuba, I would have grown grey on this book, for every step took three times longer than planned. At the Kennedy Library, Jo August had unearthed another book inventory made at Key West in 1955. By eliminating all post-1940 publications and combining the remainder with the 1940 inventory of Cuban-bound books, the original collection could be reconstructed with reasonable certainty. All it took was time and



more patience than I thought I had. Fortunately, my dauntless research assistant, Helen Garrison, never let me take short cuts.

We began with the 1940 inventory.<sup>4</sup> Hemingway had listed the books by title and author's name, frequently only his last one. Most bibliographies list only by author. An entry like *The Writer's Art* by Brown can lead to a nervous breakdown in the *National Union Catalog* where Browns have been unreasonably prolific. Just when the task seemed endless, the computer rescued us. The Ohio College On-Line Catalog contains a data base of over four million book entries. From our local terminal we needed only to punch in the first words of the title and part of the author's last name. Within seconds, a list of possibilities would appear on our screen. The mindless computer loved nothing better than to search for Browns.

If, however, either author or title were the least misspelled, we drew a blank, for computers do not think or guess. Many of the KW-40 titles were foreshortened; many of the authors misspelled. Spanish authors, we discovered, almost always have a triple last name, partly hyphenated. In 1940, Ernest had made no such fine distinctions. Even with all our Browns identified, we still had to check each entry against the *National Union Catalog*, for the computer did not always have the earliest publication date.

The OCLC produced many of the foreign publications, but several obscure ones were not listed. Books published only in England, for example, might not be in the data base. We turned back to the *British Museum Catalogue* only to find that it, also, had curious omissions. The last resort was the *Catalogue of English Books*. Year by year, we thumbed through until we found the entry. Some we never found. Should I ever find a copy of *Immigrants*, for example, I would take great pleasure in burning that book on whose trail we wasted more than a few hours.

Most difficult to find were the continental publications not stored in the computer. For French titles, we began with the *Bibliothèque Nationale* only to discover how useless it was. The first volume was published in 1913; the supplement covers only post-1956 publications. This quaint methodology leaves Jean Cocteau out of the bibliography. We had more luck with French authors in the *British Museum Catalogue*, where Simenon is more completely listed than in his native guide.

Recalcitrant titles we took to the massive card catalog in the Library of Congress reading room. There, at least, one can