

THE MOTIF OF LOSS: A UNIFYING ELEMENT OF  
ERNEST HEMINGWAY'S ISLANDS IN THE STREAM

by

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In his review of Ernest Hemingway's Islands in the Stream, John Updike refers to the work as "a gallant wreck of a novel." It consists of material, Updike says, "that the author during his lifetime did not see fit to publish; therefore it should not be held against him. That parts of it are good is entirely to his credit; that other parts are puerile and, in a pained way, aimless testifies to the odds against which Hemingway, in the last two decades of his life, brought anything to completion."<sup>1</sup> Like many of his fellow critics who reviewed Islands shortly after its publication in fall 1970, Updike complains about the lack of editorial comment, either on the textual emendations or on the author's design of the book. Updike describes the novel as "a trio of large fragments crudely unified by a Caribbean setting and the nominal presence of Thomas Hudson. 'Bimini' is a collection of episodes that show only a groping acquaintance with one another; 'Cuba' is a lively but meandering excursion in local color that, when the painter's first wife materializes, weirdly veers into a dark and private region; and 'At Sea' is an adventure story of almost slick intensity."<sup>2</sup>

Updike comments further on the novel's lack of sharp focus. He finds Thomas Hudson to be a character who "does not grow but dwindles, from an affectionate and baffled father and artist into a rather too expertly raffish waterfront character into a bleak man-hunter, a comic-book superhuman holding unlooked-for bubbles of stoic meditation and personal sorrow."<sup>3</sup> Along with problems of unity, Updike sees the book's connection with its author as another flaw: " . . . Islands in the Stream, even where most effective, inspires us with a worried concern for the celebrity who wrote it. His famous drinking, his methodical artistic devotions, his dawn awakenings,

his women, his cats, even his mail . . . are all there, mixed with less easily publicised strains. . . ."4

Malcolm Cowley views the author-character relationship of Hemingway and Thomas Hudson slightly differently:

Thomas Hudson is not a hero of myth. He is based on Hemingway himself . . . but in fact he represents only one side of the author: I mean the mask or persona that Hemingway adopted in his relations with the world. Thus, he is brave, competent, wise in a fatherly fashion, and able to hold his liquor--as Hemingway truly was in life--but those qualities in the author were mingled with others that make him an endless study. Hudson gives hardly a hint of having deeper qualities except for his feeling of despair, regarding which the author brings forward a drastic explanation: it was caused, he gives us to understand, by the death of Hudson's three sons. But the reader is likely to feel that the despair is of longer standing, based as it seems to be on the same feeling in the author, and that the sons have served as a blood sacrifice to the exigencies of fiction. That is the weaker side of Islands in the Stream, but one must add that it is a bold, often funny, always swashbuckling book. . . . It gives one a new respect for the efforts of his later years. Handicapped as he was by injuries and admirers, he continued almost to the end a double life, playing the great man in public--and playing the part superbly--then standing alone at his worktable, humble and persistent, while he tried to summon back his early powers.<sup>5</sup>

Because Cowley "read most of the original manuscript" before writing his review, he is able to fill in some of the editorial gaps of Updike's complaint. He describes the three parts of the novel as "separate stories" and applauds Charles Scribner Jr.'s and Mary Hemingway's decisions "first to publish the stories together; then to make some omissions, the longest of which is an interlude in Florida, good enough in itself, that would have made the book less unified; and finally to make no other changes except in Ernest's erratic spelling and punctuation. One is delighted to have the book in its present form."<sup>6</sup>

Edmund Wilson agrees with Cowley that the book should have been published. He also agrees with Updike that "the author is not to be charged

with the defects of manuscript which he did not choose to publish and for which he could now take no responsibility."<sup>7</sup> However, Wilson does not share Updike's need for editorial materials: "I do not agree with those who have thought it a disservice to Hemingway's memory to publish this uncompleted book. Nor do I agree with those who, possessed by the academic mania of exactly reproducing texts, declare that Mrs. Hemingway and the publisher should have printed the manuscript as Hemingway left it, without making the cuts she explains."<sup>8</sup> Wilson re-emphasizes the author's role in the novel as "a concocter of self-inflating fantasies at his most exhibitionistic."<sup>9</sup> "With all its preposterous elements," Wilson contends, "this imperfect work, Islands in the Stream, makes one feel the intensity of a crucial game played against invincible odds as one has not quite been able to do in connection with any of his last three finished novels. . . . It has never been pulled tight or polished, as Hemingway would undoubtedly have done, for his sense of form was exacting. Everything goes on too long, even the most effective episodes. . . ."<sup>10</sup> Unlike most other critics of Islands, Wilson makes an attempt to explain why Hemingway did not finish revising the book himself. Only in this novel, Wilson writes, "is Hemingway making an effort to deal candidly with the discords of his own personality--his fears, which he has tried to suppress, his mistakes, which he has tried to justify, the pangs of bad conscience, which he has brazened out. This effort is not entirely successful; hence, I imagine, his putting the manuscript away."<sup>11</sup>

Like Updike and Cowley, Wilson acknowledges the affective power of the work. "One is made to feel accutely . . . an ever-present moral malaise. . . . There is something more than needlings of conscience; there is that certainty of the imminent death that has threatened in so much of his writing. And the book is given special force and dignity by one's knowledge of the



writer's suicide."<sup>12</sup>

For Timothy Foote, who reviewed the novel in Time, the "force and dignity" of Islands in the Stream are somehow revealed, even though he feels that it is "not a novel in any well-made sense of the word. It is more like a muted literary son et lumière [a theatrical sound-and-light display] in which the aging author reviews and reflects upon the preoccupations of a working lifetime--death and love, work and action. It is all too easy, especially in the digressive anecdotes, to find him at his easy-to-parody worst." In some ways, declares Foote, Islands is "a rambling family anecdote."<sup>13</sup>

Guy Davenport in his critique written for the National Review also comments briefly on the "shapeless" structure of the novel: "By using the same, the only prose he ever wrote, apparently not noticing that it is utterly inappropriate for the tale he's telling, Hemingway has scooped together a rigamarole of his favorite themes, and strung them out like so much washing on the line. And yet this late, wordy, shapeless novel is readable; it is still the old Hemingway of the battlefields, the cafes, the bitchy women, the mercurochrome. It is not Hemingway, but the world that has changed."<sup>14</sup>

John Aldridge, who finds Islands both very good and very bad--"in some places downright wonderful, in others as sad and embarrassingly self-indulgent as the work of any sophomore"<sup>15</sup>--also faults the novel for its weakness in narrative structure and thematic design, comparing it unfavorably with For Whom the Bell Tolls:

Those sections that are devoted mainly to the description of physical action are almost invariably excellent. Those in which the physical action is interrupted to give Robert Jordan and Thomas Hudson an opportunity to think, to analyze their feelings or to find intellectual justification for doing what they are about to do, are as vapid and pretentious as such passages nearly always are in Hemingway. . . . In [Islands] there is no coherently

formed or sufficiently compressed narrative structure in which the action can take on the intensity of the meaning it would seem potentially capable of developing. There is also no thematic design strong enough to support the weight of Hudson's sagging cerebral muscles or to give his thoughts the kind of relevance to the action that Jordan's can finally be seen to have. Where For Whom the Bell Tolls is held together by the rigid economy of the form and the tightly interlocking relationship of events occurring over a period of a few days, the new novel is composed of episodes much more widely spaced in time and only vaguely connected by an evolving plot. The result is that such dramatic tension as may be generated in any one of the episodes tends to be dissipated in the lapse of time separating it from the next. The problem is not simply that the book is divided into three parts but that, as a novel, it disintegrates into three parts or long short stories, and these are related only by the fact that Hudson is the central if somewhat opaque character in all of them. Yet taken separately, as given the looseness of structure, they must be taken, many of the episodes contain the most exciting and effective writing Hemingway has ever done.<sup>16</sup>

A brief survey of the critical reception of Islands supports Joseph DeFalco's contention that the early reviews "were unanimous almost in their assessment of the work as a rather cheap and consciously contrived affair that marked the disintegration of Hemingway's power as an artist."<sup>17</sup> But DeFalco provides a refreshing assertion of his own: "The bitterness and despair of Thomas Hudson in Islands in the Stream may or may not reflect a kindred feeling in Hemingway at certain moments in his life. Attending to the imaginative structure of the work, however, reveals that Hemingway's artistic vision mediates Hudson's bleakness and that an authorial judgment of a different order informs the work."<sup>18</sup> While Aldridge and other critics compare Islands to For Whom the Bell Tolls, DeFalco links it to The Old Man and the Sea, a logical connection since, as Carlos Baker points out, The Old Man and the Sea was originally planned as a part of Islands.<sup>19</sup> In discussing Hudson's basic flaw as shown in the three sections of Islands, DeFalco says, "Put simply, that flaw is his inability to comprehend the nature of reality. As much as Santiago is an idealization of Everyman, so Hudson is

a realistic presentation of the way most men respond to the bewildering flux which is reality. Before Hudson can utter those final words [at novel's end, Hudson says, "'I think I understand, Willie.'" ] . . . he must undergo a journey of pain and suffering. Once again Hemingway employs the motif of 'The Way of the Cross' in order to achieve his thematic purpose."<sup>20</sup>

With the publication of the revised fourth edition of his book Hemingway: the Writer as Artist, Carlos Baker abolished much of the mystery which, many critics complained, surrounded both the writing and later publication of Islands.

. . . Hemingway's next posthumous work after A Moveable Feast was the three-part novel, Islands in the Stream. It was written at intervals in 1946-1947 and in 1950-1951. In point of publication, if not of composition, it was his seventh major work of fiction. At the time of his death in 1961 it had stood virtually untouched for about ten years. He generic working title for the manuscript had been "The Sea Book"--by which he meant that he thought of it as one segment of a huge trilogy on the Land, the Air, and the Sea. . . . The part relating to the sea was the only one of the three that he contrived to finish.<sup>21</sup>

Baker substantiates Cowley's comment on Charles Scribner Jr.'s and Mary Hemingway's activities in editing the book. He explains their findings as follows:

The "Bimini" materials, though still somewhat inchoate, with several false starts and a number of confusing name-changes among the leading characters, told a story that, with more of the extensive cutting that Hemingway himself had begun in 1951, could be made into a book. Although some of the conversations in the Havana section ran on too long, this part could survive the few block-deletions that were judged necessary. The sea-chase story [Part Three] stood up so remarkably well that little beyond the customary copy-editing was required. . . . At Scribner's suggestion, the three parts were named simply "Bimini," "Cuba," and "At Sea". . . . Bearing in mind that her husband had long thought of calling Part I The Island and the Stream, but recognizing that more islands than Bimini were involved in the trilogy, Mary Hemingway suggested that by changing the title to Islands In the Stream, his original intentions could be best served.<sup>22</sup>

Baker, like Hemingway, views the three parts of the novel as a whole. For him, the unifying element is the Hemingway-Hudson, author-character relationship which he defines as narcissism. This narcissism, as Baker points out, is a result of Hemingway's awareness of his place in literary history. "To his original impulse to transform his personal past into material for art was added an ulterior and perhaps mainly subconscious determination to exploit it as a means of justifying himself and his actions in the eyes of the world."<sup>23</sup> After referring to Hemingway's condemnation of James Joyce for having done the same thing, Baker says, "Nostalgia of various kinds and degrees shadowed and colored his perspectives on his past, romanticizing his fictional self-portraits and even giving prominent place to some of his own personal idiosyncracies, as if he hoped to persuade readers to accept these, along with the rest, in lieu of the genuinely objective art he had once been able to achieve."<sup>24</sup>

Islands, however, can be read as a unified novel without the autobiographical enrichment which Carlos Baker supplies. Although I do not discount Baker's unifying motifs, I think it important to consider another form of unity, one which John Aldridge regards as a defect. In writing of the novel Aldridge says, "Hudson is primarily the product of his past losses."<sup>25</sup> The key work here is "losses," and by accepting it as an asset rather than a defect, one discovers that the episodes in "Bimini," the conversations and interior monologues of "Cuba," and the action story of "At Sea" become parts of a unified work. Aldridge, moreover, neglects to consider the losses suffered by the other characters in the novel. If one views this motif of loss as loss of innocence, loss of love, and loss of life, each section of the novel is then seen as related to the others and the work achieves an overall unity. Clearly, Islands in the Stream is more than the mere conversion

of Hemingway's experiences into those of Thomas Hudson. As this study will indicate, Hemingway uses the loss motif to create in the character of Thomas Hudson a man who alternately relies on the disciplines of art and duty and the anesthetic of alcohol to cope with his losses. The loss motif is brought finally to completion when Thomas Hudson willingly faces the losses which reality forces him to accept. At the end he no longer needs the consolations of art, drink, and duty to help him meet his death--the ultimate loss--with dignity, hope, courage, and honesty.

#### Part One--"Bimini"

In the first section of Islands in the Stream, Ernest Hemingway tells the story of Thomas Hudson's life as a successful artist on the island of Bimini. More particularly, the story centers on a summer visit of Hudson's three sons by his two wives, as well as on the reappearance of his friend, the writer Roger Davis. In his discussion of Hemingway's use of autobiographical material for this section, Carlos Baker notes, "Any reader who knows something of the real-life sources on which the story drew feels sometimes like a spectator watching from the wings, rather than from the pit, the performance of a sleight-of-hand magician."<sup>26</sup> For Baker the novel lacks symbolic structure; Hemingway, he contends, is "content to let day follow day and incident succeed incident with only minimal attention to that fusion of imaginative and emotional powers that might have given unity to his diverse materials. Narrative progression was now linear rather than cubic, and depth was sacrificed to surface. Even his mastery of the art of dialogue for characterization and advancement of the action had suffered a change. Although conversations filled page after page . . . they were too often repetitive and banal, as if Hemingway were prepared to assuage his rather touching desire for

productivity at the expense of quality."<sup>27</sup>

Chaman Nahal, in the appendix to his book, The Narrative Patterns of Ernest Hemingway's Fiction, states that ". . . on the whole, the first part ["Bimini"] drags and is slow in gathering momentum; in my opinion it is the weakest section of the three. . . . The reader is obliged to wade through many pages of tiresome talk, neither original nor relevant to the story!"<sup>28</sup>

I believe that both Baker and Nahal are wrong. In terms of the loss motif, the conversations among Thomas Hudson, his sons, and Roger Davis are as relevant as the action sequences. Through both techniques, Hemingway explores the loss of innocence from many points of view. For David, the middle son, the loss is framed in the "coming to manhood" theme. He becomes involved in a typical Hemingway experience, fighting and losing a six-hour battle with a thousand-pound swordfish. David's growth is linked to that of the writer Roger Davis, who, since the age of twelve, has been forced to cope with his feelings of guilt stemming from the death of his younger brother. Because Roger Davis is a friend of long standing, he can also share in Thomas Hudson's and young Tom's memories of life in Paris. For young Tom, they are reminiscences of childhood; for Thomas Hudson, an idyllic pause before the disintegration of his first marriage and the inevitable separation from his son, with the subsequent abuse and diminishment of his artistic talents.

The swordfishing incident seems to have received the most varied critical interpretations of any of the "Bimini" episodes. For Baker, ". . . the fight with the broadbill, which requires all his [David's] courage and staying power, reads almost like a dress rehearsal for Santiago's lonely struggle with the marlin, which in 1946-1947 had not yet been written."<sup>29</sup> Most critics, however, agree that there is a difference between David's struggle and that

of Santiago; but they do not necessarily view the incident as an initiation story. John Updike acidly reflects, "Even in the first, most lyric passages, when he [Hudson] is visited on Bimini by his three sons, what lives for the father-narrator are scenes of savagery--the machine-gunning of a shark, a boy's day-long wrestle with a monstrous swordfish, the child, bent double, bleeding in hands and feet, held fast to the fighting chair by the surrounding men, his guardians, so he can experience 'love!'"<sup>30</sup> Updike also remarks upon David's claim of identity with the fish during the worst parts of the ordeal.<sup>31</sup> DeFalco finds this "union of identities" a "mystical experience" and an indication that "both Hudson and Rodger [sic] see David's encounter with the broadbill as a crucifixion."<sup>32</sup>

But Baker sees the killing of the shark which attacks David and his later encounter with the swordfish as representing "stages in the boy's progress into maturity, and his conduct in both instances goes far toward making him the true hero of the novel. . . . David's fight is carried on in the midst of company--too much company, as it turns out, and all of them talking so reassuringly and repetitively as a cheering section that they lessen instead of heightening the reader's appreciation of the boy's bravery and skill."<sup>33</sup>

John Aldridge also remarks on David's heroism: "The pathos of the boy's almost superhuman effort--which of course ends in last-minute failure--is brilliantly evoked, and one realizes that here is a dimension of Hemingway one has seen before but perhaps not often enough, that side of his nature which was capable of responding not merely to bluster and bravado but with admiration for bravery in the weak and with tenderness toward weakness in the brave."<sup>34</sup>

That David lost more than the swordfish is made quite clear by a close inspection of the text. Eddy, the rummy cook, is the first to talk of David's



ordeal as a loss of innocence. When David notes the soreness in his arms and shoulders, Eddy says, "'That's natural. . . . That'll make a man of you.'" <sup>35</sup> Thomas Hudson also sees the fishing episode as a maturing experience for his son. "'There is a time boys have to do things,'" he explains to Tommy, "'if they are ever going to be men. That's where Dave is now'" (p. 131). David's coming of age is touched on again later when Thomas Hudson tries to analyze the experiences of the day: ". . . It seemed as though all of his children except Tom had gone a long way from him or he had gone away from them. David had gone with Roger. . . . But Roger understood him better than his own father did. He was happy they did understand each other so well but tonight he felt lonely in some way about it" (p. 143). The next day he admits that "'something else was at stake'" besides catching the swordfish (p. 153). David, too, senses that his experiences that summer have thrust him toward manhood. "'I know too much for a kid, papa,'" he tells his father on the day following his ordeal with the swordfish. "'Papa, you excuse me for talking seriously. I know it isn't polite. But I like to sometimes because there is so much we don't know and then when we do know, it comes so fast it goes over you like a wave'" (p. 162).

Hemingway has already foreshadowed Roger Davis's link with David through the story of Roger's loss of innocence. In an earlier conversation with Thomas Hudson, Roger explains that his younger brother was drowned in a canoeing accident. His brother's name was also David. He is still trying to cope with his guilt; "'It's strange when you are a boy. The water was too cold and he let go. But what it added up to was that I came back and he didn't. . . . But it was early to learn about that stuff. And then I loved him very much and I'd always been afraid something would happen to him. The water was cold for me too. . . . I don't think my father ever forgave me



although he tried to understand it. I've wished it was me every day since" (p. 75).

Obviously, Roger's premonitions are not to be ignored. Significantly, David is the Hudson son who is attacked by the shark in the earlier episode. The words which David later speaks to Roger when he is trying to land the swordfish are more than a burst of boyish enthusiasm: "'You tell me what to do and I'll do it until I die. . . . I trust you'" (p. 114). Even young Tom unknowingly connects Roger and David's experiences when he tells his father, "'But you don't know him [David] like we do. He would kill himself to get the fish'" (p. 114). Characteristically, it is Roger who feels "'selfish and guilty as hell'" when David loses the fish (p. 153).

By understanding the link between Roger and David established by their experiences of loss of innocence, one sees that Roger is more than Thomas Hudson's alter ego or the insulator between Hudson and his passion for violence, the two roles which Updike comments on.<sup>36</sup> Even though Roger has failed to boat David's swordfish just as he had failed to save his drowning brother, DeFalco rightly assumes that Roger and David "achieve love in the mutuality of their effort to land the fish. The words that Roger speaks to David after the fish escapes are words that reflect their kinship and common humanity."<sup>37</sup>

As the alter ego or the somewhat less developed twin of Thomas Hudson, Roger is involved in Hudson's other sons' experiences of lost innocence. Andrew, the youngest son, figures as the main character in the drinking charade, which Baker nicely summarizes as "a practical joke designed to confound the members of a yatching party at the Ponce de Léon. Hudson calls it 'the pretend-rummy scene,' and apparently thinks it very funny indeed. He and Roger Davis play the confirmed adult alcoholics. Young Tom's role is to

dissuade Davis from getting drunk again, and young David's is to pretend to have gone on the wagon after a spectacular binge the night before. Andrew, the smallest of the lot, is given the pleasant task of drinking gin as if it were water, as of course it is."<sup>38</sup> The need to pretend Andrew's loss of innocence seems to exist because, from Hudson's point of view, the boy has never been innocent. He is described earlier as having "a dark side to him that nobody except Thomas Hudson could ever understand. Neither of them thought about this except that they recognized it in each other and knew it was bad and the man respected it and understood the boy's having it" (p. 53).

While Andrew's experience of loss of innocence is pretended and David's involves the endurance of pain and suffering, young Tom's growth from child to adolescent is an intellectual and sensory experience. Because he is the only son who shared the Paris life of Thomas Hudson, then the happy, struggling young artist, Tom does his best to jog his father's memories of their Paris days, and thereby provides much of the conversation which the critics find so tiresome.

Young Tom is particularly concerned with remembering the literary and artistic people who were their friends. When James Joyce becomes a topic of conversation, Tom admits happily that he has read Ulysses. "'I read it all. . . . I couldn't understand practically any of it when I first read it, papa, just as you say. But I kept on reading it and now there's part of it I really understand and I can explain it to people. It's certainly made me proud that I was one of Mr. Joyce's friends'" (p. 67). Although Tom's explanation centers on the last part--"'The part where the lady talks out loud to herself'" which gets him into trouble with the schoolmaster when he is caught reading it aloud to his classmates--Tom's interest in the book is as genuine as it can be. In his later discussion with his father about the artist Jules

Pascin, he asks, "'Did Mr. Pascin have a dirty mind?'" (p. 73). Tom explains his concern: "'I told the headmaster neither Papa nor Mr. Joyce had dirty minds and now I can tell him about Mr. Davis if he asks me. He was pretty set on it that I had a dirty mind. But I wasn't worried. There's a boy at school that really has one and you can tell the difference all right'" (p. 74).

As this conversation continues, Tom learns that Pascin, who "used to draw Tommy, mostly on napkins and on the marble top of cafe tables," committed suicide (pp. 73, 74). The critics can bemoan Hemingway's use of autobiographical material in these reminiscences if they like, but he flavors the memories of Thomas Hudson and his son with a bittersweet quality and tone which enhance the motif of lost innocence.

Besides his memories of Joyce, Ezra Pound, and Ford Madox Ford, young Tom remembers "'the way everything smelled in the fall and the carnivals and the way the gravel was dry on top when everything was damp and the wind on the lake to sail the boats and the wind in the trees that brought the leaves down'" (p. 60). He shares his father's memories of shooting pigeons--for the dinner table--by the Medici fountain with a slingshot "'made from a forked branch of a sapling I cut down in the forest of Rambouillet when Tommy's mother and I were on a walking trip there'" (p. 60).

Andrew, the youngest son, seems to sense the nostalgic connection between happiness and poverty which his brother and father feel. To his question, "'Papa, weren't we ever poor?'" Thomas Hudson replies, "'No. I'd gotten over being poor by the time you guys were born. We were broke lots of times but never really poor the way we were with Tom and his mother'" (p. 62). Much later in the novel, Thomas Hudson speculates on the "happiest times" and finds that "they were all happy, really, in the time of innocence

and the lack of useless money and still being able to work and eat'" (p. 448). [Hemingway strikes the same note in A Moveable Feast, which tells of "how Paris was in the early days when we were very poor and very happy."<sup>39</sup>]

Like Roger, Hudson has felt guilt because of his loss of innocence. He has "long ago ceased to worry and he had exorcized guilt with work insofar as he could. . . ." (p. 7). As the novel opens he feels that he is working "as hard as he had ever worked in Paris when young Tom had been a baby" (p. 8). But there was a period in his life--after those early Paris days--when he lost his way. There had been "a time in his life when he had not been disciplined. He had never been truly irresponsible; but he had been undisciplined, selfish, and ruthless. He knew this now . . . because he had finally discovered it for himself. Then he had resolved that he would be selfish only for his painting, ruthless only for his work, and that he would discipline himself and accept the discipline" (p. 9). But the discipline of art can neither completely exorcise the guilt over lost innocence nor insulate him against future loneliness. Knowing that his sons will soon leave, Thomas Hudson "was having a difficult time staying in the carapace of work that he had built for his protection and he thought, if I don't work now I may lose it. Then he thought that there would be time to work when they were all gone. But he knew he must keep on working now or he would lose the security he had built for himself with work" (p. 190). Earlier during his sons' visit he fleetingly wishes that he could always be with his children and that he was still married to young Tom's mother. But "then he thought that was as silly as wishing you had the wealth of the world to use as intelligently as you could; to be able to draw like Leonardo or paint as well as Pieter Brueghel; to have an absolute veto power against all wickedness and be able to detect it infallibly and always justly when it starts and stop it with something as simple as pressing a button and while doing all this

to be always healthy and to live forever and not decay in mind nor body" (pp. 96-97).

Thomas Hudson does not have a veto power over all wickedness in the world, and the threads of the motifs of lost innocence, lost love, and lost life are starkly pulled together in chapter fifteen of "Bimini" when he learns of the death of his two youngest sons. After he boards the ship that will take him to Europe to make funeral arrangements, Hemingway portrays Hudson methodically (though believably) exchanging the discipline of art as protection against guilt for the anesthetic of alcohol as a refuge against grief. "He thought that on the ship he could come to some terms with his sorrow, not knowing, yet, that there are no terms to be made with sorrow. . . . But if it is cured by anything less than death, the chances are that it was not true sorrow. One of the things that blunts it temporarily through blunting everything else is drinking and another thing that can keep the mind away from it is work. . . . But he also knew the drinking would destroy the capacity for producing satisfying work and he had built his life on work for so long now that he kept that as the one thing that he must not lose" (p. 197). As he is drinking and trying to read, he thinks: "You haven't any problem at all . . . You've given them up and they're gone. You should not have loved them so damned much in the first place" (p. 199).

Hudson's memories of his children from this point on in the novel exclusively involve young Tom. The loss of young Tom, who is killed while flying an RAF war plane, links the action of the "Bimini" section to that of "Cuba," which begins some six or seven years later. Also during this interim, Hudson has married a third wife, who significantly does not appear in the novel; a fact which Hemingway uses to typify another aspect of the loss motif--the loss of love.

## Part Two--"Cuba"

"Cuba" opens with Thomas Hudson's return from a mission on his ship as a submarine-chaser during World War II. Baker admirably summarizes Hudson's situation at the opening of this section: "This multiplication of bereavements [climaxed and re-emphasized with his knowledge of young Tom's death] supplemented in a minor way by his separation from his third wife, leaves Hudson inwardly distraught, outwardly cynical, and above all, lonely. Having now given up his painting and devoted himself to the Q-boat command, he has exchanged the creative role of artist for that of man of action, with nothing to fill the vacancy caused by his abandonment of his true profession--nothing, that is, except the consolations to be gained from the worship of his pets, . . . and the sentimental sympathies of Honest Lil, his oldest friend at the Floridita."<sup>40</sup>

The allusion to Hudson's third wife, Baker believes, is Hemingway's narcissistic reference to his own third wife, Martha Gellhorn.<sup>41</sup> Her absence in the novel and the empty house underscore the loss-of-love motif which unifies Part Two of Islands in the Stream. In a conversation with Honest Lil and Willie, one of the crewmen from his boat, Hudson says that his relationship with his absent wife "'couldn't be worse'" (p. 271). His third marriage may have resulted from his loneliness. Or perhaps it was intended to show his forgetfulness of past lessons learned. "He had trained himself," he had boasted in Part One, "not to quarrel with women anymore and he had learned how not to get married" (p. 8). With the deaths of his children, the dissolution of his first two marriages, and the probably ending of the third, Thomas Hudson can no longer fill the role of loving father or husband. His experiences of love are now vicarious--he can only

remember the happy times of fatherhood--and the cat, Boise, and occasionally Honest Lil have taken the place of his absent wife. The love of an old friend, in the person of Roger Davis, is also denied him; Roger does not reappear in the novel after Part One. And, underlying this loss-of-love motif is Hudson's loss of self-esteem, which provides the link between Part Two and Part Three of the novel.

"Cuba" opens with much commentary on the cats and dogs which live at the Finca. Baker says that "'the information piece'" on the cats was something "which he [Hemingway] had once proposed to include in his memoirs. . . ." <sup>42</sup> Nahal finds that "the opening pages, where the cats are described, are superb. . . . They [the cats] represent for us the larger life of the universe. . . . Each of these cats is unique and has a separate personality; Boise, Goats, and Princessa are not so many names; they are so many distinct individualities. Thomas Hudson sleeps with them, shares his meals with them, goes out for walks with them, and so ingenious is the presentation that soon we forget that they are cats and accept them as humans." <sup>43</sup> The cats, I might add, also serve as touchstones for the loss-of-love motif.

The cat Princessa reminds Hudson of a none-too-honorable affair which he had with a princess during a trip through Africa and the Holy Land. The Princess is married, a fact which does not bother Hudson. The Baron, a fellow passenger on the trip who is also an old friend of the Princess's family, asks Hudson how he got himself "'mixed up with such good dull people. You don't need her for your painting or anything like that, do you?'" Hudson replies, "'No. That's not the way it's done. I like her very much. . . . But I'm not in love with her and it's getting very complicated'" (p. 231). Even so, Hudson is in no hurry to leave Paris where the trip has ended. Hudson's memories of the affair dwindle to irony: "And why go on

with that? he thought now. The Baron was dead and the Krauts had Paris and the Princess did not have a baby. There would be no blood of his in any royal house, . . . unless he had a nosebleed sometime in Buckingham Palace, which seemed extremely unlikely" (p. 232).

Curiously, while Nahal does not view Hudson's relationship with his cat Boise as strange or perverted, he finds the episode with the Princess and two others--Hudson's account of his one-night-stand with three Chinese girls sent to him by a millionaire friend in Hong Kong, and the later dream sequence of Part Three--to contain "a measure of sexual inelegance."<sup>44</sup> For him, Hemingway's descriptions in these episodes "are lewd and border on repelling exhibitionism."<sup>45</sup>

If Princessa reminds Hudson of his loss of self-esteem and honor, then the cat Boise, besides partly filling the void left by his third wife, reminds Hudson of his dead son. Hemingway has Hudson explain: "The cat had originally been named after the cruiser Boise but now . . . the man had called him Boy for short" (p. 204). And "Now the boy was gone and the kitten had grown into an old cat and had outlived the boy. The way he and Boise felt now, he thought, neither one wanted to outlive the other. I don't know how many people and animals have been in love before. . . . It probably is a very comic situation. . . . No, he thought, I do not find it comic any more than it is comic for a boy's cat to outlive him" (p. 212).

From the cat "who outlived the boy," it is an easy transition for Thomas Hudson to the cat named Goats (whose early name was Friendless) that ". . . was not allergic to the basic rum smell, had no prejudice against drunkenness, and revelled in the rich whore smell, as full-bodied as a fine Christmas fruitcake" (p. 216). The remedies of alcohol, and his friendship of sorts with the prostitute Honest Lil, are the means which Thomas Hudson now uses



to cope with the losses of his children, his wife, and his artistic creativity. But as he discovers on his visit to the Floridita, the continuous drinking of double frozen daiquiris and the sentimental talking with Honest Lil sharpen rather than deaden his awareness of his losses.

From Baker one learns that ". . . Honest Lil was well-known in Havana as Leopoldina. . . ." But more important, he describes her as "happily settled at Hudson's elbow, listening to his store of anecdotes, and kindly convinced that by getting him to talk, she can help him to shed his burden of sorrow."<sup>46</sup> Nahal's comments on Honest Lil are much more ecstatic. Her description, he claims, "is the purest and finest of its kind, ranking in artistic perfection with Hemingway's portrayal of Pilar in For Whom the Bell Tolls."<sup>47</sup> But Honest Lil does not share Pilar's position of importance in the novel, and she is literally ignored when young Tom's mother enters the Floridita.

For Nahal, the encounter between Hudson and his first wife is "touching."<sup>48</sup> Updike sees it as a further example of Hemingway's artistic disintegration: "even love becomes a species of cruelty which divides women into whores and bitches on the one hand and on the other a single icy-perfect adored."<sup>49</sup> To Baker, the appearance of young Tom's mother is "contrived, since it has not been prepared for except by Hudson's nostalgic memoir of his ocean crossing in the lady's company years before. She is a famous actress, a composite of Hadley Richardson and Martha Gellhorn [Hemingway's first and third wives], but with the face, figure, and profession of Marlene Dietrich, who worked in wartime as a U.S.O. entertainer, the very activity which has brought the first Mrs. Hudson to Camagüey and thence to Havana."<sup>50</sup>

I believe that her appearance on the scene has been, at least in part,

prepared for in "Bimini," where she is described as the only woman with whom Thomas Hudson is still in love. Indeed, after they leave the Floridita and return to the Finca, they make love in the bedroom which "is like the Normandie," where Hudson "played [the role of] the Faithful Husband best" (pp. 314, 313). When she later asks about young Tom, Hudson tries to play the role of godlike protector by lying about his son's death, probably to stave off his own grief and more particularly to absent himself from dealing with hers. But because she knows that "'you are a worse liar than I am,'" she soon discovers the truth (p. 314). And although she hopes that "now Tom's gone we wouldn't start being bitter and bad again?" (p. 321) they do begin to quarrel until Hudson is summoned by a phone call back to his ship.

In a few sentences at the end of Part Two, Hemingway sums up the loss motif and foreshadows Hudson's state of mind at the opening of Part Three. On his way to round up his crew, he thinks, "Get it straight. Your boy you lose. Love you lose. Honor has been gone for a long time. Duty you do" (p. 326).

### Part Three--"At Sea"

The loss motif also provides unity to the final part of Islands in the Stream. In "At Sea," the motif most obviously applies to the loss of Thomas Hudson's life, but Hemingway does not limit the motif to Hudson alone. In fact, by forcing Hudson to consider other instances of life lost--the deaths of the massacred islanders and the German sailor who is murdered with them, the German prisoner who dies aboard Hudson's ship without releasing any information, the wounded German left aboard the turtle boat who dies after killing Hudson's radio-officer, and the German shot while trying to surrender--Hemingway allows Hudson to regain a measure of his own lost innocence and

self-esteem. At the end, with his new found knowledge of loss, Hudson is able to face his own death with honesty and courage.

Both the character of Thomas Hudson and the action described in "At Sea" have come in for their share of critical disapprobation. For Malcolm Cowley, "The sea-chase of the final episode should be the best sequence of all, and in fact it demands comparison with the dynamiting of the bridge in For Whom the Bell Tolls, but it loses by the demand. Hudson's glum sense of duty and his implicit death-wish seem pale when placed beside Robert Jordan's tangle of fierce emotions. The weakness of the book might be that here . . . Hemingway was unable to make effective use of his subconscious mind. He had always depended on it and often said that a good half of his work was done in the subconscious: 'Things have to happen there before they happen on paper.'" <sup>51</sup> Updike agrees that "the 'sea-chase story' is in many ways brilliant, but it has the falsity of the episode in Hemingway's real life upon which it was based." <sup>52</sup> "The final episode," declares Updike, ". . . sees Hudson's fulfillment as a killer, and Hemingway's as a master of the casually cruel touch." <sup>53</sup>

Carlos Baker corroborates Updike's first supposition. "The story ["At Sea"], fictional in essence though autobiographical in certain details, was Hemingway's second attempt to make use of his wartime adventures. He referred to the first attempt, in Across the River and Into the Trees, as a 'distillation' of his experiences on the Continent with the Fourth Infantry Division, set down in case he never found time to write more extensively about the land war. This left the war in the air, about which he wrote nothing beyond a single article on the Royal Air Force, and the war on the sea, as he had known it aboard the *Pilar* during his sub-hunting days of 1942-1943. He was eager to use the sea material, even though his cabin cruiser

had never managed to close with a German craft during all her months of patrolling, and had certainly never given chase, as Hudson does, to the survivors of a U-boat destroyed by a plane."<sup>54</sup>

For Baker, ". . . the action sweeps always onwards from east to west towards that obscure Cuban islet where the chase is to be consummated in blood and death."<sup>55</sup> He interprets this consummation quite differently from Updike: "The climactic section of Green Hills of Africa," writes Baker, ". . . was called 'Pursuit As Happiness.' Hemingway's Jeffersonian pun, which was not so much a joke as a sentiment deeply engraved in his hunter's heart, could apply as well to Hudson's final mission. So could his original subtitle for the African book: 'Hunters Are Brothers.'"<sup>56</sup>

In a comparison of Thomas Hudson with Captain Ahab, DeFalco notes that "Hudson's pursuit of the German sailors lack [sic] the romantic aura of Ahab's pursuit of the whale, but it does reveal Hemingway's concern with man's interrelationship with forces that emit the stuff of life and death in an undifferentiated way. What becomes evident in Hemingway's resolution of the almost insolvable predicament in which he has placed Hudson is the principle of reciprocity that operates in the nature of things. This is not an Emersonian divine ordinance, but a principle of reality."<sup>57</sup>

For Nahal, the "strength" of Part Three "comes from the endurance of Thomas Hudson, and from the balancing duality that Hemingway creates between him and his team on the one side and the Germans on the other. The Germans are not treated in the context of the Second World War; reference is hardly made to that war or the conflict that that war might have generated. They are seen by Hemingway as one of the forces in the movement of life."<sup>58</sup>

In his interpretation of the chase story, Cowley somewhat inaccurately describes Hudson as follows: "With a prescience that he shares with other

Hemingway heroes, Hudson is sure that he will be the first to die when his crew catches up with them [the Germans], but still he stands on the bridge, a fair target, and does his duty to the end."<sup>59</sup> There is no supporting evidence that Hudson is certain that "he will be the first to die." It is true that throughout the novel Hemingway foreshadows the manner of Thomas Hudson's death and gives him premonitions of it. In the opening pages, Hudson compares his house to a ship. He praises the house's stability by noting that "it had lasted through three hurricanes . . ." and then links himself with the house-ship metaphor: "Hurricanes could be so bad that nothing could live through them. He always thought, though, that if there was ever one that bad he would like to be there for it and go with the house if she went" (pp. 3, 4). Hudson's thoughts on death move from the realm of speculation to the certainty of intuition in Part Two when he is drinking with Ignacio Natera Revello. He has just won another drink from Ignacio and says, "'The dice love me.'" to which Ignacio replies, "'It's good something does.'" Thomas Hudson felt the faint prickle go over his scalp that he had felt many times in the last month" (p. 262). A few moments later when Ignacio says, "'I hope you die,' . . . Thomas Hudson felt the prickle go over his scalp again. He reached his left hand against the bar where Ignacio Natera Revello could not see it and tapped softly three times with the ends of his fingers" (p. 262). Near the end of Part Two, after he has lied to young Tom's mother about the death of their son, Hudson "felt the strange prickling go over his skin" (p. 318). Even young Tom's mother links the death of her son to that of Hudson at the end of "Cuba" after he has departed for his ship. "In the bedroom of the farmhouse, now, that looked like the Normandie, she was lying on the bed with the cat named Boise beside her. She had not been able to eat the eggs and the champagne had no taste. She had cut up all the eggs for Boise and pulled open one desk drawer and seen the boy's handwriting on the

blue envelopes and the censor stamp and then she had gone over and lain face down on the bed. 'Both of them,' she said to the cat. . . . 'What are we going to do about it? . . . . You don't know either. . . . And neither does anyone else'" (p. 327).

In Part Three, Hudson's progressive sensitivity to his natural surroundings parallels his increased awareness of his approaching death. Edmund Wilson is the only critic who comments on Hemingway's use of vivid natural settings in "At Sea." "This book [Islands] contains some of the best of Hemingway's descriptions of nature: the waves breaking white and green on the reef off the coast of Cuba; the beauty of the morning on the deep water; the hermit crabs and land crabs and ghost crabs; a big barracuda stalking mullet; a heron flying with his white wings over the green water; the ibis and flamingoes and spoonbills, the last of these beautiful with the sharp rose of their color; the mosquitoes in clouds from the marshes; the water that curled and blew under the lash of the wind; the sculpture that the wind and sand had made of a piece of driftwood, gray and sanded and embedded in white, floury sand. But to bunch in this way together these phrases of the section . . . is to deprive them of the atmosphere of large space and free air and light, of the sun and rain on the water, in which the writer makes us see them. . . ."60

Such descriptions also set up a sharp contrast between Thomas Hudson and the setting of the story. In describing him, DeFalco says that "Hudson's egocentricity blinds him from understanding anything except his own loss. The result is that he is almost totally dehumanized by his grief. Only his commitment to duty suggests that at least the vestiges of will remain."<sup>61</sup> Hudson is not quite as weak or as self-centered as DeFalco might think. Early in Part Three, he gives up the constant drinking of Part Two to the point that his crew members become worried. As Baker points out, Hudson's devotion

to action is so intense and relentless that "his closest friends among the crew feel compelled to warn him against it."<sup>62</sup> Willie is characteristically blunt. "You," he says. "Flogging yourself to death up there [on the bridge] because your kid is dead. Don't you know everybody's kids die?" But Ara suspects another motivation. "All a man has is pride," he says. "Sometimes you have it so much it is a sin. We have all done things for pride that we knew were impossible. . . . But a man must implement his pride with intelligence and care. Now that you have ceased to be careful of yourself, I must ask you to be, please. For us and for the ship" (pp. 366, 358).

As commander of the ship, Thomas Hudson is forced into "'trying to think in their [the Germans'] heads'" and in so doing, his feelings of duty and admiration become mixed (p. 399). He speculates on the death of the German who is found with the massacred islanders. "To have killed like that they must have some plan and they must have some hope of being picked up. Also there must have been dissension about the plan or they would not have done this murdering here of the sailor. That could be an execution for anything, though. He might have let her go down when she could have been kept up to make the try to get home. . . . Maybe the boy did not do it and was falsely accused" (p. 342). Earlier, in answer to Henry's [another crewman] persistent questioning about the dead German, Hudson theorizes that he was killed because of "'Family trouble . . . . Did you ever see a man shot in the base of the spine for kindness? Afterwards whoever did it was kind and shot him in the neck'" (p. 339). The death of this German and the massacred islanders, while marking the beginning of the lost-life motif in Section Three, also serves as a link to the motif of lost innocence in Part One.

Before encountering the other two wounded Germans, who are left behind by the fleeing enemy, Hudson puzzles over his general feelings of indifference.

"If you can round up the crew, it will be extremely useful. Then why don't you care anything about anything? he asked himself. Why don't you think of them as murderers and have the righteous feelings that you should have? Why do you just pound and pound on after it like a riderless horse that is still in the race? Because we are all murderers, he told himself. We all are on both sides, if we are any good, and no good will come of any of it" (p. 356). Even so, Hudson cannot help "admiring" the German crewman who is brought aboard the ship dying of gangrene. As Hudson will do later, the German refuses the offer of morphine.

After they have killed the prisoner on the turtle boat, Hudson agrees with Willie's comment that the German "'was a pretty good guy . . . . He took all that surrender talk and a grenade before he even made his play'" (p. 442). Although he fails to take a live prisoner, Hudson's admiration of the manner of the Germans' deaths marks a partial return of his own sense of honor and self-esteem.

His concern for others is re-emphasized when he chides himself for forgetting to have Ara and Willie detrap the turtle boat. "That is a hell of a thing to leave around if some poor fisherman comes onto it" (p. 454). Life, including his own, has again become precious.

In the last few pages of the novel, Hudson's thoughts touch more hopefully and realistically on those things which he has tried to use to cope with his guilt, his grief, and his lack of concern for himself. "He had refused the hypodermic of morphine that Henry had brought him because he thought he might still have to think" (pp. 462-463). Although he knows he is going to die, Hudson also thinks about art and the need to "hold hard to life" in order to "paint the sea better than anyone now if you will do it and not get mixed up in other things" (p. 464). While perceiving the unlimited possibilities of



his art, Hudson also realizes the extremes of duty revealed through the actions of the Germans. "Why did the poor bastards ever make that error on the massacre key? They could have surrendered and been all right. I wonder who the one was who came out to surrender when Ara shot. He could have been like the boy they shot at massacre key. Why do they have to be such damned fanatics? We chased good and we will always fight. But I hope we are not fanatics" (p. 464).

Significantly, the loss motif is framed in the last few lines of the novel by the words "love" and "understand." Willie says to Thomas Hudson, "'I love you, you son of a bitch, and don't die. . . . Try and understand if it isn't too hard.'" And Thomas Hudson replies, "'I think I understand, Willie.'" "'Oh shit,'" answers the frustrated Willie. "'You never understand anybody that loves you'" (p. 466). By replying that he "thinks" he understands love and death, Hudson is finally admitting honestly his personal limitations without feeling the need to persecute himself because of them. As DeFalco says in his discussion of the last conversation, "Love is a transforming agency that can change all things, and it forms the common bond of humanity. Rodger [sic] discovered this earlier through David, but it took three chance bullets and many guides along the way before Hudson could understand."<sup>63</sup> Baker sums up Hudson's "unstated and largely unplanned program of self-rehabilitation" as a composite of "pride of command, pride of endurance, pride in the ascetic abnegation of creature comforts, pride in having overcome remorse and gloom (if never the innermost sorrow) not once but many times, pride in his expectation of outwitting a resourceful enemy, pride in his potential ability to accomplish the impossible. . . ."<sup>64</sup> From Hudson's point of view, such an accomplishment is his acceptance of his feelings of grief for young Tom, which Hemingway reveals in Part Three through reminiscences paralleling those of

"Bimini" and "Cuba" (pp. 343, 383, 445-446, 447-448).

Islands by no means marks Hemingway's first attempt at using the loss motif. In one of his early Nick Adams stories from the 1920's, "The End of Something," he details the loss of that idyllic innocence of relationship which Nick and Marjorie have shared--a relationship very like the one which Thomas Hudson remembers sharing with young Tom's mother in those early Paris days. In the companion piece, "The Three-Day Blow," Hemingway, in a scene involving much small talk and much drinking, explores Nick's dishonesty and loss of honor in his treatment of Marjorie--a story which has much in common with the "Cuba" section of Islands in the Stream. But undoubtedly the story which is most closely related to Islands through the loss motif is "The Snows of Kilimanjaro." Like Thomas Hudson, Harry, the dying writer, has wasted or, at the very least, misused his artistic gift. He, too, recalls the days of lost innocence and lost love in Paris. For him, the approach of death brings a reconciliation of sorts with his lost life.

Hemingway's non-fiction of the 1930's also deals with the loss motif and, interestingly, connects it with the Gulf Stream. In a "Gulf Stream Letter" published in Esquire, he refers to the Stream as "the last wild country there is left."<sup>65</sup> And then he goes on to recount in miniature the story which will later form the basis for The Old Man and the Sea. In the Green Hills of Africa all traces of man's losses are submerged in the enduring Stream: "the torn leaves of a student's exercise book," "the no-longer distinguished cat," "the empty condoms of our great loves," and "the palm fronds of our victories."<sup>66</sup>

To view Islands in the Stream as unified by the element of loss--of innocence, of love, and of life--is to see this latest published novel of Hemingway as more than a glossed-over account of his life and more than a "gallant wreck." While it may not measure up to his finest work, it becomes

much more than a mere enumeration of favorite themes of Hemingway the artist, or a catalog of personal sufferings of Hemingway the man. As this study has tried to indicate, the loss motif provides one means by which to better understand and appreciate this novel.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>John Updike, "Papa's Sad Testament," New Statesman, LXXX (Oct. 16, 1970), 489.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Malcolm Cowley, "A Double Life, Half Told," Atlantic, CCXXVI (Dec. 1970), 108.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 106.

<sup>7</sup>Edmund Wilson, "An Effort at Self-Revelation," New Yorker, XLVI (Jan. 2, 1971), 62.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 61-62.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 59.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 59-60.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 60.

<sup>13</sup>Timothy Foote, "Papa Watching," Time, XCVI (Oct. 5, 1970), 90, 92.

<sup>14</sup>Guy Davenport, "Hemingway as Walter Pater," National Review, XXVII (Nov. 17, 1970), 1215.

<sup>15</sup>John W. Aldridge, "Hemingway Between Triumph and Disaster," Saturday Review, LIII (Oct. 10, 1970), 25.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Joseph M. DeFalco, "Hemingway's Islands and Streams: Minor Tactics for Heavy Pressure," Hemingway In Our Time, ed. Richard Astro, and Jackson J. Benson (Corvallis, Oregon, 1974), p. 39.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>19</sup>Carlos Baker, Hemingway: The Writer as Artist, 4th ed. (Princeton, 1972), p. 382.

<sup>20</sup>DeFalco, p. 45.

<sup>21</sup>Baker, p. 379.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 383-384.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 385.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Aldridge, 39.

<sup>26</sup>Baker, p. 386. For more autobiographical detail, see pp. 386-389.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 389.

<sup>28</sup>Chaman Nahal, The Narrative Pattern in Ernest Hemingway's Fiction (Rutherford, N. J., 1971), p. 215.

<sup>29</sup>Baker, p. 392.

<sup>30</sup>Updike, 489.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>DeFalco, p. 47.

<sup>33</sup>Baker, p. 392.

<sup>34</sup>Aldridge, 25.

<sup>35</sup>Ernest Hemingway, Islands in the Stream (New York, 1970), p. 116.  
All subsequent references to Islands in the Stream are to page numbers in this edition, cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>36</sup>Updike, 489.

<sup>37</sup>DeFalco, p. 47.

<sup>38</sup>Baker, pp. 395-396.

<sup>39</sup>Ernest Hemingway, A Moveable Feast (New York, 1964), p. 211.

<sup>40</sup>Baker, p. 393.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 390.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Nahal, p. 221.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 217.

- <sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 218.
- <sup>46</sup>Baker, p. 399.
- <sup>47</sup>Nahal, p. 220.
- <sup>48</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>49</sup>Updike, 489.
- <sup>50</sup>Baker, p. 400.
- <sup>51</sup>Cowley, 106.
- <sup>52</sup>Updike, 489.
- <sup>53</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>54</sup>Baker, p. 403.
- <sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 401.
- <sup>56</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>57</sup>DeFalco, p. 49.
- <sup>58</sup>Nahal, p. 222.
- <sup>59</sup>Cowley, 106.
- <sup>60</sup>Wilson, 60.
- <sup>61</sup>DeFalco, p. 49.
- <sup>62</sup>Baker, pp. 407-408.
- <sup>63</sup>DeFalco, p. 51.
- <sup>64</sup>Baker, p. 408.
- <sup>65</sup>Ernest Hemingway, "On the Blue Water: A Gulf Stream Letter,"  
in By-Line: Ernest Hemingway, ed. William White (New York, 1967), p. 237.
- <sup>66</sup>Ernest Hemingway, Green Hills of Africa (New York, 1935), pp. 149-150.

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THE MOTIF OF LOSS: A UNIFYING ELEMENT OF  
ERNEST HEMINGWAY'S ISLANDS IN THE STREAM

by

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A look at the criticism which followed the posthumous publication in 1970 of Ernest Hemingway's novel, Islands in the Stream, shows that one of the most common complaints against the book is its supposed lack of unity. However, when the book is read with an eye toward tracing Hemingway's use of the motif of loss--of innocence, of love, and of life--the novel is seen as the unified record of Thomas Hudson as father, husband, and soldier.

In Part One, "Bimini," Hemingway explores the loss of innocence from several points of view. For Thomas Hudson and his oldest son, young Tom, lost innocence is recalled by shared memories of their early family life in Paris, when Thomas Hudson was still married to his first wife and was a poor, but happy artist. For David, Hudson's middle son, the loss of innocence is framed in the "coming to manhood" theme, which is handled in typical Hemingway fashion when David fights and loses a six-hour battle with a thousand-pound swordfish. For Hudson's friend, the writer Roger Davis, who acts as David's guide during the fishing ordeal, his "coming of age" occurs when his younger brother (also named David) drowns during a canoeing accident. For Andrew, Hudson's youngest son, the loss of innocence is at least pretended in a drinking charade during which Andrew drinks water as if it were gin.

Hemingway uses the loss-of-life motif to link the "Bimini" and "Cuba" sections of Islands. Thomas Hudson's two youngest sons are killed in an auto accident at the end of Part One and his oldest son is shot down while flying an RAF war plane some six or seven years later before the beginning of Part Two. Hudson now exchanges the discipline of art as a protection against guilt for the anesthetic of alcohol as a refuge against grief. Hudson's third wife never appears in the novel, a fact which underscores

the loss-of-love motif that pervades and unifies the second part of Islands in the Stream. In reminiscences and later conversations with Honest Lil, the prostitute at the Floridita, Hudson reveals his infidelity, as well as his loss of honor and self-esteem, by telling of his affair with the Princess and of his one-night-stand with the three Chinese girls. When young Tom's mother appears on the scene, Hudson and his ex-wife try to regain the idyllic innocence of their youth during the Paris days, but not even young Tom's death can salve their old quarrels, and Hudson is called back to his ship.

Part Three, "At Sea," is most obviously concerned with the loss of Hudson's life. But Hemingway does not limit the motif to Hudson alone. By forcing him to consider the innocence of the massacred islanders and the German who is murdered with them, the bravery of the German prisoner who dies aboard Hudson's ship after refusing an injection of pain-killing morphine, the courage of the German on the turtle boat who dies after surviving the explosion of a grenade and after killing Hudson's radio-officer, and the degree of guilt of the German who is shot while trying to surrender, Hemingway allows Hudson to regain a measure of his lost innocence, as well as self-esteem. At the end, with his new-found knowledge of loss, Hudson is able to face his own death with honesty and courage, and without the aid of anesthetics--be it alcohol or morphine. As this study has tried to indicate, the loss motif provides one means by which better to understand and appreciate this novel as a unified work.