

Twentieth-Century
Literary Criticism

TCLC

119

Volume 119

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

**Criticism of the
Works of Novelists, Poets, Playwrights,
Short Story Writers, and Other Creative Writers
Who Lived between 1900 and 1999,
from the First Published Critical
Appraisals to Current Evaluations**



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Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism, Vol. 119

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Preface

Since its inception more than fifteen years ago, *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism (TCLC)* has been purchased and used by nearly 10,000 school, public, and college or university libraries. *TCLC* has covered more than 500 authors, representing 58 nationalities and over 25,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical response to twentieth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as *TCLC*. In the words of one reviewer, “there is nothing comparable available.” *TCLC* “is a gold mine of information—dates, pseudonyms, biographical information, and criticism from books and periodicals—which many librarians would have difficulty assembling on their own.”

Scope of the Series

TCLC is designed to serve as an introduction to authors who died between 1900 and 1999 and to the most significant interpretations of these author's works. Volumes published from 1978 through 1999 included authors who died between 1900 and 1960. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of the period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. In organizing and reprinting the vast amount of critical material written on these authors, *TCLC* helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in *TCLC* presents a comprehensive survey on an author's career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Every fourth volume of *TCLC* is devoted to literary topics. These topics widen the focus of the series from the individual authors to such broader subjects as literary movements, prominent themes in twentieth-century literature, literary reaction to political and historical events, significant eras in literary history, prominent literary anniversaries, and the literatures of cultures that are often overlooked by English-speaking readers.

TCLC is designed as a companion series to Gale's *Contemporary Literary Criticism, (CLC)* which reprints commentary on authors who died after 1999. Because of the different time periods under consideration, there is no duplication of material between *CLC* and *TCLC*.

Organization of the Book

A *TCLC* entry consists of the following elements:

- The **Author Heading** cites the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. Also located here are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose native languages use nonroman alphabets. If the author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym will be listed in the author heading and the author's actual name given in parenthesis on the first line of the biographical and critical information. Uncertain birth or death dates are indicated by question marks. Single-work entries are preceded by a heading that consists of the most common form of the title in English translation (if applicable) and the original date of composition.
- A **Portrait of the Author** is included when available.
- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication date of each work is given. In the case of foreign authors whose

works have been translated into English, the English-language version of the title follows in brackets. Unless otherwise indicated, dramas are dated by first performance, not first publication.

- Reprinted **Criticism** is arranged chronologically in each entry to provide a useful perspective on changes in critical evaluation over time. The critic's name and the date of composition or publication of the critical work are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the source in which it appeared. All titles by the author featured in the text are printed in boldface type. Footnotes are reprinted at the end of each essay or excerpt. In the case of excerpted criticism, only those footnotes that pertain to the excerpted texts are included.
- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism.
- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** explicating each piece.
- An annotated bibliography of **Further Reading** appears at the end of each entry and suggests resources for additional study. In some cases, significant essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights are included here. Boxed material following the further reading list provides references to other biographical and critical sources on the author in series published by Gale.

Indexes

A **Cumulative Author Index** lists all of the authors that appear in a wide variety of reference sources published by the Gale Group, including *TCLC*. A complete list of these sources is found facing the first page of the Author Index. The index also includes birth and death dates and cross references between pseudonyms and actual names.

A **Cumulative Nationality Index** lists all authors featured in *TCLC* by nationality, followed by the number of the *TCLC* volume in which their entry appears.

A **Cumulative Topic Index** lists the literary themes and topics treated in the series as well as in *Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism*, *Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800*, *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism*, and the *Contemporary Literary Criticism* Yearbook, which was discontinued in 1998.

An alphabetical **Title Index** accompanies each volume of *TCLC*. Listings of titles by authors covered in the given volume are followed by the author's name and the corresponding page numbers where the titles are discussed. English translations of foreign titles and variations of titles are cross-referenced to the title under which a work was originally published. Titles of novels, dramas, nonfiction books, and poetry, short story, or essay collections are printed in italics, while individual poems, short stories, and essays are printed in roman type within quotation marks.

In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Gale also produces an annual paperbound edition of the *TCLC* cumulative title index. This annual cumulation, which alphabetically lists all titles reviewed in the series, is available to all customers. Additional copies of this index are available upon request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index; it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the next edition.

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William H. Slavick, "Going to School to DuBose Heyward," *The Harlem Renaissance Re-examined*, ed. Victor A. Kramer (AMS, 1987), 65- 91; reprinted in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*, vol. 59, ed. Jennifer Gariepy (Detroit: The Gale Group, 1995), 94-105.

Suggestions are Welcome

Readers who wish to suggest new features, topics, or authors to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions or comments are cordially invited to call, write, or fax the Managing Editor:

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Carlos Baker

1909–1987

(Born Carlos Heard Baker) American biographer, novelist, critic, and editor.

INTRODUCTION

Baker is best known as the official biographer of Ernest Hemingway, but he also published critical studies of other literary figures, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and William Faulkner. His biographical account of Hemingway's life garnered much praise for its wealth of invaluable material but drew negative reaction for its lack of insight and interpretation. Yet *Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story* (1969) is still regarded as an important biographical work and Baker is remembered as an influential biographer and literary critic.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Baker was born on May 5, 1909 in Biddeford, Maine. In 1932 he received his B.A. from Dartmouth College and a year later received his M.A. from Harvard University. After spending a few years teaching high school, he became an English instructor at Princeton University in 1938. He received his Ph.D. from Princeton in 1940 and became a full professor in 1951. He was appointed chairman of the English department in 1952, a position that lasted until 1958. In the early 1950s, Baker initiated a correspondence with Hemingway, a relationship that would continue until a few months before Hemingway's death in 1961. This exchange of letters allowed Baker to gather personal information from the author, even though Hemingway forbade the writing of any biography of himself. From 1954 to 1957, Baker was the Woodrow Wilson Professor of English at Princeton. He received a Fulbright lectureship at Oxford University in 1957 and in Nice, France, in 1958. After Hemingway's death, Baker maintained a privileged relationship with Mary Hemingway, the author's widow. In this way he was able to become Hemingway's official biographer. In 1969 his biography of Hemingway was published. In 1977 Baker retired as professor emeritus. He died after a short illness on April 18, 1987.

MAJOR WORKS

Baker's 1952 interpretive study of Hemingway's oeuvre, *Hemingway: The Writer as Artist*, succeeded in establishing his credentials as a leading Hemingway scholar. He revised the study three times, adding chapters to explore later fiction and appending a bibliography. Baker's often contentious relationship with Hemingway is retold in *The*



Land of Rumbelow: A Fable in the Form of a Novel (1963), a novel chronicling the complex relationship between a famous author and a literary critic. Through information garnered from Hemingway and his widow, as well as interviews with associates, family, friends, and acquaintances, Baker compiled his comprehensive biography, *Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story*, which was published in 1969. Considered the official biography of Hemingway, the book was a commercial success and has been translated into several languages. With the permission of Mary Hemingway, Baker published *Ernest Hemingway: Selected Letters, 1917-1961* (1981), a collection of approximately six hundred unedited letters. Because Hemingway had forbidden the publication of his correspondence, even after his death, the appearance of this book garnered critical approbation as some scholars disparaged Baker as opportunistic and dishonorable.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Although some of Baker's facts have been challenged, *Ernest Hemingway* is regarded as an invaluable resource

on Hemingway's life. Commentators have noted a few inaccuracies in Baker's biographical account, a result of Hemingway's tendency to invent his own truth and Baker's willingness to accept it. In general, however, Baker has been commended for exposing most of Hemingway's myths by presenting objective accounts of the author's life. The copious amount of previously unpublished information reported in *Ernest Hemingway* has also been a matter of critical discussion: most commentators praise the extensive amount of new material in the book; yet several assert that the research could have been presented more judiciously and with more insight into Hemingway's personality. Some critics maintain that Baker's privileged position as official Hemingway biographer impacted his interpretation of the material—that, in fact, he treated the author with too much respect. Yet critics recognize his accomplishment and the importance of his work, as well as his considerable influence on Hemingway studies.

PRINCIPAL WORKS

- Shadow on a Stone* (poetry) 1930
The American Looks at the World [editor] (essays) 1944
Shelley's Major Poetry: The Fabric of a Vision (criticism) 1948
Hemingway: The Writer as Artist (criticism) 1952
The Major English Romantic Poets: A Symposium in Re-appraisal [editor with C. D. Thorpe and Bennett Weaver] (criticism) 1957
A Friend in Power (novel) 1958
Hemingway and His Critics: An International Anthology [editor] (criticism) 1961
Ernest Hemingway: Critiques of Four Major Novels [editor] (criticism) 1962
A Year and a Day: Poems (poetry) 1963
The Land of Rumbelow: A Fable in the Form of a Novel (novel) 1963
Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story (biography) 1969
The Gay Head Conspiracy: A Novel of Suspense (novel) 1973
The Talismans and Other Stories (short stories) 1976
Ernest Hemingway: Selected Letters, 1917-1961 [editor] (letters) 1981
The Echoing Green: Romanticism, Modernism, and Phenomenon of Transference in Poetry (criticism) 1984
Emerson Among the Eccentrics: A Group Portrait (criticism) 1996

CRITICISM

Arthur Mizener (review date 18 October 1952)

SOURCE: Mizener, Arthur. "Prodigy into Peer." *Saturday Review of Literature* 35, no. 42 (18 October 1952): 25.

[In the following favorable review of Hemingway: The Writer as Artist, Mizener contends that Baker succeeds in focusing on Hemingway's "essential character" and considers the study "a considerable accomplishment."]

This first systematic study of Hemingway as a writer [in *Hemingway: The Writer as Artist*] is a fine, sensible book, and when you think of all the possibilities for going astray about Hemingway's work and of all the irrelevant things it would be easy to write about his personality, you feel, I think, very grateful to Professor Baker for having written the kind of book he has.

He is not trying to startle the reader with "Freudian fiddle-faddle" or another trick kind of interpretation; he is trying to give precise definition to what we can all see, if only vaguely. Consequently he fixes from the start on what is certainly the essential characteristic of Hemingway's work, the way he is able to embody a structure of values and feelings in a meticulously "true" representation of "the way it was." Professor Baker makes us see how this central intention has governed Hemingway's work through all the changes and developments of the thirty years between *Three Stories and Ten Poems* and *The Old Man and the Sea*. It is a considerable accomplishment. Along with it he also manages to give the reader a good deal of insight into the way it has been with Hemingway himself. Since each of Hemingway's books has been what Fitzgerald called *The Sun Also Rises*, "a romance and a guide-book," Professor Baker's thorough knowledge of Hemingway's times in Paris and Africa and Spain is invaluable.

Hemingway's lifelong commitment to an ideal of fiction not unlike Eliot's objective correlative and his habit—also shared by Eliot—of disowning even the most modest interpretation of a story ("It's just something that happened to us") make interpretation of his work a very delicate matter. Every reader must, for example, have been moved by the magnificent opening of *A Farewell to Arms* and have been aware of how remarkably it succeeds in conveying, with beautiful economy, the interanimation of life and death. Professor Baker rightly begins his account of *A Farewell to Arms* with an attempt to explain these paragraphs. He does not, I think, wholly succeed; but what he does say is solid and sensible and gets us a good deal farther than most analyses of Hemingway's style.

Much the same thing is true of his accounts of the books as a whole. No one will agree with all Professor Baker's judgments and some will be bothered by his occasional air of putting a good face on things, as when he conveniently forgets his previous emphasis on Hemingway's brilliant surface representation in discussing *Across the River and Into the Trees*. He is nonetheless talking very good sense about these things and you have to respect him.

I wish he had managed to get along without the numerous unilluminating references to writers like Pater, Ruskin, and Carlyle and his own occasional excursions into "wit." ("None but occasional modifiers are called," he says, for

example, of Hemingway's style, "and only a few are chosen.") These things sound like the lecturer in a sophomore introduction to literature, and Professor Baker is far too good a man ever to sound like that. But these are minor defects in an otherwise thoroughly informed and interesting book.

Patrick F. Quinn (review date 24 October 1952)

SOURCE: Quinn, Patrick F. "The Measure of Hemingway." *Commonweal* 57, no. 3 (24 October 1952): 73-75.

[In the following review, Quinn asserts that Baker repudiates many of the critical perceptions about Hemingway and his work in *Hemingway: The Writer as Artist*.]

Perhaps the most important generalization that can be made about modern literature, fiction as well as poetry, is that its method is dramatic rather than expository. It seeks not to explain but to *imply*.

Some day this axiom will be taken for granted. Ignoring it, many people are baffled by the apparently inflated reputation of Hemingway. The man can write—obviously. But what a narrow range, and how little depth! The smallness of his talent compels him to deal with sensational material. His writing is almost invariably concerned with war, sex, and violence. No doubt these subjects have an immediate and widespread interest, and so the man's audience is large. But Hemingway's great weakness is that he can treat his material only on a primitive, non-intellectual, amoral level. There are no mature values in his work. One misses ideas, ethics, high seriousness. And so what is he, really, but the prince of pulp-writers; and how is it that a professor at Princeton has published this detailed and enthusiastic study of what Hemingway has done?

The book [*Hemingway: The Writer as Artist*] was written for two reasons. For one, to correct such misunderstandings as that crudely outlined above. And, positively, to state a full case for Hemingway as one of the major talents of our time. The man's legendary personality, the details of his biographical and literary careers—these matters are given no special emphasis, although Carlos Baker is evidently as well-informed about them as anyone around. He makes available a good many new and interesting facts about Hemingway, but he presents them economically and intelligently so that the accent throughout the book will remain in steady accord with its subtitle: the writer as artist. Baker's purpose, finally, is to get at the vital center of Hemingway's art. Most readers and critics, he rightly thinks, have seen only its hard and brilliant surfaces.

They have seen Hemingway variously as a naturalist, a primitivist, a bar-room nihilist. Or, with more sophistication, as the writer who fulfills De Tocqueville's century-old prophecy that American literature would be shaped (and hence misshaped) by the brassy criteria of American journalism. Baker explodes these errors, and up in smoke

with them goes the notion that Hemingway had his brief moment of success only when he wrote as the tightlipped mouthpiece for "the lost generation." The labels that have customarily been pasted on Hemingway and his work are shown up for what they are: attempts to dispose of a new and original writer, made by people who never acquired the ability to read him properly.

In his effort to redress the balance, Baker has written a useful, illuminating book. His great virtue as a critic is that despite his warm devotion to the subject he does not fall back on rhapsodic gusto as a substitute for thought and analysis. The cards are all on the table. If Baker's first premise is that Hemingway's literary technique is one of indirection and suggestion, his second premise, equally sound, is that his own technique must be one of explanation and discussion.

Inevitably, a critical study of this sort cannot be uniformly convincing, and it would be foolish to demand otherwise. There are many fine pages throughout the volume, but especially in its first half, where the discussion is concerned with Hemingway's early work, from the first stories through *The Green Hills of Africa*. Baker defines very nicely the persistent themes of Hemingway, explains the use that is made of understatement and non-literary symbolism, illustrates how the deceptively simple style acts to charge the stories with meaning. He shows, too, how a serious and coherent aesthetic animates the work of a writer too easily thought of as intellectually bankrupt.

All this is to the good, and there can be no doubt that Baker supports his major contentions very cogently. But occasionally we meet with the usual extravagances that seem to characterize modern criticism. Speaking of "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," Baker would have us believe that at the climax of this story "the oncoming horns of the buffalo are the prolonged forceps for Macomber's moral rebirth." The forceps business seems a bit forced; and so does the interpretation given a detail in *Across the River and Into the Trees*: "Renata's square emeralds have likewise a double function. They are the stones of Venice . . ." etc.

These are specimen demurs that a reading of this book is bound to give rise to. Yet however one may take exception to such details or to the general appraisals which are made of Hemingway's various volumes, Baker's criticism as a whole commands and rewards attention. The brief he argues is a sound one and he argues it well, with lucidity and usually with tact. To disagree with it, as one must sometimes do, is itself a rewarding exercise in framing literary judgments. Only an able critic can write a book which, like this one, is sharp enough to cut both ways.

Ray B. West, Jr. (review date spring 1953)

SOURCE: West, Ray B., Jr. "The Sham Battle over Ernest Hemingway." *Western Review* 17, no. 3 (spring 1953): 234-40.

[In the following review, West compares Baker's treatment of Hemingway and his work in Hemingway: The Writer as Artist to Philip Young's Ernest Hemingway.]

Present-day criticism of Ernest Hemingway appears to be in a confused and unhappy state. The blame, I think, lies with the over-zealous friends of Mr. Hemingway, and with Mr. Hemingway himself. There is a kind of person who can abide no criticism of Ernest Hemingway, and Ernest Hemingway himself seems to be one of these people. In those pleasant days—say between the publication of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and *Across the River and Into the Trees*—a good many wise and interesting things were said about Ernest Hemingway's work, as well as many things that were interesting but not wise, and a few that were just plain foolish. This is as it should be—this is the way of criticism. Almost all of the remarks, good, bad, and indifferent, served to create a picture of an artist who was more than competent, but not without his weaknesses. The competence and the limitations were discussed and defined, in terms of the principal works and in terms of general problems of the aesthetics of fiction. Hemingway's place in the heaven of American novelists may have seemed lowly to him and his friends, but it was no mean place. He was assigned a dwelling somewhat less favorably situated than those of Melville, Hawthorne, Twain, and James, but well within reach of their company.

I am well aware that Ernest Hemingway does not share my high regard for criticism. He spoke out early in his own defense in *Death in the Afternoon*, and what he had to say there was interesting, even enlightening; and it was not always about himself. It was criticism of a sort. His discussion of tragedy in terms of a bull-fight and in terms of the Spaniard's attitude toward death added a fresh note to a subject which had become almost the sole property of dry-as-dust scholarship. Even when one disagreed, it was difficult not to admire. By 1950, however, and the publication of *Across the River and Into the Trees*, it was impossible either to agree or to admire: "The winner! And still champion of the world! Ernest Hemingway!"

Across the River and Into the Trees touched off the controversies and introduced the irrelevancies. Most reviewers did not like the novel, and they were, for the most part, those same critics who had admired the earlier works. Although Ernest Hemingway speaks of all critics as "the enemy," his principal critics—Malcolm Cowley, Robert Penn Warren, and Joseph Warren Beach—have all been his friends. They prepared the way for his greatest successes. His greatest enemies are his disciples, and one of them—John O'Hara—rushed into print in 1950 with claims which were so preposterous that they literally seemed the work of one drunk, drugged, or insane. This article, which was the lead review in the New York Times book review section, did nothing for Hemingway's career except to lend credence to an article by Lillian Ross in the New Yorker, which portrayed Hemingway as the petulant, blood-brother to Colonel Cantwell, touched to the quick by pin-pricks that would have been beneath the attention of even the least of his earlier heroes.

Here the situation rested for two years—until the appearance of *The Old Man and the Sea*. Now, one might have expected that, since this new novel was a worthy successor to the earlier, fine books, it might be discussed with the dispassionate interest it deserved. But, no! Reviewers rushed into print with statements obviously designed to fan the old fires of controversy. In brief, what they said was this: "You thought the champ was down; you'd counted him out. Here he is—back, not only still in possession of the belt, but with one bigger and brighter than ever" (Hemingway admirers share his enthusiasm for the language of sports); these "friends" of Hemingway seemed to speak for all America, if not the whole world: "Here is the greatest novel ever written in America! Not even his enemies will deny it!" The most revealing statement was made with irrepressible glee: "Here you are, you symbol chasers, everything is here, go out and find it!"

Does one fight with such people? Who are they? It is difficult even to identify them. Yet it is equally difficult not to be irritated by them, not so much because of their zeal, but because they confuse the issues. Who is on trial—the critics? Of course, in a sense they are, because they must accept the responsibility for their judgments. But an author such as Hemingway is on trial too—not as his "friends" seem to think, for his reputation, because he has never had the reputation they claim for him; his reputation is secure. It is his reputation which causes his books to *deserve* the consideration of competent critics. There is no battle between Hemingway and modern criticism; the battle is between Hemingway's "friends" and the non-existent "critic" whom they have created; it is a sham battle.

Yet even a sham battle does damage by deflecting interest from what is important to what is unimportant. The important things are Hemingway's works and the reputation they have achieved. At present, I am willing to take the judgment of competent critics that Hemingway's work is among the most significant fiction produced by an American, and I accept this judgment both for reasons given by these responsible critics and for reasons of my own. I do not, however, consider any single book the equal of such works as *Moby Dick*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *The Scarlet Letter*, or *The Wings of the Dove*. At the present moment, I am not sure whether I prefer *A Farewell to Arms* to *The Sun Also Rises* (although I have said in print that I prefer the former, which I did at the time), but I do feel certain that both are superior to the novel which I would place third on the list, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. I do not think that Hemingway's work, finally, will be evaluated as high as William Faulkner's, although these two authors will come to seem more similar to all of us than they now do. I continue to think of *Across the River and Into the Trees* as a failure, and even as a failure, nowhere near as important to our understanding of Hemingway as another failure, *To Have and Have Not*. I do not consider *The Old Man and the Sea* a novel at all (although I am willing to concede the unimportance of this statement), but see it as an over-extended short story, in conception one of Hemingway's best, but finally a less successful story than "The Short

Happy Life of Francis Macomber" or the short story that it most resembles: "The Undeclared."

I realize that such statements need justification, but it is not as though Ernest Hemingway's work has not received serious and competent consideration. I differ in my own judgment from those critics I have mentioned only in minor ways, except, possibly, for what I have said about *The Old Man and the Sea*. Joseph Warren Beach, for instance, considers *For Whom the Bell Tolls* superior to the two best-known earlier novels, but he does so for excellent reasons which one can admire without wholly agreeing with them. In the last issue of this review, John McCormick made a case for *The Sun Also Rises* which, I must admit, greatly influenced my own judgment of that novel. Now, within the past few months, two book-length studies of Ernest Hemingway have appeared, both of which assume a certain undisputed excellence in Hemingway as an American writer of fiction, but which approach an examination of that excellence from two quite different points of view.

Both of these books have interesting and valuable things to say about the works. The first, *Hemingway, the Writer as Artist*, by Carlos Baker, displays great proficiency in an analysis of the best novels and stories. The second, *Ernest Hemingway* by Philip Young, relates Hemingway's work to its background in the American Mid-West and to an American fictional tradition in a way which makes us wonder why someone had not performed this task much earlier.

When I say, however, that these two books approach their subject from two different points of view, I mean that in Philip Young we see the literary critic at work, attempting to define and evaluate a certain body of work, both in terms of his own capabilities and in terms of what other critics have accomplished in the past; in Carlos Baker we see the analytic critic at his best when Mr. Baker is at work upon those works which are unanimously considered to have achieved a high degree of success; too often, however, we have instead of the critic, the apologist, recognizing little error and very few limitations in his subject. Mr. Baker does not say, as John O'Hara did, that Ernest Hemingway is the greatest author in the English language since Shakespeare, but there is little in what he does say to disavow—or even to qualify—such a judgment. His tone, which is often touchy and intolerant, especially in those rare instances when he acknowledges opposition of any kind to any of Hemingway's work, lends weight to the general impression that he believes every word of Hemingway's to be stamped with the same indelible mark of greatness. His analysis of those works which have been most heavily criticized—*To Have and Have Not*, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and *Across the River and Into the Trees*—valuable though they are in providing special insights, cavalierly disregards comments by other critics who have considered them, or, at most, relegates notice of them to an occasional footnote.

Mr. Young's book, on the other hand, while not so skillful in analysis as Mr. Baker's (it even shows signs of careless

reading, as when he has Francis Macomber engage in two *separate* lion hunts), does something which seems to me of extreme value in a study of Ernest Hemingway at this point in his career: it relates the works to the author and to each other and to other Americans from whom Hemingway is shown to derive. Also, Mr. Young does not hesitate to make judgments of the value of individual works and to indicate the causes of failure as well as of success. The novels, he appears to rate in this order: 1. *A Farewell to Arms*, 2. *The Sun Also Rises*, 3. *The Old Man and the Sea*, 4. *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, 5. *To Have and Have Not*, 6. *Across the River and Into the Trees*.

I can find little to disagree with in such a rating aside from the place assigned to *The Old Man and the Sea*. Mr. Baker would disagree, I imagine, particularly on the placing of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. But it is not merely the placing which is at odds or which is most important. Mr. Baker, as one of Ernest Hemingway's "friendly" critics, would object greatly to Philip Young's estimation of *Across the River and Into the Trees*. In the sham battle over Hemingway's reputation, an adverse judgment of this novel has become a sign and token of the enemy. Mr. Baker differs from the extreme "friends," in that he is the only apologist who has made an extended defense. He calls *Across the River and Into the Trees* a "prose poem," which it undoubtedly is; he says that its theme is "the three ages of man," which it well may be; he compares it to Mann's *Death in Venice*, which is not wholly inappropriate. He states his final position thus:

Across the River and Into the Trees is not one of Hemingway's major novels. It was not meant to be, any more than *Eclogue X* was meant to match the *Aeneid*, or *Paradise Regained* to duplicate *Paradise Lost*. One might construct a rough table of correspondence in order to place the book in its relations to the best of the earlier works of long fiction. If *A Farewell to Arms* was his *Romeo and Juliet*, and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* his *King Lear*, the mid-century novel could perhaps be called a lesser kind of *Winter's Tale* or *Tempest*. Its tone is elegiac. It moves like a love lyric. The round within which its forces are deployed is the rough shape of a life.

The most serious attempt to evaluate the novel here is in its designation as "a lesser kind of *Winter's Tale* or *Tempest*," but the suggestion is that Ernest Hemingway, in the serenity of his old age, has constructed a poetic elegy in the story of Colonel Cantwell, capable of comparison with Shakespeare's late works. A more appropriate comparison, in my opinion, would be between *Tom Sawyer* and *Tom Sawyer, Detective*, where an attempt was made to repeat an early success by reviving the form but perverting the content. Mr. Young states his conclusions on *Across the River and Into the Trees*, thus:

... this is one of his weakest books ... a novel which for its author, he has indicated, is almost intolerably poignant, but which readers who are sympathetic to Hemingway found painful.

The extended reasoning of each critic, we shall have to leave to a comparison of the two books by those who are

interested. My own special interest at the present is in the evaluation of *The Old Man and the Sea*, which appeared too late to receive a full treatment by Mr. Baker, but which he read in time, apparently, to insert a comment in the form of a footnote. Here our two critics would appear to be in agreement. Mr. Baker says, "Hemingway's characteristic union of Dichtung and Wahrheit is nowhere better exemplified than in this newest of his stories." Mr. Young states: "The action is swift, tight, exact; the construction is perfect, and the story is exciting. . . . In addition, although *The Old Man and the Sea* is not necessarily Hemingway's greatest book, it is the one in which he has said the finest single thing he has ever had to say as well as he can ever hope to say it."

It is speculation, but probably not unfair, to say that this last book appeared too late for either Mr. Baker or Mr. Young to approach it in exactly the same way they appraised the earlier works; and that if they had had more time to consider, Mr. Baker's judgment would have remained the same, although completely documented, while Mr. Young's account might have been somewhat tempered by the effects of re-reading. In saying this, I am implying, first, that Mr. Young practices the craft of the critic more completely than Mr. Baker, and, second, that my own judgment of *The Old Man and the Sea* is that it is not as successful as either of these critics judge it to be.

Apparently, both critics grant this story only one limitation: its length and pretensions. It is, in short, a slighter work than the more successful novels, they say, but it is, within these limits, almost perfect. I would say, to the contrary, as I suggested above, that it is not a novel at all, that its genre is the short story, and that even in comparison with the best of the short stories, it is not only not perfect, it is less successful than at least two of Hemingway's earlier stories with a similar theme, "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber" and "The Undefeated." It is a much better work than *Across the River and Into the Trees*, but as an indication of Hemingway's talent, it says as much about his weaknesses as it does about his greatness.

The simplicity of incident in *The Old Man and the Sea* has been pointed out most often as a characteristic of its success. With this I am in agreement, but this is also the basis for my calling it a short story rather than a novel; but this is not the most important characteristic of the novel, as witness *War and Peace*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, or *Tom Jones*. The entire story is focussed upon the struggle between Santiago, the old man, and the largest fish he was ever to meet in a life-time of fishing. Two things are against Santiago, his age and the distance he had to go from the shore. As a result, he captures the fish but loses all that is of apparent (i.e., material) value to sharks before his return. The only excuse I can find for calling this a novel is the number of words it contains, for its focus upon a single incident in the long life of Santiago, fulfills the traditional concept of the short story more completely than do many other of Hemingway's own shorter works. This would be a minor matter, were it

not for my belief that the story's greatest limitation is its length. We are told not only too much about the old man and his experience, but we are told also too much about what the incidents are supposed to mean. It takes thirty pages to get the old man away from the land—to develop a relationship between him and a young admirer which the old Hemingway would have accomplished in two or three at the most. It takes him fifty pages to find and catch the fish. It takes forty more to cover the attacks by sharks and the return to shore. Only the last five pages give us the typical Hemingway economy of language and event. (And it must be remembered that this is an activity much less complicated, and more familiar, than the bullfight of "The Undefeated.") Details here, such as the injury to the old man's hand, are repeated until their effects are blunted; we are told too often that the old man had gone "too far outside." Sometimes such repetition is freighted with unnecessary comment, such as:

His choice had been to stay in the deep dark water far out beyond all snares and traps and treacheries. My choice was to go there to find him beyond all people. Beyond all people in the world. Now we are joined together and have been since noon. And no one to help either one of us.

.

I do not understand these things, he thought. But it is good that we do not have to try to kill the sun or the moon or the stars. It is enough to live on the sea and kill our true brothers.

You are killing me, fish, the old man thought. But you have a right to. Never have I seen a greater, or more beautiful, or a calmer or more noble thing than you, brother. Come on and kill me. I do not care who kills who.

.

"But man is not made for defeat," he said. "A man can be destroyed but not defeated."

.

It is silly not to hope, he thought. Besides I believe it is a sin. Do not think about sin, he thought. There are enough problems now without sin. Also I have no understanding of it.

I would maintain that all of the comment contained in the above passages is contained in the story, and that with the possible exception of the image of the man and fish joined in the first quotation, nothing is stated with any approach to distinction. Some of the statement, such as that contained in the second quotation, is positively embarrassing. Finally, I am one of those who believe that the basketball talk between the old man and the boy and the baseball images in the old man's mind during his trial of strength and cunning with the fish are unsuccessful—because not integrated into the story. Imagine, for instance, how many footnotes would be necessary in order to prepare an edition for a French or a German, and you will see the most obvious objection; more fundamental is the lowering of tone which comes, without being saved by a partial irony, for American sports are not capable—at least, not yet—of carrying the mythological burden Hemingway puts upon them.

Perhaps the most disheartening aspect of Hemingway's career is that which many readers commented upon following the appearance of *Across the River and Into the Trees*—his tendency to repeat himself. This did not appear true following the appearance of either *To Have and Have Not* or *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, but it appears very true today. He is incapable of surprising us, as William Faulkner is, for instance; and while *The Old Man and the Sea* is probably a more successful effort than *Requiem for a Nun*, it tends to confirm a fear that Hemingway in his late works is likely merely to repeat the formula of his early successes. To say this is not to say that it is true, nor is it an indication of ill-will. At this moment, I am convinced that whoever calls attention to such a possibility shows a greater respect for Hemingway as a significant figure in American letters than he who calls him the Shakespeare of our age. Critics should be allowed their quarrels over the value of Hemingway's work as a whole or over any particular work, for only through such differences will the true values emerge. But it is not a matter of choosing up sides. Criticism is not a game, nor is it like war, where one is forced to be wholeheartedly for one side or the other. Criticism is an imperfect instrument in the hands of a fallible human being—the instrument utilized for the examination and evaluation of an incomplete, but often amazingly successful, human accomplishment. When it becomes an instrument of battle, it is usually a pop-gun engaged in a sham battle.

Joseph Warren Beach (review date spring 1954)

SOURCE: Beach, Joseph Warren. Review of *Hemingway: The Writer as Artist*. *American Quarterly* 6, no. 1 (spring 1954): 79-83.

[In the following mixed assessment of Hemingway: *The Writer as Artist*, Beach commends Baker's analysis of specific stories and novels, but criticizes his treatment of Hemingway's aesthetic.]

Even if he is not always satisfied with Professor Baker's approach to the esthetic problem, the devoted reader of Hemingway must hail this study [entitled *Hemingway: The Writer as Artist*] as of decided importance for an understanding and evaluation of Hemingway's writing. To begin with, it is full and detailed in its account of the conditions under which each work was written and published and of Hemingway's intentions in general and in particular. Frequent quotations from Hemingway's letters to Baker underline the zeal with which the latter has gone about to inform himself. But what is more important, in his analysis of Hemingway's books in relation to his artistic intentions, Baker gives us a better notion of the stature of the man than most previous writers. Mr. Baker is, one must admit, an overzealous partisan of Hemingway, so deeply impressed with his greatness and integrity as an artist that he inclines to defend him against all comers and ignore the limitations under which Hemingway labored by virtue

of his personal temper and the historical moment that so largely determined his *Weltansicht*. But it is better to be a partisan of Hemingway than the complacent captive of a critical formula that would deny him the right of growth. It is better to overestimate the moral range of *Across the River and Into the Trees* than to underestimate that of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. It is better to include the positive humanism of Hemingway in one's view of him than to confine oneself to an appreciation of his irony and his power of evocative understatement. Mr. Baker belongs to a generation that does not have first to get over its shock at whatever in Hemingway offends the sensibilities of a Victorian reader. He lives in Hemingway's world of Armageddon—an Armageddon that does not promise an end to the world but an indefinite continuance of fighting among men and of violent struggle with natural forces that do not favor us more than they work against us. What Mr. Baker makes us feel more than anything else is the accent on virility among the personal qualities celebrated by Hemingway in men engaged in this struggle.

My own reading of Baker's book just preceded my reading of *The Old Man and the Sea*, and the power and beauty of this latest story, too late for more than a footnote commentary in Baker's study, came in strong confirmation of Baker's rendering of the moral quality of Hemingway's imaginative world. The two things that Hemingway places highest all along are the ruthless recognition of reality and the dogged determination to stand up against reality and fight it through to the end for the maintenance of one's integrity. In its most elementary sense this means the struggle for existence. As Hemingway once wrote to Maxwell Perkins, the first thing you have to do in this world is to last in it and not be smashed by it, "and it is the same way with your work." And Mr. Baker thus summarizes the kind of "stoic morality" that Hemingway practices and dramatizes in his work: "One finds implicit in all his work the half-humorous, half-bitter acceptance of what the act of living brings, though with him to endure is never enough. With the endurance and acceptance comes a recognition of the necessity of right action for the soul's sake, the counsel of freedom from perturbation and fear, and the constantly renewed assertion of the complete independence of the inner self." As for the truth or reality of things, Mr. Baker makes clear that this does not mean simply the objective truth of facts unassimilated to man's system of values. The facts must of course be taken subjectively whether for art or for ethics; but the sense for fact must always be active in the elimination of all that is false or self-deceiving in the subjective view. As Colonel Cantwell says in *Across the River*, "Every day is a new and fine illusion. But you can cut out everything phony about the illusion as though you would cut it out with a straight-edge razor."

Mr. Baker pays much attention to the "symbolic substructure" of Hemingway's stories, and it is a pity that *The Old Man and the Sea* came too late for him to deal with this finest example of Hemingway's use of symbols in a strictly realistic narrative. Baker does speak in a footnote of "its underlying use of Christian symbolism," referring, pre-