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The "Giant Killer":  
The Use of Liquor in the Fiction of Ernest Hemingway

by

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Beer, champagne, Scotch, cognac, kirsch, absinthe, strega, grappa, Sancerre wine--the list reads like an inventory of a well-stocked and cosmopolitan liquor cabinet, but it is also an incomplete listing of liquors encountered in any account, reliable or otherwise, of Ernest Hemingway's life. He was a great drinker. He drank in Paris cafes, he drank in German beer-drinking contests, he drank at the bull-fights, he drank on safaris, he drank on board the Pilar--and in prodigious quantities, too. Carlos Baker reports that on one occasion Hemingway "had overeaten and overdrunk so much in Spain that he woke one September morning to find that the ends of his fingers were swollen like small balloons."<sup>1</sup>

Hemingway's serious drinking began when in 1918 he joined the Italian army as an ambulance driver. In Italy he was free at last--from the strait-laced Victorianism of his teetotaling parents--to drink all he wanted, which he did and continued to do even after he was wounded and confined to a hospital bed. One of his nurses was roused to anger when she found his closet full of empty cognac bottles, a scene which would later find its way into A Farewell to Arms. When he made his medalled return to the United States and Oak Park, he brought his liquors with him, including a bottle of Kummel which he urged his sister Marcelline to try. "'Don't be afraid,' said Ernest. 'There's great comfort in that bottle. . . . Taste everything, Sis. . . . Sometimes I think we only half live over here. The Italians live all the way.'"<sup>2</sup>

This thirst continued throughout his life; liquor was important to him, so important that Aaron Hotchner, a writer and friend, suggested to

the doctors attending Hemingway at the Mayo Clinic that perhaps they should allow Hemingway to drink more wine than they would normally allow a patient in his condition. Hotchner believed that some wine would improve Hemingway's bleak attitude.<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps wine would have had this effect; Hemingway frequently attributed medicinal and restorative properties to liquor. As early as 1919 Hemingway proclaimed that he had "cauterized the wound of Agnes' rejection"<sup>4</sup> with liquor. In 1940 he mentioned that when he cut back on his drinking it was a "'sign of things quieting down and becoming solid once more,'"<sup>5</sup>; in other words he drank during times of chaos and change. He excused his riotous nights of drinking in 1940 "as a necessary counterforce to the daily bouts of writing which left him as whipped, wrung out, and empty as a used washrag."<sup>6</sup> And in 1956 he told Wallace Meyers, his editorial contact with Scribners, that it was "'very hard to take bores without something to drink.'"<sup>7</sup>

Hemingway discussed liquor's capacity to dull his reactions to his surroundings in "An African Journal," an account of his African trip in 1953. In this particularly candid account Hemingway related that one evening after awakening from a nightmare he used gin to allay his apprehensions. "It tasted clean and friendly," he wrote, "and made me brave against the nightmare. . . . I took another swallow of the gin and it tasted even better and more like the old Giant Killer."<sup>8</sup> Later in the journal he explained why he drank:

But G.C. and I were drinkers and I knew it was not just a habit or a way of escaping. It was a purposeful dulling of a receptivity that was so highly sensitized, as film can be, that if your receptiveness were always kept at the same level it would become unbearable.<sup>9</sup>

During his drinking life Hemingway acquired an educated palate and an astonishing storehouse of information about liquor. He tried them all, or almost, and noted their qualities, their histories and their availability. In the glossary of Death in the Afternoon, he provides detailed accounts of Spanish beer and wine: "The Madrid breweries were founded by Germans and the beer is the best anywhere on the continent outside of Germany and Czecho-Slovakia. The best bottled beer in Madrid is the Aguilar. In the provinces good beer is brewed in Santander, . . .";<sup>10</sup> "Valdepenas is fuller bodied than Rioja, but is excellent in both white and rosée. The Spanish vintners produce Chablis and Burgundies that I cannot recommend."<sup>11</sup>

Hemingway's judgments are, for the most part, valid and surprisingly accurate. His authority on wine is so much respected that several wine manuals and texts quote him; for example, Leon D. Adams' Commonsense Book of Wine, Alexis Lichine's Encyclopedia of Wines and Spirits, and Clifton Fadiman and Sam Aaron's The Joys of Wine. All quote the following passage from Death in the Afternoon:

Wine is one of the most civilized things in the world and one of the natural things of the world that has been brought to the greatest perfection, and it offers a greater range for enjoyment and appreciation than, possibly, any other purely sensory thing which may be purchased.<sup>12</sup>

His international reputation as a wine connoisseur is further demonstrated by Jose del Castillo's use of his picture in Los Vinos de Espana, a Spanish wine text. Castillo uses Ernest's picture as an example of how one should correctly sample the taste of wine.



Examples of Hemingway's precise knowledge of liquor also abounds in his fiction. For instance, in The Sun Also Rises Jake orders Pernod in Paris, but absinthe in Spain. This is a notable distinction because Pernod is the distillery which produces both liqueurs. It produced absinthe in France until it was outlawed there during World War I when it moved its absinthe production to Spain. Pernod continued to supply the Paris demand for absinthe with an imitation absinthe, minus the wormwood, and this beverage was commonly called "Pernod."<sup>13</sup>

It seems natural that Hemingway, who wrote so much from personal experience, created characters who not only drink, but also exhibit his same attitudes about the power of liquor. But most critics were appalled by the drunken carousing in his early fiction and regarded it as boring, pointless, gross, and immoral. The Sun Also Rises was particularly attacked in this respect. Bruce Barton complained that "the people of [Hemingway's] new book have no morals, drink too much, are blown about by their passions, have no religion and no ideals. . . ."<sup>14</sup> And André Maurois narrowly observed that the characters "do not talk about their souls, they do not unravel their feelings. No, they merely order drinks and dinners, swear, have a good time. . . ."<sup>15</sup> Reviews in the Chicago Daily Tribune and the Cincinnati Enquirer respectively proclaimed that the characters were "prize old soaks"<sup>16</sup> and that "most of the author's narrative is employed in ushering his characters in and out of cafes and in recording the number, nature and effect of their drinks. A good part of the remainder is required to recount the drunken protestations of Mike about Brett's various lovers."<sup>17</sup> Schuyler Ashley of the Kansas City Star righteously noted: "The amount of beer, wine and brandy

consumed in The Sun Also Rises runs, I should say, to a higher average per page and per character than in any other fiction since Rabelais. And the conversation! Hemingway reveals what amounts to a special talent for drunken conversation. . . ."<sup>18</sup>

Although A Farewell to Arms does not feature the fiesta atmosphere of The Sun Also Rises, it too was hit hard by the critics for its alcoholic content. H. L. Mencken caustically stated, "His tricks begin to wear thin. The mounting incoherence of a drunken scene is effective once, but not three or four times."<sup>19</sup> Henry Hazlitt's attack on A Farewell to Arms was even more extreme: "Hemingway's people are for the most part above the level of morons, but their two main interests in life are alcohol and adultery; the whole world of business, public affairs, art, science, literature might almost cease to exist for all the attention they give to it."<sup>20</sup>

Perhaps the critics felt impelled to attack Hemingway and his inebriate characters because these novels were published during Prohibition. Whatever the reason, critics' attacks on the consumption of alcohol in Hemingway's fiction noticeably decrease after the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, but they do not completely disappear. In 1955 Leon Edel again raised the old complaint:

What of the substance? In Hemingway's novels people order drinks--they are always ordering drinks--then they drink, then they order some more. . . . It is a world of superficial action and almost wholly without reflection--such reflection as there is tends to be on a rather crude and simplified level. . . . Hemingway has created a world of Robinson Crusoes, living on lonely islands, with bottle and gun for companions, and an occasional woman to go with the drinks.<sup>21</sup>

To be sure, there is a great deal of drinking going on in Hemingway's fiction. But surprisingly the critics reacted negatively to the drinking scenes. Most critics, Carlos Baker and Philip Young included, agree that Hemingway's life and fiction are so closely enmeshed that it is hard to separate the two. Given this fact, why have the critics generally disregarded Hemingway's own attitudes towards, and knowledge of, liquor, and perversely seen the consumption of alcohol as a superficial element in his fiction? Such a view is not merited by the evidence, fictional and biographical. Only Malcolm Cowley in 1945 and Philip Young in 1966 seemed to recognize the importance of the liquor references, but neither critic explored them thoroughly. Commenting on Hemingway's characters, Cowley wrote: "They drink early and late; they consume enough beer, wine, anis, grappa, and Fundador to put them all into alcoholic wards, if they were ordinary mortals; but drinking seems to have the effect on them of a magic potion."<sup>22</sup> About For Whom the Bell Tolls, Young observed: "The function of alcohol in the life of the hero is never more clear than in this novel . . . alcohol is the 'giant-killer' for Robert Jordan."<sup>23</sup>

For nearly five decades Hemingway's critics--with the exception of Cowley and Young--ignored the possibility that he might have been using liquor in his works for essential and sophisticated reasons. Then, in 1973 Charles A. Norton noted that 104 of 342 pages in A Farewell to Arms contained some reference to alcohol, that the novel referred by name to 30 types and kinds of alcoholic beverages, and that these references occurred in 72 instances of "critical significance." From these startling statistics Norton concluded that Hemingway was, indeed, up to something and that the something was a comment on Prohibition. Declared Norton:

"It seems inevitable that along with other factors influencing the direction of his thoughts and consequently his writing, Hemingway's distaste for Prohibition would seek a way to be expressed."<sup>24</sup>

This is not an altogether ridiculous conclusion, but when one considers the labor that went into compiling the statistics, it seems a poor payoff. What about all the liquor references in Hemingway's post-Prohibition work, especially For Whom the Bell Tolls? Norton's argument does not apply to these instances; in fact, even when it is restricted to Hemingway's fiction published before 1933, it is, at best, only a partial answer.

Hemingway's frequent references to liquor as a "giant killer" (i.e., a medicine or substance which kills or numbs painful, disturbing thoughts); his many allusions to specific drinks; and his inclusion of liquor in scenes of importance, those of "critical significance," have led me to this conclusion: Liquor primarily serves in the fiction of Ernest Hemingway as a "giant killer" to dull the senses of the Hemingway hero and also functions on occasion to subtly enrich characterization and situation.

## I

The Hemingway hero, born to a world of conflict and change, seeks a way to control this turmoil and uses liquor to evade or suppress pain and anxiety. He has, at one time or another, had to confront moral, emotional or physical crises: death, the acceptance of adult responsibility,

"duty," and the blackest of despairs, or nada. The Hemingway hero feels the presence of these "giants" keenly, and he knows that a time will come when he must face them. So, he searches for ways to control his environment and discipline his mind. Often he ritualizes his life in order to manipulate his external world and to provide himself with a pre-determined pattern of response, but manipulating the conscious and subconscious mind is quite another problem. To deal with this internal threat he anesthetizes his mind and his thoughts with alcohol--it stills or slows the "giants" which plague him, the giants of "unfaith" and "unhope." His behavior is usually marked by a tight-lipped, disciplined restraint and stoicism, with the help of a drink or two.

The young Nick Adams is a prime example of the Hemingway hero who attempts to subdue pain and anxiety with liquor. Nick is introduced to the pleasantly lulling effects of liquor in "The Three-Day Blow." In this story the adolescent Nick has just broken off with a girl, Marjorie, and has gone to visit a friend, Bill. Bill seems to be expecting Nick and almost immediately offers him a drink. The drinks are strong--"There was more whiskey than water"<sup>25</sup>--and their conversation becomes garrulous. But when Bill brings up the subject of Marge, Nick becomes suddenly quiet:

The liquor had all died out of him and left him alone. Bill wasn't there. He wasn't sitting in front of the fire or going fishing tomorrow with Bill and his dad or anything. He wasn't drunk. It was all gone. All he knew was that he had once had Marjorie and that he had lost her. She was gone and he might never see her again. Probably he never would. It was all gone, finished.<sup>26</sup>

Nick has been trying to forget about his breakup with Marjorie and his drinking has helped to facilitate this obliteration. When Bill mentions her name and the liquor loses its effect, Nick quickly suggests,

"'Let's have another drink.'"<sup>27</sup> He is determined to blot out the pain of his broken romance. He and Bill resolve at this point to "'get really drunk.'"<sup>28</sup>

This conscious effort to use liquor to control his thoughts is central to Nick's concern with control in the story. The break with Marjorie apparently had been quick and unforeseen: "'All of a sudden it was over.'"<sup>29</sup> Because of his lack of control in this instance--he "'couldn't help it'"<sup>30</sup>--Nick is concerned with control in the drinking sequence with Bill. When Bill pours him a drink, Nick fixes his eyes carefully and intensely on the glass, and when he knocks a dish of apricots on the kitchen floor, he meticulously and painstakingly returns each of them to the dish. He several times expresses a desire to be practical and not to get drunk before Bill does, or at least not to show it. He is anxious to reassert his control over things and situations after the painful and unexpected episode with Marjorie.

"The Three-Day Blow" is not the only time Nick gets "really drunk;" he also gets "stinking" in "A Way You'll Never Be." In this story Nick admits that in order to go into battle he had to get drunk because he was unable to face the possibility of death or to witness the mass deaths of others without a dose of nerve-dulling liquor. Before every battle, except one, he got drunk on a combination of Grappa and ether. The ether is significant because it is a liquid which is often used as an anesthetic, and Nick was using his drink in just that way--to anesthetize himself to his situation and to the death that surrounded him. It was a way to control himself, to dull his anxiety over death.

In "Cross-Country Snow" Nick also attempts to use liquor to control anxious thoughts. Before Nick returns to the states with his wife to accept adult responsibility as a father, he skis one last time with an old friend, George. The trip is a last attempt to clutch at the waning freedom and irresponsibility of his youth, to escape momentarily the "giant" of adult responsibility--but the trip is full of disappointments. After arriving at the lodge, Nick and George order a bottle of Sion and indulge in a wineful bout of male companionship. There are specks of cork floating in the wine; Nick had had difficulty uncorking the bottle; but the wine makes them "feel good" in a "funny" way. The spell is broken when George asks if Helen is going to have a baby. They quit drinking. Nick has been trying to blot out his anxiousness about his impending fatherhood, but when George forces the issue Nick realizes that he can never recapture the freedom of his past. When the bottle and glasses are empty, Nick does not order another bottle.

Somewhat like Nick, Jake Barnes in The Sun Also Rises turns to liquor when confronted with male/female relationships. Jake's "giant" is his inability to consummate physical love as a result of a war wound and his dissatisfaction with his crowd and the purposeless lives they lead. But he will not, cannot, extinguish his torch for Lady Brett, nor abandon his fiesta friends. Instead he turns to liquor to dull his perceptions. At a dinner in Pamplona Jakes observes:

It was like certain dinners I remember from the war. There was much wine, an ignored tension, and a feeling of things coming that you could not prevent happening. Under the wine I lost the disgusted feeling and was happy. It seemed they were all such nice people.<sup>31</sup>



Jake is concerned with learning how to cope with his problems and finding a way to control his life through a search for values. "Perhaps as you went along you did learn something," he muses. "I did not care what it was all about. All I wanted to know was how to live in it. Maybe if you found out how to live in it you learned from that what it was all about" (SAR, p. 148).

Brett Ashley is a disturbing reminder to Jake of his impotence and his wastelander crowd. Significantly, whenever she is around he finds it difficult to deal with his surroundings and control himself, and even when he allows himself to think of her he cannot control his thoughts. At one point he admits, "I was thinking about Brett and my mind stopped jumping around and started to go in smooth waves. Then all of a sudden I started to cry" (SAR, p. 31). When he is in her physical presence, he usually reaches for the bottle.

After the bull-fight on the last day of the fiesta, Brett goes upstairs with the bull-fighter, Romero, an act of infidelity which hits Jake hard because he is hopelessly in love with Brett. He indirectly explains: "Bill was tired after the bull-fight. So was I. We both took a bull-fight very hard" (SAR, p. 221). What he is taking hard is that Romero, not he, is with Brett. To assuage and control his bitterness, Jake spends the last night of the fiesta with Bill in a cafe drinking absinthe, which "made everything seem better . . . and it was pleasantly bitter" (SAR, p. 221). Bill urges Jake, who feels like "hell," to drink absinthe to recover from his "damn depression."

Liquor is a pleasant, soothing companion for Jake; it does not aggravate him. After the fiesta when Jake goes to San Sebastian to



recuperate from his tumultuous Pamplona experience, he refers to wine in this way: "I drank a bottle of wine for company. It was a Château Margaux. It was pleasant to be drinking slowly and to be tasting wine and to be drinking alone. A bottle of wine was good company" (SAR, pp. 232-33). This implies that Jake prefers to isolate himself from those people and conditions which trouble and confuse him. Later when Brett calls him to her rescue, Jake reaffirms this attitude. They go to lunch and Jake drinks three bottles of rioja alta. Brett does not understand his excessive drinking and tries to interfere, but unsuccessfully.

"Don't get drunk, Jake," she said. "You don't have to."  
 "How do you know."  
 "Don't," she said. "You'll be alright."  
 "I'm not getting drunk," I said. "I'm just drinking a little wine. I like to drink wine" (SAR, p. 246).

Jake ignores Brett's plea for moderation. He needs the wine to dull the pain he experiences when the presence of Brett reminds him of his hopeless situation. Then liquor is essential to him.

Although not as obviously as Jake, Frederic Henry in A Farewell to Arms also uses liquor to cope with anxiety. When Catherine Barkley tells him that she is pregnant, Henry is a bit nonplused. He knows that he should be brave and resolute, but he has trouble reacting manfully. "'I'm very brave when I've had a drink,'"<sup>32</sup> he confesses. After Catherine brings him cognac and a glass, he pours a glass one-third full. Catherine advises moderation: "'I know brandy is for heroes. But you shouldn't exaggerate'" (FTA, p. 140). Henry turns to liquor to suppress his apprehensions; he had not prepared himself to accept full responsibility for his affair with Catherine.

The acceptance of his responsibility and his fate is the problem that Robert Jordan, braced by liquor, wrestles with in For Whom the Bell Tolls.

Robert Jordan has been sent on a guerilla mission from which he is unlikely to return. He is rather certain that he will die, and he needs to control his fear of death in order to complete, responsibly and efficiently, his mission. His concern with controlling his thoughts is evident throughout the novel, and at one point he even states that he has suspended his mind until the war is over. Several times he admonishes himself not to think and admits that he has done a lot of pretending on his mission. He must narrow his concentration: "Turn off the thinking now, old timer, old comrade. You're a bridge-blower now. Not a thinker."<sup>33</sup>

Realizing he will have trouble restraining his thoughts, Jordan purposely brings along a bottle of absinthe, the "last bottle" in Madrid. Absinthe is a particularly appropriate "giant killer" for Jordan to drink. It is a liqueur made by a distillation of alcohol and macerated wormwood, and it is astoundingly potent, containing 70 to 80 percent alcohol. Also, absinthe is said "to be addictive and to act on the motor centers of the cerebrum and on the paracerebellar nuclei. . . ."<sup>34</sup> Jordan could hardly have selected a better "giant killer," because those parts of the brain are known to control particular processes of thought and voluntary motion, and these are precisely the processes which Jordan feels a need to control.

That Jordan is not ignorant of these properties of absinthe is shown by his references to it as "medicine" and by his explanation to the gypsy: "'In this, the real absinthe, there is wormwood. It's supposed to rot your brain out but I don't believe it. It only changes ideas.

You should pour water into it very slowly, a few drops at a time. But I poured it into the water'" (FWBT, p. 51). For Jordan absinthe works as a "delicate anesthesia" and possesses "chemical-change producing heat." According to Jordan, "'It cures everything. If you have anything wrong this will cure it'" (FWBT, p. 50). But Jordan praises it for its nostalgic qualities too:

There was very little of it left and one cup of it took the place of the evening paper . . . and of being able to read and relax in the evening; of all the things he had enjoyed and forgotten and that came back to him when he tasted that opaque, bitter, tongue-numbing, brain-warming, stomach-warming, idea-changing liquid alchemy (FWBT, p. 51).

Jordan has brought the absinthe with him because he knows he will need it to help him suppress his anxieties and doubts, but the quantity is limited. What he has must last him throughout the whole mission. Because of this the absinthe has a twofold purpose in Jordan's exercise of control--not only must he use it to control his thoughts, but he must also control his consumption in order for it to last. Whenever he takes a drink of absinthe, he notes that there is not much of it left, thus emphasizing its importance to him. That he had intended for it to last and to help him meet the "giant" of death is evident at the end of the novel. As he waits for death and the enemy army patrol, he thinks: "I'll take a good spot of the giant killer and then I'll try it. But the flask was not there when he felt for it. Then he felt that much more alone because he knew there was not going to be even that. I guess I'd counted on that, he said" (FWBT, p. 467).

Absinthe, for Jordan, is the best of the "giant" killers; not even Scotch, which Anselmo declares kills the "worm" that "haunts us," can

match the absinthe's effects. For Jordan the Scotch "tasted clean and thinly warming. But it does not curl around inside of you the way the absinthe does, he thought. There is nothing like absinthe" (FWBT, p. 204).

Another Hemingway hero who has to find a way to control or suppress his disquietude about death is Colonel Cantwell in Across the River and Into the Trees. Cantwell's attitude exhibits some of Jordan's determined stoicism, but he is more bitter, much more. He is also considerably older; he is half a century old. Perhaps his bitterness prompts him to add Campari bitters to his Gordon's gin. Cantwell is a career army man who is returning one last time to Venice, the beloved city of his youth. His career has not been outstanding, in his eyes. During World War II he was promoted to Brigadier General for the duration, and during his term as general he lost three battalions. Later, after the war was over, he was demoted to colonel, a loss of rank which Cantwell views with rancor because of his pride in his ability as a soldier and his scorn for abilities of several famous generals.

The whole of the novel is a ritualization of Cantwell's preparation for his death. He stops at the exact spot where during World War I he received his first serious wound, buries money there, and relieves himself upon it. The circle of his military life is now complete; realizing that his death is near, he returns to the place where many years ago he lost his illusion of immortality. The places Cantwell visits during that last weekend in Venice and the things he does seem to be a part of a mental itinerary which he is determined to complete before he dies. Cantwell has great need for command in these final days as he struggles to control his body, his actions, and, to some degree, his fate.

Cantwell is aware he will die soon and during the drive to Venice even considers where he would like to be buried. He is alive to the panorama of life along the road. The sight of the slow, white movement of a sail or oxen moves his heart--ironic because it is his heart which he must control. He is determined to face his death resolutely, but it is difficult. "Damn, I wish I might walk around this town all my life. All my life, he thought. What a gag that is. A gag to gag on. A throttle to throttle you with. Come on, boy, he said to himself. No horse named Morbid ever won a race."<sup>35</sup> His thoughts and bitterness sometimes escape and he consciously attempts to control them. During his stay in Venice he finally tells his story, purging himself of his bitterness.

The liquor which the Colonel relies on to get him through this ordeal is Valpolicella. This is as appropriate a choice for Cantwell as absinthe was for Jordan; it again shows how thoroughly Hemingway knew his liquor. Valpolicella is considered to be unquestionably the best of the wines of Veneto, Cantwell's favorite part of Italy. According to one wine expert, "It is ruby-red, of medium alcoholic content (perhaps 10%-13%), has a delicate bouquet and a rich, mouth-filling texture."<sup>36</sup> It is also considered to be one of Veneto's most graceful wines, lacking the usual pungency of Italian wines. Valpolicella, representative of Cantwell's pleasant young manhood in Venice, serves as a mild, natural sedative and anesthetic for Cantwell during his final stay in his favorite city.

Cantwell consumes prodigious quantities of Valpolicella during his sojourn, and even asks the Gran Maestro if he can procure fiascos of it, rather than just bottles. The more, the better. In fact, he prefers that

it not be aged too long: "'Now look. I believe that the Valpolicella is better when it is newer. It is not a grand vin and bottling it and putting years on it only adds sediment. Do you agree?'" (ARIT, p. 130). The same can be said for Cantwell. He believes that he was better when he was younger, and that since he is no longer a general his confinement as a colonel has only degraded him and added to his bitterness. No wonder Cantwell turns to Valpolicella, a wine so like him, for solace.

He reaches for a glass of Valpolicella whenever he encounters a moment or memory of pain or loneliness. He drinks Valpolicella when he is alone in his hotel room with only the portrait of Renata; he drinks Valpolicella when he talks about the battles in which he lost his battalions; he drinks Valpolicella when he wakes alone in the morning in his hotel room; he drinks Valpolicella when he considers the dead he has seen and counted during his command; he drinks it when he toasts his secret order, whose members are either dying or grievously troubled. The wine helps him to suppress the pain of those moments and memories and helps him to control his sadness and regrets about his life and death.

Another Hemingway hero that admits to using liquor to suppress loneliness and to control his thoughts is Thomas Hudson in Islands in the Stream. He, like most other Hemingway heroes, uses routine to evade conscious, unpleasant thinking; his routine, he tells us, "had many of the inventions that lonely people use to save themselves and even achieve unloneliness with and he had made the rules and kept the customs and used them consciously and unconsciously."<sup>37</sup> Part of this routine is liquor.

When Hudson's world changes with the deaths of his sons, Andrew and David, he realizes that he must face the uncertainty of life, and for the

first time he looks "straight down the long and perfect perspective of the blankness ahead" (IITS, p. 196). This realization of nothingness is chillingly reminiscent of the "nada" found in "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place." It represents a finality, a nihilism, which is difficult for Hudson to accept.

Thomas Hudson realizes that he must find a way to anesthetize his 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. Thomas Hudson knew about both of these remedies. But he also knew drinking would destroy the capacity for producing satisfying work and he had bet his life on work for so long now that he kept that as one thing he must not lose.

But since he knew he could not work now for some time he planned to drink and read and exercise until he was tired enough to sleep (IITS, p. 197).

So, Hudson makes the decision to drink, despite the fact that it will "bitch" his work. But his sorrow invades his thoughts. It is essential that Hudson not let his sorrow overwhelm him, or he will give way to "nada." Work is out of the question. The only other defense left is to drink. Drinking will transform his sorrow into something that can be coped with. Speaking of liquor, he remarks: "What a solvent of our problems. The solvent alchemist that in a trice our leaden gold into shit transmutes" (IITS, p. 199).

Later in the novel, Hudson again resorts to liquor to dull the pain of learning that his remaining son, young Tom, has been killed in the war on a flying mission. He mourns his son's death, perhaps sensing that his own will not be long in coming. He is always "drinking against something or for something," and when he hears of Tom's death he resolves that no



matter what the reason he is going to fill that day with a lot of drinking. He has to drink as a "palliative measure" because "he could feel it all coming up; everything he had not thought of on the trip or all this morning" (IITS, p. 263).

Among the Hemingway heroes in the short stories are several others, besides Nick Adams, who also use liquor as a means of control. In "A Pursuit Race" William Campbell, a desperate man relentlessly pursued by his personal "giant," warns Mr. Turner to stay away from "women and horses and . . . eagles," and he relies on liquor to control his perceptions of this problem, the "wolf." He states, "'Oh, yes. My dear wolf. Every time I take a drink he goes outside the room. He can't stand alcohol. The poor little fellow.'"<sup>38</sup> Also using liquor to dispel the "giant" is the old deaf man in "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place." Having recently failed at suicide, the old man spends his evenings in "a clean, well-lighted cafe," drinking brandy late into the night. This is a man for whom nothing is left, for he has outlived his faith. The old have few things to occupy the night and to dull the pervading sense of nada. Drinking, however, makes existence temporarily tolerable. Not surprisingly, the old, brandy-drinking man does not leave the cafe until service is refused him.

In "The Gambler, the Nun, and the Radio" Mr. Frazer, a writer confined to a hospital bed because of a broken leg and the nervous condition it caused, refers to liquor as "the sovereign opium of the people, oh, an excellent opium."<sup>39</sup> He, too, uses liquor to control thinking and self-prescribes some of that "opium," or "a little spot of the giant killer"<sup>40</sup> when he thinks "a little too well." Another writer suffering a physical



ailment and using liquor for solace is Harry in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro." Harry, dying from a gangrenous wound, lies on his cot reviewing, in bits and pieces, his life and career. Downing whiskey-sodas with surprising determination for a dying man, Harry drinks, not to kill the pain, but to anesthetize his disgust for having sold out his writing career for a rich wife, luxury, and security. He drinks to dull his awareness that he has violated his integrity and that he will never write about all the things he has seen. This grave's-edge realization is more painful than the wound. Harry drinks to dull and control his remorse.

So, from among the Hemingway heroes the pattern emerges; the Hemingway hero reaches for the bottle in times of stress and crisis. He is determined--although he sometimes fails--to present a stoic front to others, not to be sloppily emotional or maudlin. First and foremost, he is determined to exert some control over his life and when he cannot control his fate, he is at least able, with the aid of liquor, to suppress and evade anxieties and pains and, in most cases, thereby control his responses to life and death.

## II

The use of liquor as an anesthetic, or "giant killer," is not Hemingway's only use of it in his fiction. He liberally floods his stories with liquors--the names and kinds of which, because of their particular qualities and/or histories, can significantly add to the knowledgeable reader's understanding. Hemingway frequently uses specific drinks as a subtle means to comment on the personalities of his fictional

characters. What a character chooses to drink can often be revelatory.

In all of Hemingway's fiction no other character reveals so much about himself by what he drinks as does Colonel Cantwell in Across the River and Into the Trees. Cantwell is a bitter man and admits it, calling himself, "'The unjust bitter criticizer who speaks badly of everyone'" (ARIT, p. 229). This bitter man frequently adds bitters to his drinks. And Cantwell often drinks a curiously labeled martini, a "Montgomery." This drink also illustrates his bitterness, for he has named it in honor, or dishonor, of Bernard L. Montgomery, a general of the British Army during World War II. Cantwell is very critical of Montgomery's battle tactics and resents the stature the British general has achieved, in Cantwell's opinion undeservedly. The proportions of a "Montgomery" are fifteen to one. Cantwell later explains, "'Monty was a character who needed fifteen to one to move, and then moved tardily!'" (ARIT, p. 125). Cantwell's lack of respect for a cowardly commander who waits to be assured of such odds before attacking is conveyed by his christening of a fifteen-to-one martini as a "Montgomery."

In an exchange with the Gran Maestro, Cantwell notes that a wine which has been offered is good, but that it isn't Chambertin. He explains that although when he was young he would drink anything, now he seeks perfection, which, while it may not be absolute, should be perfection for his money. That Cantwell chooses Chambertin to symbolize perfection is notable because according to legend Napoleon would drink no other wine, and planned all his great military and civil victories when warmed by the generous fire of Chambertin. Napoleon's supply of this liquor ran out during his Russian campaign, which culminated in an ignominious retreat and

eventual defeat.<sup>41</sup> This story connects Cantwell's image of himself with Napoleon. Napoleon was a general who lost his army and was later exiled; Cantwell's career has been similar, and, while he has not been literally exiled, he feels the loss of generalship as keenly as Napoleon felt the loss of his empire. They were both lions that had been de-clawed.

Although Hemingway refers with authority to a great variety of liquors in his fiction, champagne is the liquor which he most often uses to compliment a character. Hemingway himself exhibited a particular fondness for this beverage. Lillian Ross in a New Yorker profile quotes him as saying, "'The half bottle of champagne is the enemy of man'" and "'If I have any money, I can't think of any better way of spending money than on champagne.'"<sup>42</sup>

Two characters who share Hemingway's attitude toward champagne are Count Mippipopolous in The Sun Also Rises and Count Greffi in A Farewell to Arms. In The Sun Also Rises Brett brings Count Mippipopolous to meet Jake and it is through her that the reader discovers the Count's connection with champagne. She observes that he loves to go for champagne and that "'It means any amount to him'" (SAR, p. 56). Count Mippipopolous turns out to be an easy-going, relaxed individual who proclaims that he knows those things which Jake is searching for. He is aware of the correct way to drink champagne--he patiently chills it, despite Brett's desire to drink it before it is properly chilled. He also believes that champagne is better in magnums, a belief which is supported in Alec Waugh's Wine and Spirits. The Count knows the value of a good champagne--in this case Mums, whose house was founded in 1827 and is one of the largest of the champagne firms. In order for a Count who owns a chain of sweetshops in

the States to be familiar with this brand, he has also to be familiar with Europe because Mumms did not export to the United States until 1952.<sup>43</sup> His knowledge of champagne shows that the Count, an American, has indeed tasted the world and lends support to his statement, "'You see, Mr. Barnes, it is because I have lived very much that now I can enjoy everything so well. Don't you find it like that?'" (SAR, p. 60).

Count Mippipopolous' knowledge of the civilized and cultivated liquor, champagne, shows that he possesses the qualities which Jake wishes to know, or to achieve. As the Count says, "'You must get to know the values!'" (SAR, p. 60), and this is exactly what Jake is concerned with in the novel. This sets up the Count as a sort of model. Count Mippipopolous has learned what to ask and expect of life, and illustrates it by saying, "'Mr. Barnes, . . . all I want out of wines is to enjoy them'" (SAR, p. 59). With experience comes the knowledge of how to separate things, and Count Mippipopolous, speaking of champagne, tells Brett, "'This wine is too good for toast-drinking, my dear. You don't want to mix emotions up with a wine like that. You lose the taste'" (SAR, p. 59). Brett does not have this knowledge and is probably incapable of acquiring it because, as the Count makes the previous statement, Jake observes that her glass is empty. Jake recognizes the Count and his values when he observes, "It was amazing champagne" (SAR, p. 59). He could as easily be saying, "The Count was an amazing man."

Another character who exhibits the same relaxation with life and the same proclivity for champagne is Count Greffi in A Farewell to Arms. This Count, though considerably older than Count Mippipopolous, is quite similar to him. He, too, has experienced life, as a contemporary of

Metternich and as a diplomat for both Austria and Italy, and has learned the values. Greffi has the champagne iced and is careful that only one bottle is opened at a time, in order to preserve the effervescence of the unopened wine. Greffi's carefulness and concern for the champagne show his control and knowledge of life. Appropriately, he comments upon his wisdom, saying, "'The wisdom of old men. They do not grow wise. They grow careful.'" (FTA, p. 261). Henry recognizes the similarity between himself and Greffi when he admits that the wine the Count had chosen was "icy cold and very dry and good" (FTA, p. 260), and he accepts Greffi's stance toward life as they drink the wine and proceed up the stairs together.

In "The Undefeated," champagne is used to satirize the substitute bull-fight critic. The wine still stands for qualities of grace and culture, but the critic's ignorance of its proper use is a negative comment on him. Hemingway's satiric stroke is a marvel of economy. He merely has the bull-fight critic drink warm champagne. This action consummately damns him as a man totally ignorant of those things Counts Greffi and Mippipopolous know. This critic, then, lacks grace, style, taste, refinement, experience, civility and culture--clearly, he does not know the "values." A connoisseur, or a discerning person, knows that champagne is "improved in the drinking by being iced, as this not only cools the liquid but also helps to repress the effervescence."<sup>44</sup> Connoisseurs desire champagnes of moderate effervescence because the better qualities of a wine will vanish in thin air when the glass is filled with foam or froth.

Anyone who drinks warm champagne cannot be expected to applaud and recognize the true values. And so the critic in "The Undefeated" writes a shallow and vulgar appraisal of the valiant Manolo's performance in the bullring. He is a second-string critic, who misses the finer points of the matador's accomplishment. "'If it was Belmonte doing that stuff, they'd go crazy,'"<sup>45</sup> says one onlooker. But the critic views Manolo's performance as only second-rate and vulgar, ending each of his superficial and cliché-ridden judgments with a long drink of the warm champagne.

Another character who is equally condemned by that which he drinks is the old grain-broker in To Have and Have Not. This is a man who has attained his wealth by being vicious and impersonal, utterly without a human conscience. But, now, he has reached the end of his luck and is being investigated by the IRS, and he is justifiably worried. Because of the excesses of his past life, his health has been seriously weakened and the doctor has told him to give up alcohol for at least three months or he would be dead in a year's time. The walls of his world are closing in on him.

He finds himself unable to sleep "because he finally had remorse. His remorse was to think if only he had not been quite so smart five years ago."<sup>46</sup> Despite the doctor's orders he reaches for some Scotch, "that chemical courage that had soothed his mind and warmed his heart for so many years" (THAHN, p. 238). Scotch is derived from grain, which the broker has wheeled and dealed in for many years; it is a distilled liquor, not a natural one as is wine. It is potent and its effect is quick. Had the broker ordered wine it would not have shown as clearly how he has blocked himself in and how he is choosing the easy way out--death.

The history of Scotch also in many ways interestingly parallels that of the broker. For many years Scotch was produced in the Highlands by individual lairds who were as wily and rough and harsh as the brew they distilled. They distilled Scotch freely, without taxes.<sup>47</sup> In 1814 small scale distillation of Scotch was prohibited, and the lairds revolted, continuing to make Scotch in the Highland wilds despite the threat of excise taxes. Only when the Duke of Gordon made a deal with the government in 1823 in which he promised that the taxes would be equably adjusted did the illegal stills start to disappear. Hemingway's independent, ruthless, tax-evading grain dealer is quite like these lairds of history, but unlike the Duke of Gordon he is not willing to strike a bargain with the government.

Scotch is also used to help characterize El Sordo in For Whom the Bell Tolls. When El Sordo discovers that the mountain guerrilla bands will be visited by an "English" dynamiter, he gets whisky specifically for him: "'Knew many English,' he explains. 'Always much whiskey'" (FWBT, p. 142). El Sordo's fetching of the Scotch for the foreigner shows his thoughtfulness and consideration. Jordan recognizes this quality and observes of El Sordo that he has "the true thoughtfulness of thinking the visitor would like it and then bringing it down for him when you yourself were engaged in something where there was every reason to think of no one else but yourself and of nothing but the matter in hand--that was the Spanish" (FWBT, p. 204). By his gesture El Sordo has accepted Jordan, the Inglés, and has exhibited respect for him.

Again if the reader knows the history of Scotch it is possible to see in El Sordo's selection of Scotch a subtle foreshadowing of the



destruction of his mountain stronghold. According to Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart the fate and future of Scotch was decided at the battle of Culloden in 1746, "when the English finally conquered the Scots and opened the Highlands to the Lowlands; one fortunate result of this conquest was a road that made the Highlander whiskey accessible to the rest of the world. Until then the Highlanders and their whiskey had lived secure in the fastnesses of their glens, where there was a distillery to every family."<sup>48</sup> Similarly, the future of the mountain guerrilla bands rests in the hands of Robert Jordan, named Inglés by the Spanish. His mission is to destroy a bridge, but ironically if he succeeds the mountain strongholds of the guerrillas will become vulnerable and they will no longer be able to live securely in "the fastnesses of their glens." As a seasoned soldier, El Sordo fully realizes the consequences of Jordan's mission. His offer of Scotch to the Inglés, a liquor which was made available to the outside world as a consequence of a similar battle involving a bridge, may be seen as a corroborating gesture.

Other such uses of liquor to enhance characterization that require special knowledge to be fully appreciated occur in The Sun Also Rises and "Night Before Battle." In one comic sequence of The Sun Also Rises Jake Barnes orders a round of Pernod for himself and a prostitute. Pernod, he explains to her, "'is a greenish imitation absinthe'" (SAR, p. 15). It was also a favorite drink among the artiste set of Paris at that time and generally considered as a sign of decadence. It also had some reputation as an aphrodisiac. That Jake Barnes orders Pernod comments on the irony of his situation--he is a man whom even a large dose of aphrodisiac would not help--and this sharing Pernod with a prostitute



reveals that he is aware of his situation and that he can laugh hallowly at it.

Another veiled reference to character through liquor occurs in "Night Before Battle." Al, a tank driver who anticipates his death on the following morning, has dinner at a restaurant run by an anarchist syndicate, which serves wine stolen from the royal cellars. After several undistinctive bottles, the waiter finally brings the narrator and Al a bottle of Chateau Mouton Rothschild 1906 "that was as good as the claret [they] had was rotten."<sup>49</sup> Hemingway's providing the name of the wine is significant because of its comment on Al's resignation to his fate. When in 1855 Mouton was rated with the Second Growth (Second Crus) instead of the First Growth (Premier Crus), despite the wine's excellence, the Rothschilds adopted the motto: "First I cannot be, Second I do not deign to be, I am Mouton."<sup>50</sup> Al, as did the Rothschilds, realizes his unalterable fate but does not succumb to it. He faces death with admirable resignation and stoic determination to do what he can for the cause to the best of his ability. His motto might read, "Win I cannot, Loss I do not accept, I will be Al, a good tank commander."

Again in "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot" Hemingway shows his knowledge of liquor and uses it to add a stroke of characterization. Mr. Elliot is an ineffectual, emasculated young man. He is a man who does not think and lacks control over his life. He marries a woman fifteen years older than he, but he is incapable of fathering a child. He goes to Europe to live as an expatriate author but is out of place there. Like everything else he tries, he is a failure as a poet and has to pay to have

his poems published. In the end he sends for his wife's girlfriend; he does not object when they sleep together, but accepts it placidly and neutrally:

Elliot had taken to drinking white wine and lived apart in his own room. In the evening they all sat at dinner together in the garden under a plane tree and the hot evening wind blew and Elliot drank white wine and Mrs. Elliot and the girlfriend made conversation and they were all quite happy.<sup>51</sup>

When Hemingway chose to put white wine in Mr. Elliot's glass, he completed the distasteful portrait of an ineffectual, inexperienced, bland and emasculated man. White wines are bottled young and are conserved at lower temperatures than red wines. They are also best when they are young. Mr. Elliot by keeping himself pure when he was young did not let himself know the heat, or passion, of life, and so, like white wine, never acquired the color of experience. It is appropriate that such an inexperienced and colorless man would drink a liquor which is so closely his mirror image.

Hemingway also uses liquor to develop the characters of the priest and Rinaldi in A Farewell to Arms. These characters are meant to represent the opposing forces and values with which Frederic Henry is striving to strike a balance. Rinaldi is the sensual, the material forces of life; he is a doctor of the body. The priest is the spiritualist, the ideal part of life; he is a doctor of the spirit.

After Henry has been wounded, Rinaldi visits him in the hospital and brings along some very expensive and fine cognac (all the doctors of the body offer Henry brandy). Cognac is produced from the grapes grown in the Cognac region of France, a region of plains. It is a

fairly potent liquor which requires double-distilling, and needs to be aged in wooden casks to attain its amber glow. It should be gently warmed by the hand's heat before being consumed.<sup>52</sup> What more appropriate drink for Rinaldi, the representative of materialism and sensualism, than cognac, a liquor of age and heat. Rinaldi, old with experience, advises Henry to pursue the "heat" of life.

The priest, on the other hand, brings the wounded Henry a bottle of vermouth. Vermouth is as appropriate for the priest as cognac is for Rinaldi. It is primarily an Italian beverage, made from white wine of the Turin region and is blended with the aromatic herbs of the neighboring mountains. Further, "Italian law lays it down that 70% of anything called 'vermouth' must be pure natural wine."<sup>53</sup> Vermouth is also properly served cold. This liquor is the choice of the representative of the ideal and spiritual--a natural choice. It connects with purity and coldness of the mountains from which the priest comes and which represent his values. Vermouth also does not undergo the lengthy distilling process that cognac does and is ready for consumption in a relatively short time. This parallels the priest's youth and inexperience with sensual love.

### III

Hemingway's choices of liquor are made with skill and precision. He makes everything count, even down to the drink a character chooses. Of course, to the reader not as familiar with liquor as was Hemingway, some of the drinking may not signify much, but nevertheless the

significance is there. Characters do not reach for characteristic drinks over and over again by mere coincidence. Hemingway uses everything to his advantage--even the "booze." And he uses it to achieve several effects--effects which are sometimes not easily separable, as in the case of Rinaldi and the priest. The liquors they choose to give Henry not only contribute to their characterization, but also serve to heighten the contrast Hemingway tries to establish between the two characters and the values each represents--hot and cold, plain and mountain, age and youth, body and spirit.

Hemingway, on occasion, enriches situations by using liquor to introduce the element of contrast. He uses liquor to manipulate situations and impressions and memories. Occasionally liquor is introduced to contrast the past with the present, and this is a power which liquor seemed to have for Hemingway himself. In the Green Hills of Africa Hemingway remarks, "'Do you remember the time we were sheep hunting and your hat blew off and nearly fell onto the ram?' I asked her, the whiskey racing my mind back to Wyoming."<sup>54</sup>

This power of liquor to conjure up the past is also present in Islands in the Stream: Thomas Hudson "stood there, holding the long, pleasantly bitter drink, tasting the first swallow of it, and it reminded him of Tanga, Mombasa, and Lamu and all that coast and he had a sudden nostalgia" (IITS, pp. 15-16). The nostalgia-producing effects of liquor are only touched on briefly in Islands in the Stream and Hemingway did not develop Hudson's African past to any significant extent.

But in Across the River and Into the Trees liquor is clearly used to contrast Cantwell's past with his present. Several times mention is

made of Perrier-Jouet 1942 and Roederer Brut 1942--both are champagnes, expensive and French. These champagnes conjure up pleasant memories for Cantwell. They were bottled in 1942, the year which saw the first landing of American troops in World War II. (On November 8, 1942, at 5:15 a.m. American and other Allied troops landed 125 miles southwest of Casablanca in North Africa.) This invasion launched the chain of events which would raise Cantwell to the heights of his military career. Moreover, Perrier-Jouet is connected with his recollection of the death of the French General Jacques Leclerc. He states, "'Leclerc, another jerk of the third or fourth water, whose death I celebrated with a magnum of Perrier-Jouet 1942'" (ARIT, p. 134). When Renata asks Cantwell to tell her about when he was a general, he motions the Gran Maestro to bring champagne. "It was Roederer Brut '42 and he loved it" (ARIT, p. 136). Also when Cantwell prepares to view the portrait of Renata he drinks Perrier-Jouet, the celebratory liquor of his generalship and youth.

Cantwell's association of his more glorious past with the champagne of 1942 is similar to the narrator's association of the "old days" with yellow gin in "The Denunciation." The story draws a contrast between the Chicote's bar in the old days and the bar in the present days of the Spanish Revolution. The beginning stresses the past tense--it was always pleasant, the waiters were always pleasant, it was the best bar in Spain, the drinks were wonderful. In the old days if someone ordered a Martini, "it was made with the best gin that money could buy."<sup>55</sup> When the revolution starts, Chicote's loses its non-partisanship; the waiters take it over and the "good liquor" eventually runs out.

Chicote's appeal dwindles as the liquor stores are depleted. The intimation is that when the Loyalist cause is lost, so too is the world that once supported the pleasant atmosphere of Chicote's. In the old days it served yellow gin, but it runs out in May 1938, the year before the civil war ends. Without the yellow gin to recreate the past, there is not much to go to Chicote's for.

When Luis Delgado goes to Chicote's for a drink of the yellow gin and tonic, he exhibits a desire to return to the old days when politics was not a life-and-death matter and when things were pleasant. Henry Emmunds, another old client, and Delgado are now on opposite sides of the political fence, but both order a gin and tonic, which is "still the same price as before the revolt."<sup>56</sup> When Henry remembers his last time with Delgado in 1933, one of the things he remembers is that they had a gin and tonic together and that it had never tasted so good as at that time. Henry also remembers the old days when he looks at the table on which are setting two gin and tonics. When he remembers the pleasantness of those old days and the yellow gin, he feels badly about giving the waiter the number to call to denounce Delgado.

Another story in which liquor nostalgically recalls a past which sharply contrasts with the present is "Wine of Wyoming." Here liquor serves to contrast the cultures of the old country, France, and the new country, America. Wine in this story is associated with France; Fontan remarks, "'Everybody that was ever in France they want to come and drink wine. They like wine all right.'"<sup>57</sup> Fontan, himself, exhibits a marked fondness for wine and France, and as Madame Fontan says, "'Il fait de la vendange. Oh, my God, il est crazy pour le vin.'"<sup>58</sup> Fontan finds

America's dry laws repressive. He reveals his nostalgia for the old country by usually speaking in French and by spending much of his time making wine despite the threat of arrest.

He does not understand a culture which prefers the grossness of mixing whiskey with wine. Such behavior exhibits a lack of civilization and normality. His "very light and clear and good" wine is his only connection with the French culture, and after exposure to American crudity he protects it fiercely.

Hemingway uses liquor in a more sustained and subtle way to introduce contrast in For Whom the Bell Tolls. There is a battle of wills between Pablo, Pilar and Jordan for authority, and each time a significant scene occurs involving authority it takes place around the communal wine bowl. The repeated references to the wine contrast Pablo's past leadership to his present indecisive and weakened position. Over the wine bowl the reader witnesses the changing degrees of authority in the guerrilla band.

The wine itself is closely related to Pablo's authority. It was procured during the "last raid of Pablo." According to Anselmo, "'Since then he has done nothing'" (FWBT, p. 25). In the scenes of contested authority, the wine represents Pablo's last initiative as the band's leader, and as its supply dwindles, Pablo's authority wanes. In the first meeting of Pablo and Jordan there is still over half a skin of the wine left, and Pablo is still deferred to by the other members of the band. Anselmo hands his cup to Pablo, but not until he dips a cup for Jordan. Shortly after Pablo leaves this scene it becomes evident that he has lost his real power as a leader. Jordan, dipping another cup of



wine, states, "'This is the last one. We've had enough of this'" (FWBT, p. 25). This attitude is echoed by Anselmo, who observes that, although in the beginning Pablo was very brave and serious, he has since become very afraid to die and so prefers not to act. The band, too, has had enough of Pablo's fear and is ready for a change.

After Jordan has had time to assess Pablo's waning authority, they confront one another again over the wine bowl. Jordan, unsure of just how tenuous Pablo's hold is, asks the group at large if there is wine. Pablo, not any of the others, answers sullenly that there is little, which reveals his recognition that his power is declining and that Jordan could challenge him. The group does not respond to Jordan at this moment, and so he does not drink any wine. Then when Pablo attempts to convince the band that they should not blow the bridge, Jordan turns to Pilar, who along with the rest defies Pablo's authority. The command is transferred to Pilar when she announces, "'There is wine enough for all'" (FWBT, p. 57). The man who obtained the wine no longer has a vote in how it will be distributed.

The next scene around the wine bowl occurs after it snows, which threatens the success of Jordan's mission. Pablo has been drinking wine all day waiting for it to snow. He offers Jordan a cup of wine, and they toast to the snow because Pablo realizes that, though he may have lost command, the snow now has control and it may immobilize Jordan. When Pablo taunts Jordan about the snow, Jordan considers openly challenging him, but privately wishes that he did not have to do so and recalls Christ imploring his Father to let the cup pass from him. Jordan, however, decides not to ignore the situation but to accept the



responsibility: "'Let me have a cup of wine, please,'" he commands (FWBT, p. 181). But Jordan fails to provoke Pablo to action, and recognizes Pablo's shrewdness and wiliness concerning the wine bowl. There is wine left, and so, still, is some of Pablo's power.

Pablo, while drinking the dregs of the wine which symbolizes his leadership, has convinced himself that he is still indispensable: he is the only one who can lead them safely out of the mountains. When Agustín knocks Pablo's cup of wine out of his hand, Pablo observes, "'That is a waste. . . . That is silly'" (FWBT, p. 215). To throw away Pablo at this time would be unwise, and he is aware of his remaining power. But Pablo does not consider himself invulnerable, as is evidenced by the following passage:

"Be careful," he said to [Maria]. "The wine's below the chest now."

No one said anything.

"I drank from the belly-button to the chest today," Pablo said. "It's a day's work. What's the matter with you all? Have you lost your tongues?"

No one said anything at all.

"Screw it up, Maria," Pablo said. "Don't let it spill" (FWBT, pp. 220-221).

Pablo is unsure of himself and is desperately trying to hold on to the last vestiges of his authority. Pablo admits that he searches for his ideas in the wine bowl, an admission that he is relying on his past authority in order to contend with the outside and present challenge of Jordan.

The last power struggle to take place over the wine bowl occurs after the band of El Sordo has been massacred. Pablo and Jordan are sitting opposite one another with a full bowl of wine between them.

Each has a cup of wine. The news of El Sordo's death has had a profound effect on Pablo because in it he has seen his own end. Jordan has become the active leader, and Pablo has become completely passive. His eyes are focused on the wine bowl "but he was not seeing it" (FWBT, p. 329). When he speaks to Jordan, he speaks to the wine bowl; when Pablo addresses the wine bowl as Inglés, he abrogates his power. In this complex way, then, the wine and the wine bowl serve to trace the contrast between Pablo and Jordan and their shifting roles of authority within the band.

The liquor references in Hemingway's fiction, then, are more than a simple protest against Prohibition. His characters are not drinking merely to occupy their time while they wait for something to happen; nor do they drink only for a quick "high." The Time reviewer who speculated that Hemingway's "interests appear to have grown soggy from too much sitting in cafes in the Latin quarter of Paris"<sup>59</sup> clearly was wrong. From the liquor-sodden pages of Hemingway's fiction emerges a hero who uses liquor as a means to anesthetize and control pain and anxiety caused by a world of turmoil and change. Drawing on his exhaustive knowledge of liquor and his skill as a writer, Hemingway also uses liquor to characterize his fictional people and to introduce elements of contrast.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Carlos Baker, Ernest Hemingway: A Life Story (New York: Scribner's, 1969), p. 204.
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 58.
- <sup>3</sup> A. E. Hotchner, Papa Hemingway (New York: Random House, 1966), pp. 280-281.
- <sup>4</sup> Baker, p. 64.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 353.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 346.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 537.
- <sup>8</sup> Ernest Hemingway, "An African Journal: Miss Mary's Lion, Part 1," Sports Illustrated, 20 Dec. 1971, p. 61.
- <sup>9</sup> Ernest Hemingway, "An African Journal: Miss Mary's Lion, Part 2," Sports Illustrated, 3 Jan. 1972, p. 46.
- <sup>10</sup> Ernest Hemingway, Death in the Afternoon (New York: Scribner's, 1932), p. 394.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 461.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 10.
- <sup>13</sup> Harold J. Grossman, Grossman's Guide to Wines, Spirits, and Beers (New York: Scribner's, 1940), p. 241.
- <sup>14</sup> Bruce Barton, rev. in Atlantic Monthly, in Ernest Hemingway: The Critical Reception, ed. Robert O. Stephens (New York: Burt Franklin, 1977), p. 46.
- <sup>15</sup> André Maurois, "Ernest Hemingway," in Ernest Hemingway: The Critical Reception, p. 48.
- <sup>16</sup> "Hemingway Seems Out of Focus in the 'Sun Also Rises,'" in Ernest Hemingway: The Critical Reception, p. 39.
- <sup>17</sup> "Study in Futility," in Ernest Hemingway: The Critical Reception, p. 31.

<sup>18</sup> Schuyler Ashley, untitled review, in Ernest Hemingway: The Critical Reception, p. 41.

<sup>19</sup> H. L. Mencken, "Fiction by Adept Hands," in Ernest Hemingway: The Critical Reception, p. 98.

<sup>20</sup> Henry Hazlitt, "Take Hemingway," in Ernest Hemingway: The Critical Reception, p. 71.

<sup>21</sup> Leon Edel, "The Art of Evasion," in Hemingway: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Robert P. Weeks (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962), p. 170.

<sup>22</sup> Malcolm Cowley, "Nightmare and Ritual in Hemingway," in Hemingway: A Collection of Critical Essays, p. 43.

<sup>23</sup> Philip Young, Ernest Hemingway: A Reconsideration (University Park, Penn.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1966), p. 113.

<sup>24</sup> Charles A. Norton, "The Alcoholic Content of A Farewell to Arms," Fitzgerald/Hemingway Annual, (1973), p. 312.

<sup>25</sup> Ernest Hemingway, "The Three-Day Blow," in The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway (New York: Scribner's, 1938), p. 120.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>31</sup> Ernest Hemingway, The Sun Also Rises (New York: Scribner's, 1926), p. 146. Hereafter references to this work will be abbreviated as SAR and cited in parentheses in the body of this paper.

<sup>32</sup> Ernest Hemingway, A Farewell to Arms (New York: Scribner's, 1929), p. 140. Hereafter references to this work will be abbreviated as FTA and cited in parentheses in the body of this paper.

<sup>33</sup> Ernest Hemingway, For Whom the Bell Tolls (New York: Scribner's, 1940), p. 17. Hereafter references to this work will be abbreviated as FWBT and cited in parentheses in the body of this paper.

<sup>34</sup> Mark Keller and Mairi McCormick, eds., A Dictionary of Words About Alcohol (Richmond, Va.: The William Byrd Press, 1968), p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> Ernest Hemingway, Across the River and Into the Trees (New York: Scribner's, 1950), p. 78. Hereafter references to this work will be abbreviated as ARIT and cited in parentheses in the body of this paper.

<sup>36</sup> Alexis Lichine, Alexis Lichine's Encyclopedia of Wines and Spirits (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), p. 539.

<sup>37</sup> Ernest Hemingway, Islands in the Stream (New York: Scribner's, 1970), p. 95. Hereafter references to this work will be abbreviated as IITS and cited in parentheses in the body of this paper.

<sup>38</sup> Hemingway, "A Pursuit Race," in The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway, p. 352.

<sup>39</sup> Hemingway, "The Gambler, the Nun, and the Radio," in The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway, p. 485.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 487.

<sup>41</sup> Grossman, p. 47.

<sup>42</sup> Lillian Ross, "How Do You Like It Now, Gentlemen?" The New Yorker, 13 May 1950, p. 51.

<sup>43</sup> Patrick Forbes, Champagne (London: Victor Gollancz, 1967), p. 454.

<sup>44</sup> G. Selmer Fougner, Along the Wine Trail (Boston: Stratform, 1935), p. 34.

<sup>45</sup> Ernest Hemingway, "The Undefeated," in The Fifth Column and Four Stories of the Spanish Civil War (New York: Scribner's, 1972), p. 259.

<sup>46</sup> Ernest Hemingway, To Have and Have Not (New York: Scribner's, 1937), p. 236. Hereafter references to this work will be abbreviated as THAHN and cited in parentheses in the body of this paper.

<sup>47</sup> Grossman, p. 209.

<sup>48</sup> Alec Waugh, Wines and Spirits (New York: Time-Life Books, 1968), p. 42.

<sup>49</sup> Hemingway, "Night Before Battle," in The Fifth Column and Four Stories of the Spanish Civil War, p. 127.

<sup>50</sup> Lichine, p. 372.

<sup>51</sup> Hemingway, "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot," in The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway, p. 164.

<sup>52</sup> John Doxat, The World of Drinks and Drinking (New York: Drake, 1971), p. 65.

<sup>53</sup> André L. Simon, ed., Wines of the World (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962), p. 168.

<sup>54</sup> Ernest Hemingway, Green Hills of Africa (New York: Scribner's, 1935), p. 60.

<sup>55</sup> Hemingway, "The Denunciation," in The Fifth Column and Four Stories of the Spanish Civil War, p. 90.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>57</sup> Hemingway, "Wine of Wyoming," in The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway, p. 461.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 451.

<sup>59</sup> "Sad Young Men," in Ernest Hemingway: The Critical Reception, p. 35.

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The "Giant Killer":  
The Use of Liquor in the Fiction of Ernest Hemingway

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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## ABSTRACT

In the fiction of Ernest Hemingway liquor primarily serves as a "giant killer" to dull the senses of the Hemingway hero and also functions on occasion to subtly enrich characterization and situation.

The Hemingway hero, born to a world of conflict and change, seeks a way to control this turmoil and uses liquor to evade or suppress pain and anxiety. In order to confront the "giants" of moral, emotional or physical crises, the hero, including Jake Barnes in The Sun Also Rises and Robert Jordan in For Whom the Bell Tolls, anesthetizes his mind and thoughts with alcohol. His behavior is usually marked by a tight-lipped, disciplined restraint and stoicism, with the help of a drink or two.

The liquors with which Hemingway liberally doses his stories can, because of their particular histories and qualities, measurably contribute to characterization. Specific drinks are frequently used as a subtle means to comment on the personalities of his fictional characters. For instance, champagne is used to compliment a character's knowledge of life and the values in The Sun Also Rises and A Farewell to Arms. What a character chooses to drink in Hemingway's fiction can often be revelatory.

Hemingway also, on occasion, enriches situation by using liquor to introduce the element of contrast. It often has a capacity to conjure up the past and, so, to contrast it to the present, a power found in Across the River and Into the Trees and "The Denunciation."