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ERNEST HEMINGWAY'S IMPRESSIONISTIC STYLE

BY

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE ........................................ iv

Chapter

I. TOWARD A DEFINITION OF IMPRESSIONISM .......... 1
II. HEMINGWAY'S IMPRESSIONISTIC FICTION .......... 10
III. IMPRESSIONISM AS A CRITICAL GAUGE .......... 39
IV. CONCLUSION .................................... 56
LIST OF WORKS CONSULTED .......................... 58
VITA .............................................. 63
The literary reputation of Ernest Hemingway has been in a state of flux since the publication of his first group of short stories, *in our time*, in Paris in 1914. However, Hemingway's work did not gain world-wide renown until the publication in 1926 of his first novel, *The Sun Also Rises*. Hemingway's story of world-weary ex-patriates in Paris shortly after World War I won popular and critical acclaim, and in 1929 *A Farewell to Arms* brought the young author his first major commercial success.

Then, apparently at the height of his creative powers, Hemingway turned to non-fiction with his next two major publications, *Death in the Afternoon* (1932) and *Green Hills of Africa* (1935). This hiatus in his fictional production was ended in 1937 with *To Have and Have Not*, which many critics considered to be his worst work. Hemingway countered this more or less major disaster with his fine collection of short stories *The Fifth Column and the First Forty-Nine Stories* (1938), and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940), one of his most moving and best received books. Next followed a ten-year lapse in his literary career which was ended by *Across the River and Into the Trees* (1950). This novel of
a dying colonel's last affair with a beautiful young girl in Venice is probably the most controversial of his works and led many critics to cry that Hemingway was finished as a writer of fiction. Then, amidst the many literary obituaries being written for him, Hemingway capped his long career in 1952 with the novel many consider to be his masterpiece, *The Old Man and the Sea*.

This thesis is in one sense an attempt to explain to what extent, if any, the fluctuations in critical and popular evaluation throughout, and even after, Hemingway's lengthy career are due to his impressionistic style. The purpose and method of this thesis is therefore twofold:

1. To arrive at a workable definition of Impressionism, and, using this definition, to delineate those portions of Hemingway's work which are written in this manner.

2. To determine if Impressionism may be used as a critical gauge in assessing Hemingway's fictional works and perhaps explain the aforementioned fluctuations in his work.
CHAPTER I
TOWARD A DEFINITION OF IMPRESSIONISM

Impressionism, like many other literary "isms," is a somewhat ambiguous term. Its ambiguity is made more nebulous not only by the loose use to which such terms are subjected, but also by the fact that this same term is employed in the areas of music and painting, as well as in literature. In general, Impressionism is used in these diverse arts to mean the aesthetic practice which emphasizes not objective reality as it is, but rather the impressions the artist derives from that reality. A general definition such as this, however, would be inadequate for the purposes of this discussion. Therefore, in this chapter I have attempted to arrive at a definition of Impressionism which would be broad but not lax; brief yet inclusive; specific but not limited.

The term Impressionism has frequently been used to describe the modern fictional technique of centering on the mental life of the chief character rather than the reality surrounding him. Authors such as James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and Marcel Proust often dwell at length upon their characters' memories, associations, and inner emotional
reactions, and hence they are often described as being impressionistic writers. Such a description is a rather free employment of the term because it seems to deny the use of verisimilitude by impressionistic writers, and because such a definition borders on describing Expressionism, not Impressionism.

According to the Reader's Encyclopedia, one of the most common sources of information on such terms, Impressionism refers to a movement containing music and literature which began in the latter half of the Nineteenth Century. Originating in France, the aim of this movement was "to portray the effects, or 'impressions,' of experience upon the consciousness of the artist or on an observer with whom he identifies himself, rather than the objective characteristics of things and events."¹ This seems a rather limited definition as it excludes the audience entirely, and it also seems to deny any attempt at verisimilitude by the artist. This definition may be sufficient in defining Impressionism in music or painting, but it is inadequate in describing the literary technique.

The most frequently cited definition is that found in The Oxford Companion to American Literature. In this monumental work Impressionism is defined as an "aesthetic movement in which the artist attempts to present the impression an object makes upon him, rather than a realistic version

of the object itself."² As in the preceding definition the audience is excluded and verisimilitude is denied. It is important to realize that whereas the realists emphasize the photographic depiction of details, impressionistic writers are more concerned with moods or sensations. But this does not mean that these moods or sensations are less "real" than objects, or that the Impressionists are not concerned with conveying verisimilitude. Hence The Oxford Companion's definition, while not incorrect, is not complete.

An essential point to what I consider a "correct" definition of Impressionism is stated by Herbert Read in his English Prose Style. Mr. Read states that an impressionistic prose style is one "which gives the reader the illusion that he is an active participant in the actions, scenes, or events described."³ This aspect is missing from both the definitions above and is probably their greatest weakness. This "illusion" I consider to be the focus of Impressionism, and any workable definition of this term must take it into account when describing the technique.

This illusion above is one part of what might be called the dualism of Impressionism. If focus is placed upon the artist, then the work should reflect the "impressions" the object makes upon him. If the focus is shifted to the audience, then the artist endeavors to give his audience


the "impression" that they are a part of the action, scene, or character presented. It is easy to see that the first half of this dualism is primarily used in painting and music, whereas the latter half occurs more frequently in literature. This discussion will deal with the literary part of this dualism and hence will be concerned with that type of Impressionism which makes the reader feel like a participant in or eyewitness to the action portrayed.

Meyer Abrams in his discussion of critical theories in The Mirror and the Lamp calls that type of aesthetic theory which attempts to achieve certain emotions in an audience a "pragmatic" theory. In Abrams's sense of the word literary Impressionism is pragmatic, and any definition of the term worthy of the name must also be pragmatic in this manner. Barry and Wright's Literary Terms calls Impressionism "the theory and practice in literature . . . aimed at evoking the emotional effect of a scene, a character, or a mood rather than providing a detailed description; the goal is to achieve subjective impression rather than objective reality." This is a rather good definition of Impressionism, but it is incomplete because, like the others above, it also overlooks that important factor - the audience.

I have therefore attempted to evolve a definition of Impressionism through the process of synthesis. As we have seen above, any complete definition must be "pragmatic";
it must focus on the audience's impression not the artist's; and it must not exclude verisimilitude. Not wishing to seem presumptive, I feel that all the definitions uncovered by my research are deficient in at least one of these requirements, and hence, incomplete.

The definition of Impressionism which follows, then, will serve throughout this discussion as my working definition, and all subsequent references to Impressionism will refer to it: Impressionism is that theory and practice in literature aimed at evoking a particular emotional effect from the reader rather than focusing upon detailed, objective description. Its goal is subjective impression on the part of the audience; and although the representation of objective reality is not its principal aim, the impressionistic technique does make use of verisimilitude.

In order to place this definition in perspective I will contrast it with the terms Expressionism and Realism; with which it is often confused. Expressionism is defined in Thrall, Hibbard, and Holman's A Handbook to Literature as "the willing yielding up of the realistic and naturalistic methods, of verisimilitude, in order to use objects in art not as representational but as transmitters of the impressions and moods of a character or of the author or artist."5 So we see that Expressionism is similar to Impressionism,

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but in one vital aspect, verisimilitude, the two techniques are widely divergent.

In *A Glossary of Literary Terms* M. H. Abrams says that the aim of the Expressionist is "to represent how the world appears to the troubled, and often abnormal, mind of a character in the work, or else to project in the construction of the work the concepts and attitudes of the artist himself." Thus Expressionism is a further step in the revolt against realism which was begun by Impressionism. Such works as *Finnegans Wake*, the "Circe" episode of Joyce's *Ulysses*, and particularly the novels and short stories of Franz Kafka, are excellent examples of fictional Expressionism. Expressionists often exaggerate and disjoint the normal time sequence and frequently distort the happenings and surroundings of the external world for their purposes. Impressionism, which does not completely reject verisimilitude, thus "differs from Expressionism significantly in avoiding conscious distortion and abstraction." Thus these two terms are far from being equivalent, and should not be used synonymously.

Impressionism is also often entangled with that other well-known literary "ism," Realism. If we accept that broad definition of Realism as being "fidelity to actuality in its representation in literature," it is obvious that


7Thrall, Hibbard, and Holman, p. 238.

8Ibid., p. 397.
the meanings of these two terms are somewhat similar. But while the realist attempts to give all the details of a scene or an incident, the impressionist selects only those details which he considers necessary for his purpose. Both present these details realistically, and hence Impressionism should probably be considered an offspring of literary realism.

I do not mean by the above that a writer must be classified by only one or the other of these terms. He may be classified by all these within the confines of a single short work. For example, Harry Levin made the following observation on Hemingway in an article for *Kenyon Review*:

> When he (Hemingway) offers this general view of a restaurant -- 'It was full of smoke and drinking and singing.' -- he is an impressionist, if not an abstractionist. Then to expressionism in an easy step: '... the room whirled.'

To end this discussion with an illustration, suppose that these three literary techniques were photographs. A realistic technique might be compared to a photographic enlargement in which the most minute details can be seen with utmost clarity. In a similar manner Expressionism could be likened to a photograph made through a distorting lens in which the structure of exterior facts has been exaggerated and distorted. The impressionistic technique, then, would compare to a picture made through the new technique of laser

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holography in which the viewer experiences the greatest sensation of actually "being there."

The Impressionist painters, such as Van Gogh, Monet, Manet, Renoir, and Cezanne enhanced individual details in their compositions in order to heighten reality. These artists presented scenes of common life, so called "tranche de vie," without artistic intrusion in order that the viewer could form his own impression of what was depicted. Modern literary Impressionists, such as Virginia Woolf and John Dos Passos, resemble these Nineteenth Century artists, particularly in this latter aspect.

As a literary movement Impressionism found its two major sources in nineteenth century realism and the naturalistic style of such French authors as Flaubert and the brothers Goncourt. Nineteenth century realism, of which Impressionism may be considered a continuation, had made the impressionistic style possible; and Naturalism had sharpened the realists' method of the close observation of minute details. Hence it only remained for the final flowering and partial fusion of the two styles to result in twentieth century Impressionism.

In poetry Impressionism is an important aspect of the works of such Imagist poets as Ezra Pound and Carl Sandburg. Excluding Hemingway, the prime example in American fiction of Impressionism is found in the works of John Dos Passos. The impressionistic technique is particularly evident in the "Camera Eye" sections of Dos Passos's USA. Gertrude Stein,
whose cadence Robert Spiller called "a sort of literary cubism or post-impressionism,"¹⁰ was a great influence upon Dos Passos and the other members of the "Lost Generation" in Paris during the Twenties. Chief among these expatriates was, of course, Ernest Hemingway.

CHAPTER II
HEMINGWAY'S IMPRESSIONISTIC FICTION

Ernest Hemingway's manner of writing is somewhat similar to the aforementioned Impressionist painters because, like them, he allows his work to stand or fall on its own merit, without editorial commenting from the artist. This statement perhaps suggests that Impressionism should be equated with objectivity, but such is not the case. Instead, Impressionism might be called "controlled objectivity;" that is, the writer selects only those details which will elicit the desired response from his reader. The readers or viewers of impressionistic works of art are supposed to form their own opinions without overt authorial prodding. Hemingway and other impressionistic authors attempt to use words to record their impressions as these painters had utilized paint and brush, and hence such writers may in one sense be considered the heirs of these earlier artists.

Hemingway himself acknowledged his debt to the impressionistic painters in *A Moveable Feast* when he spoke of the Musee du Luxembourg and its contents thusly:

I went there nearly every day for the Cezannes and to see the Manets and the Monets and the other Impressionists
that I had first come to know about in the Art Institute at Chicago. I was learning something from the painting of Cezanne that made writing simple true sentences far from enough to make the stories have the dimensions that I was trying to put in them. I was learning very much from him but I was not articulate enough to explain it to anyone. Besides it was a secret.11

In this chapter I intend to illustrate Hemingway's use of the impressionistic technique by presenting brief excerpts from five of Hemingway's book-length works, and several of his short stories. The five books I have selected are The Sun Also Rises (1926), A Farewell to Arms (1929), For Whom the Bell Tolls (1940), The Old Man and the Sea (1952), and A Moveable Feast (1964). This group of works ranges from his first published novel to his last work, which was published posthumously.12

I have purposely excluded from this list several of Hemingway's works because I felt that they were not applicable to this discussion. For example, Death in the Afternoon (1932) and Green Hills of Africa (1935) were omitted because both of these works are non-fiction and hence not appropriate for a discussion of a fictional technique.

I excluded The Torrents of Spring (1926) from consideration because it is essentially a parody of Sherwood Anderson's work. I set aside To Have and Have Not (1937) for

12The short stories were chosen from The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953.
two reasons. First, it has been acknowledged by many Hemingway critics to be his most obvious fictional failure. Secondly, this novel capped a drought in Hemingway's fictional efforts, and as such it is not representative of the main body of his work. I have also excluded Hemingway's other "failure," *Across the River and Into the Trees* (1950). Not because I consider it a failure, but because it is written in a style almost completely alien to the rest of his fiction. Hence, it is not representative of his work either.

Failing to find any coherent discussion which separated Impressionism into its components, I intend to enumerate in this chapter the types of Impressionism which I have found in Hemingway's fiction. Perhaps these categories may seem to have been rather arbitrarily chosen for literary impressionism in general, but at least they offer a manner of comparing Hemingway's various impressionistic works. It should also be noted that the excerpts which follow by no means represent all of Hemingway's impressionistic fiction, but the chosen passages are representative of his overall use of this technique.

While reading the body of Hemingway's work in an effort to select those passages which I considered impressionistic, I found that Hemingway's employment of this technique could handily be divided into five categories. The first category I call "Impressionism of Scene." This category I consider to be the simplest type of Hemingway's impressionistic
fiction. Here Hemingway attempts, by presenting a few important details, to give the reader the impression of observing as an eye-witness the scene being depicted. The reader seems to be present with Hemingway and to be seeing exactly what he is seeing. In this technique Hemingway puts his emphasis upon nouns, not only because they come closest to reality among parts of speech, but also because the names of concrete objects are far removed from abstraction and hence more "real."

This type of Impressionism, seen especially in the bullfight scenes, was what Edmund Wilson referred to when he wrote that such scenes

have the dry sharpness and elegance of the bull-fight lithographs of Goya. And, like Goya, he is concerned first of all with making a fine picture.13

The simplicity of the setting is often matched by the simplicity of the prose describing it; and this simplicity deepens the impression made upon the reader.

A good example of this first type of Impressionism is found in Hemingway's first novel, The Sun Also Rises. Here is the way Hemingway describes a bus journey through the Spanish countryside:

The bus climbed steadily up the road. The country was barren and rocks stuck up through the clay. There was no grass beside the road. Looking back we could see the country spread out below. Far back the fields were squares

of green and brown on the hillsides. Making the horizon were the brown mountains. They were strangely shaped . . . . Then the road came over the crest, flatted out, and went into a forest. It was a forest of cork oaks, and the sun came through the trees in patches, and there were cattle grazing back in the trees. We went through the forest and the road came out and turned along a rise of land, and out ahead of us was a rolling green plain, with dark mountains beyond it . . . . The green plain stretched off. It was cut by fences and the white of the road showed through the trunks of a double line of trees that crossed the plain toward the north. As we came to the edge of the rise we saw the red roofs and white houses of Burguete ahead strung out on the plain, and away off on the shoulder of the first dark mountain was the grey metal-sheathed roof of the monastery of Roncesvalles.14

I have quoted this entire passage because it is an excellent example of Impressionism of Scene. In this excerpt we are able to see the technique very clearly. This passage is written in a strict reportorial style, from a purely objective point of view. The over-all tone is one of quiet understatement, with an emphasis on simple, straightforward words. Notice how Hemingway is able, while using a preponderance of simple, concrete nouns and adjectives, to make the reader see, if not actually experience, the scene unfolding before him.

Another example of Hemingway's use of this technique is the inter-chapter between the first and second stories

14Ernest Hemingway, The Sun Also Rises (New York, 1926), p. 108.
in the collected short stories. This entire inter-chapter follows:

Minarets stuck up in the rain out of Adrianople across the mud flats. The carts were jammed for thirty miles along the Karagatch road. Water buffalo and cattle were hauling carts through the mud. No end and no beginning. Just carts loaded with everything they owned. The old men and women, soaked through, walked along keeping the cattle moving. The Maritza was running yellow almost up to the bridge. Carts were jammed solid on the bridge with camels bobbing along through them. Greek calvary herded along the procession. Women and kids were in the carts crouched with mattresses, mirrors, sewing machines, bundles. There was a woman having a kid with a young girl holding a blanket over her and crying. Scared sick looking at it. It rained all through the evacuation.

This passage is similar to the previous one in several ways. First, both begin right in the midst of the setting. Second, both selections end with a magnificent, crystal-clear image. Also, in the latter example one sees the same simplicity, the same curt, un-emotional style and the same absence of metaphors and similies. As Earl Rovit has observed, "the traditional techniques of achieving pictorial description have been sedulously avoided."

And yet in both selections the reader is aware of the scene described as though he were viewing it in person.

One of Hemingway's fine short stories, "In Another Country," begins with this paragraph:

15Ernest Hemingway, The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway (New York, 1953), p. 97. (Hereafter Short Stories.)

In the fall the war was always there, but we did not go to it any more. It was cold in the fall in Milan and the dark came very early. Then the electric lights came on, and it was pleasant along the streets looking in the windows. There was much game hanging outside the shops, and the wind blew their tails. The deer hung stiff and heavy and empty, and small birds blew in the wind and the wind turned their feathers. It was a cold fall and the wind came down from the mountains.17

Here, with just a few sentences, Hemingway shows us what a day in the fall in Milan is like. By concentrating on the cold and the effects of the wind, and by increasing the impact of these elements through repetition and reiteration, Hemingway makes us "see" the scene as he saw it.

Another good example of this category is this passage from the beginning of A Farewell to Arms:

In the late summer of that year we lived in a house in a village that looked across the river and the plain to the mountains. In the bed of the river there were pebbles and boulders, dry and white in the sun, and the water was clear and swiftly moving and blue in the channels. Troops went by the house and down the road and the dust they raised powdered the leaves of the trees. The trunks of the trees too were dusty and the leaves fell early that year and we saw the troops marching along the road and the dust rising and leaves, stirred by the breeze, falling and the soldiers marching and afterward the road bare and white except for the leaves.18

Here we see the familiar technique of reiteration which probably shows the influence of Gertrude Stein's dictum

17Short Stories, p. 267.

18Ernest Hemingway, A Farewell to Arms (New York, 1929), p. 3.
of beginning over and over again. Used in this manner, the technique of reiteration has a cumulative effect which slowly builds up by a process of accretion an almost concrete impression in the reader's consciousness.

The second of these categories of Impressionism I have labeled "Impressionism of Character." I uncovered fewer examples of this aspect of the technique in Hemingway than any of the other categories. Perhaps this is because Hemingway did not generally delineate the appearance or physical characteristics of his characters very extensively. It is very difficult to form an opinion as to how any of Hemingway's characters might actually look. Unlike the scene around them, the characters in Hemingway's fiction are not described in a detailed way. Commenting on this phenomenon in The Art of Ernest Hemingway, John Atkins says, "It is impossible to think of a Hemingway character and describe his appearance with any certainty."19 This observation is perhaps borne out by the scarcity of examples in this category.

A good example of this type of Impressionism appears at the beginning of The Sun Also Rises. Jake Barnes has just stepped to the doorway of the dance hall and he sees two taxis drive up:

A crowd of young men, some in jerseys and some in their shirt-sleeves,

got out. I could see their hands and newly washed, wavy hair in the light from the door. The policeman standing by the door looked at me and smiled . . . . As they went in, under the light I saw white hands, wavy hair, white faces, grimacing, gesturing, talking.20

We, the readers, also see these white hands flashing in the light and understand, without Hemingway's actually stating the fact, that these young men are homosexuals. It is amazing that the reader realizes this fact so quickly when one considers the paucity of details which are presented. And yet there can be no doubt about our conclusion regarding these young men for Hemingway has the policeman confirm our suspicion with his smile.

In another example of this category Hemingway paints the protagonist of The Old Man and the Sea with these few lines:

The old man was thin and gaunt with deep wrinkles in the back of his neck. The brown blotches of the benevolent skin cancer the sun brings from its reflection on the tropic sea were on his cheeks. The blotches ran well down the sides of his face and his hands had the deep-creased scars from handling heavy fish on the cords. But none of these scars were fresh.21

This description is really not distinct, but it is nonetheless very powerful. The few details we are given are sufficient for us to form an opinion about the old fisherman's

20The Sun Also Rises, p. 20.

personality, and this was the impression Hemingway wanted to give us. Hemingway could have written many more lines and still not have strengthened our impression of Santiago.

One of the most powerful portraits of character in Hemingway is that section from *For Whom the Bell Tolls* where Pilar speaks of the odor of death thusly:

... you must go down the hill in Madrid to the Puente de Toledo early in the morning to the matadero and stand there on the wet paving ... and wait for the old women who go before daylight to drink the blood of the beasts that are slaughtered. When such an old woman comes out of the matadero, holding her shawl around her, with her face gray and her eyes hollow, and the whiskers of age on her chin, and on her cheeks, set in the waxen white of her face as the sprouts grow from the seed of a bean, not bristles, but pale sprouts in the death of her face; put your arms tight around her, Ingles, and hold her to you and kiss her on the mouth and you will know the second part that odor is made of.²²

This portrait is so horrible and disgusting that it almost makes one ill, and this is precisely the effect which Hemingway was striving to make the reader feel.

An equally disgusting portrait is that of the writer in *Across the River and Into the Trees*. Whether or not this character is in fact Hemingway's attempt at revenge on Sinclair Lewis, who once called Hemingway "puerile" and "senile," the caricature is very effectively drawn. In any

²²Ernest Hemingway, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (New York, 1940), p. 254.
event these two passages do offer an excellent example of Hemingway's Impressionism of character:

He had a strange face like an over-enlarged, disappointed weasel or ferret. It looked as pock-marked and as blemished as the mountains of the moon seen through a cheap telescope and, the Colonel thought, it looked like Goebbels' face, if Herr Goebbels had ever been in a plane that burned, and not been able to bail out before the fire reached him.  

As if this blast were not enough, Hemingway adds this coup de grace:

He looks like a caricature of an American who has been run one half way through a meat chopper and then boiled, slightly, in oil.

The next category of Hemingway's Impressionism contains aspects of the first two types. I call this category "Impressionism of Action." Here Hemingway presents action in such a manner that the reader feels that he is viewing it from close up, if not actually participating in the event portrayed. The prose of this category is very near reporting, but its effect is more in the nature of a newsreel than newspaper reporting. There are innumerable excellent examples of this technique in Hemingway's fiction and the first I have chosen is taken from The Sun Also Rises:

They had hitched the mules to the dead bull and then the whips cracked, the men ran, and the mules, straining forward, their legs pushing, broke into a gallop, and the bull, one horn up, his
head on its side, swept a swath smoothly across the sand and out the red gate.\textsuperscript{25}

Notice how the sense of motion in the event being described seems to increase until the bull is swept swiftly out the gate. Hemingway has heightened this idea of accelerating motion by using alliteration, and by presenting the last of the action unbroken by pauses or commas. It is as if the reader were seated in the first row of the bull-ring, very near to the action portrayed. It is amazing that Hemingway was able to make one sentence so vividly effective.

Just before the above action occurs in the novel Hemingway shows us this vivid bit of movement:

I put on a coat of Cohn's and went out on the balcony. Down below the narrow street was empty. All the balconies were crowded with people. Suddenly a crowd came down the street. They were all running, packed close together. They passed along and up the street toward the bull-ring and behind them came more men running faster, and then some stragglers who were really running. Behind them was a little bare space, and then the bulls galloping, tossing their heads up and down. It all went out of sight around the corner. One man fell, rolled to the gutter, and lay quiet. But the bulls went right on and did not notice him. They were all running together.\textsuperscript{26}

In cinematic fashion, the reader is there on the balcony with Jake, seeing the action unfold simultaneously before the narrator and the reader. The reader sees the movement come down the street toward him, hesitate for one brief instant

\textsuperscript{25}The \textit{Sun Also Rises}, p. 168.

\textsuperscript{26}Ibid., p. 160.
when the man falls, and then swirl away out of sight around a bend in the street.

Impressionism of action is not limited to dramatic or exciting events, however. Hemingway is also able to produce this cinematic effect in scenes which are not full of swift and violent movement. A good example of this low-key Impressionism is the following scene from *A Moveable Feast*:

In the spring mornings I would work early while my wife still slept. The windows were wide open and the cobbles of the street were drying after the rain. The sun was drying the wet faces of the houses that faced the window. The shops were still shuttered. The goatherd came up the street blowing his pipes and a woman who lived on the floor above us came out onto the sidewalk with a big pot. The goatherd chose one of the heavy-bagged, black milk-goats and milked her into the pot while his dog pushed the others onto the sidewalk. The goats looked around, turning their necks like sightseers. The goatherd took the money from the woman and thanked her and went on up the street piping and the dog herded the goats on ahead, their horns bobbing.27

Notice how the action of this scene is simply a variation of the sequence of events seen in the bull-running episode. The goatherd and his goats come up the street slowly, stop while the milking operation takes place, and then continue on up the street and out of our sight. The action is portrayed in the same sequence - appearance, hesitation, disappearance, only less violently and less rapidly. What Hemingway shows us here is another cinematographic effect - slow motion.

27 *A Moveable Feast*, p. 49.
One particularly effective demonstration of Impres­sionism of action occurs in the latter half of For Whom the Bell Tolls. The leader of a band of guerillas, El Sordo, has been hopelessly surrounded by opposing troops and springs a trap on them by pretending to be dead. The only one of the enemy to fall for his ruse is advancing up the hill:

Look at him walking. Look what an animal. Look at him stride forward. This one is for me. This one I take with me on the trip. This one coming now makes the same voyage I do. Come on, Comrade Voyager. Come striding. Come right along. Come along to meet it. Come on. Keep on walking. Don't slow up. Come right along. Come as thou art coming. Don't stop and look at those. That's right. Don't even look down. Keep on coming with your eyes forward. Look, he has a moustache. What do you think of that? He runs to a moustache, the Comrade Voyager. He is a captain. Look at his sleeves. I said he was caza mayor. He has the face of an Ingles. Look. With a red face and blond hair and blue eyes. With no cap on and his moustache is yellow. With blue eyes. With pale blue eyes. With pale blue eyes with something wrong with them. With pale blue eyes that don't focus. Close enough. Too close. Yes, Comrade Voyager. Take it, Comrade Voyager.

Here we are actually seeing the action through the eyes of El Sordo, the chief participant. How real it seems! Here is what Harry Levin said about this sequence:

Prose gets as near as it can to physical conflict here. The figure enlarges as it advances, the quickening impression grows clear and sharp and almost unbearable, whereupon it is

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For Whom the Bell Tolls, p. 319.
blackened out by El Sordo's rifle. Each clipped sentence, each prepositional phrase, is like a new frame in a strip of film; indeed the whole passage, like so many others, might have been filmed by the camera and projected on the screen.29

Mr. Levin has grasped the essential point which makes this passage so effective: the snowballing effect of the short sentences and prepositional phrases keeps the action rolling until El Sordo shoots.

Another example in which the reader seems to be a participant in the action is this section from *A Farewell to Arms* when Lieutenant Henry is wounded:

> I ate the end of my piece of cheese and took a swallow of wine. Through the other noise I heard a cough, then came the chuh-chuh-chuh-chuh - then there was a flash, as when a blast-furnace door is swung open, and a roar that started white and went red and on and on in a rushing wind. I tried to breathe but my breath would not come and I felt myself rush bodily out of myself and out and out and out and all the time bodily in the wind. I went out swiftly, all of myself, and I knew I was dead and that it had all been a mistake to think you just died. Then I floated, and instead of going on I felt myself slide back. I breathed and I was back. The ground was torn up and in front of my head there was a splintered beam of wood. In the jolt of my head I heard somebody crying. I thought somebody was screaming. I tried to move but I could not move. I heard the machine-guns and rifles firing across the river and all along the river. There was a great splashing and I saw the starshells go up and burst and float whitely and rockets going up and heard the bombs, all this in

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29 Levin, p. 601.
a moment, and then I heard close to me someone saying 'Mama Mia! Oh, Mama Mia!' I pulled and twisted and got my legs loose finally and turned around and touched him. It was Passini and when I touched him he screamed.30

This passage, and the one concerning El Sordo, seem to be somewhat more subjective than the others cited. But this subjectivity does not decrease their impact upon the reader at all.

Hemingway's ability to transform the reader from onlooker to participant is not restricted just to human characters. In at least one instance he is able to make the reader observe the action from the viewpoint of an animal. In his excellent short story "The Short Happy Life of François Macomber" the point of view shifts at a very crucial point in the story from that of the hunter to that of the hunted.

Thirty-five yards into the grass the big lion lay flattened out along the ground. His ears were back and his only movement was a slight twitching up and down of his long, black-tufted tail. He had turned at bay as soon as he had reached this cover and he was sick with the wound through his full belly, and weakening with the wound through his lungs that brought a thin foamy red to his mouth each time he breathed. His flanks were wet and hot and flies were on the little openings the solid bullets had made in his tawny hide, and his big yellow eyes, narrowed with hate, looked straight ahead, only blinking when the pain came as he breathed, and his claws dug in the soft baked earth. All of him, pain, sickness, hatred and all of his remaining strength, was tightening into an absolute concentration for a rush. He

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30A Farewell to Arms, p. 54.
could hear the men talking and he waited, gathering all of himself into this prepa-
ration for a charge as soon as the men would come into the grass. As he heard their voices his tail stiffened to twitch up and down, and, as they came into the edge of the grass, he made a coughing grunt and charged.31

However, the best example of this category is this brief inter-chapter to Chapter X in the short stories:

They whack-whacked the white horse on the legs and he kneed himself up. The picador twisted the stirrups straight and pulled and hauled up into the saddle. The horse's entrails hung down in a blue bunch and swung backward and forward as he began to canter, the monos whacking him on the back of his legs with the rods. He cantered jerkily along the barricra. He stopped stiff and one of the monos held his bridle and walked him forward. The picador kicked in his spurs, leaned forward and shook his lance at the bull. Blood pumped regularly from between the horse's front legs. He was nervously wobbly. The bull could not make up his mind to charge.32

This short piece, quoted in its entirety, is extremely powerful. The choice of words is particularly effective - the "whacking" of the horse's legs, the "blue bunch" of its entrails, etc. Unlike the preceding passages, this one does not come to a definite conclusion. It ends with the action suspended for a moment prior to its conclusion. The reader knows what happens next, but the very fact that Hemingway does not spell it out makes the ensuing charge of the bull even more horrible.

31Short Stories, p. 19.
32Short Stories, p. 165.
The fourth category of Hemingway's Impressionism I call "Impressionism of Sensation." In this type of Impressionism the emphasis is upon actual physical sensation as Hemingway attempts to cause these sensations to be felt by the reader.

This emphasis upon the senses is very pronounced in much of Hemingway's work. So much so that it has led D. S. Savage to label Hemingway "a stylist who has brought to something like perfection a curt, unemotional, factual style which is an attempt at the objective presentation of experience."33 This presentation of experience and conveying of that experience to the reader is perhaps the most successful aspect of Hemingway's fiction. In his effort to communicate to the reader "how it was," Hemingway relies almost exclusively on concrete images. He avoids loose, ambiguous abstractions and concentrates instead on the attempt "to recreate the exact physical sensations that he, or his heroes, felt under certain conditions."34 That he is successful in this attempt at re-creation is obvious to anyone reading his fiction.

Most of these sensations are on a somewhat "simple" physical level, perhaps because such crude sensations are easier to portray truthfully than more abstract feelings. Certainly, any trace of abstraction would interfere with


34Donald Heiney, Recent American Literature, IV (Woodbury, New York, 1958), p. 150.
the reader's awareness of how it was to run one's hand over a girl's sheared head, or how the wind felt on one's face while skiing down a Swiss mountainside. Hemingway allows nothing to interrupt the transference of these sensations from the written word to the reader. Donald Heiney speaks for many of Hemingway's readers when he says that after reading Hemingway "the reader is left with a strong impression of 'how it was' to shoot lions in Kenya, to take part in the retreat from Caporetto, or to live in Paris in the early nineteen-twenties." These are precisely the types of impressions that Hemingway was trying to convey to the reader.

An early example of Hemingway's dedication to the exact rendering of the data received from the senses is the following passage from The Sun Also Rises: "The red door of the ring went shut, the crowd in the outside balconies of the bull-ring were pressing through to the inside, there was a shout, then another shout." Notice that Hemingway separates the shouts, exactly as they would occur in reality. To have said, "there were some shouts," would have abandoned the desire for the exact truth by being unnecessarily vague. The latter choice of words, while sufficient for many authors, would have violated Hemingway's aesthetic principles (and, not incidentally, would not have made the reader "feel" exactly "how it was").

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35 Heiney, p. 150.
36 The Sun Also Rises, p. 196.
In *A Moveable Feast*, Hemingway gives us this example of his Impressionism of Sensation:

As I ate the oysters with their strong taste of the sea and their faint metallic taste that the cold white wine washed away, leaving only the sea taste and the succulent texture, and as I drank their cold liquid from each shell and washed it down with the crisp taste of the wine, I lost the empty feeling and began to be happy and to make plans.37

Here Hemingway makes every effort to separate and enjoy each sense impression, and to transmit it to the reader. Further on in the same work is this section which is particularly effective:

For luck you carried a horse chestnut and a rabbit's foot in your right pocket. The fur had been worn off the rabbit's foot long ago and the bone and the sinews were polished by wear. The claws scratched in the lining of your pocket and you knew your luck was still there.38

Perhaps the best example of this technique appears in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Robert Jordan has just left the cave in which the band of guerillas has been hiding:

The mist had cleared away and the stars were out. There was no wind, and, outside now of the warm air of the cave, heavy with smoke of both tobacco and charcoal, with the odor of cooked rice and meat, saffron, pimentos, and oil, the tarry, wine-spilled smell of the big skin hung beside the door, hung by the neck and the four legs extended, wine drawn from a plug fitted in one leg,

37 *A Moveable Feast*, p. 6.
38 Ibid., p. 91.
Here prose comes as close as possible to communicating actual sensations to the reader; certainly this is one of Hemingway's most effective passages.

"Impressionism of Style" is what I have called the last category of Hemingway's Impressionism. By style I mean what Thrall, Hibbard, and Holman describe as "the arrangement of words in a manner which at once best expresses the individuality of the author and the idea and intent in his mind."\(^4\) Another aspect of this type of Impressionism might be called theme - that is, "the abstract concept which is made concrete through its representation in person, action, and image in the work."\(^1\) I have made theme an adjunct of style and not a separate category because the two naturally seem to occur

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39For Whom the Bell Tolls, p. 59.

40Thrall, Hibbard, and Holman, p. \(^4\)74.

41Ibid., p. 486.
together. It should be noted here that by theme I do not mean the over-all theme of a work, but a kind of connotation which is implied by the style itself. Thus, this final type of Impressionism represents a culmination of all four of the preceding techniques we have previously examined, plus the additional element of connotation or theme.

From the beginning of his fictional career Hemingway aimed at a curt, impersonal, extremely objective style which was entirely alien to the personal, subjective, confessional type of literature which was very popular during the early part of this century in the work of such writers as Sherwood Anderson, Theodore Dreiser, and Edna St. Vincent Millay. This does not mean that Hemingway's work is cold or indifferent, but that his style is an attempt at achieving the maximum in factual clarity. In Creating the Modern American Novel Harlan Hatcher describes Hemingway's style thusly:

> The tricks are obvious - the faulty grammar, the planned repetition, the colloquial rhythms, the trivialities which become vital through reiteration, the tone of superiority, the affected casualness. It is splendid reporting wherein no attempt is made to get all the facts, nor as many as Theodore Dreiser would want, but a few sharp and representative ones, with the eye always on the subject, and on nothing but the subject.42

Such concentration in Hemingway's work results in extremely powerful and moving fiction.

Such a moving passage is this one which takes place in *A Farewell to Arms* in an ambulance carrying the just-wounded Lieutenant Henry to the rear. The man on the stretcher above him has begun hemorrhaging, but the driver cannot remove the stretcher by himself, so they must continue to the aid-station:

The stream kept on. In the dark I could not see where it came from the canvas overhead. I tried to move sideways so that it did not fall on me. Where it had run down under my shirt it was warm and sticky. I was cold and my leg hurt so that it made me sick. After a while the stream from the stretcher above lessened and started to drip again and I heard and felt the canvas above move as the man on the stretcher settled more comfortably.

'How is he?' the Englishman called back. 'We're almost up.'

'He's dead I think,' I said.

The drops fell very slowly, as they fall from an icicle after the sun has gone. It was cold in the car in the night as the road climbed. At the post on the top they took the stretcher out and put another in and we went on.43

In this passage we see at work another aspect of Hemingway's style - what might be called "submerged" meaning. This aspect is illustrated by Hemingway's famous metaphor of the iceberg: "The dignity of movement of an ice-berg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water."44 The latent horror of the above scene is not alluded to, and hence is made more horrible.

43 *A Farewell to Arms*, p. 61.
This profundity of unseen detail is a very significant feature of Hemingway's style. Tony Tanner comments on this aspect thusly: "If the writer selects the right details he will activate the power of a large number of other details without having to enumerate them: the economy of the art will increase the impact of the material."45 This is one reason why it is easy to imitate Hemingway's style, but difficult to duplicate the wealth of meaning he packs into his sparse sentences.

As fine as Mr. Tanner's statement is, however, Hemingway himself expressed the same idea better: "If a writer of prose knows enough about what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them."46 But Hemingway also said that a writer who leaves things out simply because he does not know them will leave very evident spaces in his writing. It is to Hemingway's credit that, despite the fact that he omits many details from his work in the above manner, he has very few "blank" places in his writing.

A good example of this effect is this passage from The Old Man and the Sea:

He unstepped the mast and furled the sail and tied it. Then he shouldered

46Death in the Afternoon, p. 192.
the mast and started to climb. It was then he knew the depth of his tiredness. He stopped for a moment and looked back and saw in the reflection from the street light the great tail of the fish standing up well behind the skiff's stern. He saw the white naked line of his backbone and the dark mass of the head with the projecting bill and all the nakedness between.

He started to climb again and at the top he fell and lay for some time with the mast across his shoulder. He tried to get up. But it was too difficult and he sat there with the mast on his shoulder and looked at the road. A cat passed on the far side going about its business and the old man watched it. Then he just watched the road.

Here Hemingway has omitted any comment upon the old man's painfully injured hands, or his aching back, and has mentioned only in passing Santiago's overwhelming fatigue. But the reader is aware of all of these things, and the fact that these conditions are not thrust overtly to the surface of the narrative makes them all the more powerful.

A slightly different effect is achieved by this interchapter from the short stories:

They shot the six cabinet ministers at half-past six in the morning against the wall of a hospital. There were pools of water in the courtyard. There were wet dead leaves on the paving of the courtyard. It rained hard. All the shutters of the hospital were nailed shut. One of the ministers was sick with typhoid. Two soldiers carried him downstairs and out into the rain. They tried to hold him up against the wall but he sat down in a puddle of water. The other five stood very quietly against the wall. Finally the officer told the

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47The Old Man and the Sea, p. 121.
Behind the calm, unemotional facade of this story the reader feels an almost overwhelming moral outrage lurking over the scene. Each sentence, by stating only so much and suppressing a great deal more, gradually builds the disgust felt by the reader to an almost unbearable level. Hemingway too must have felt this disgust, and the apparent indifference of the observer is merely a stance designed to elicit a greater emotion from the reader. That this effort on Hemingway's part is successful is attested to by the powerful impact of this short piece.

Earl Rovit, commenting on the apparent disconnectedness of the sentences in the above passage, says that "... the logic of the scene construction is dependent neither on the stage-setting nor on the action which takes place within it, but on the fragmented reaction of the observer."49 That is, the impressions this scene makes upon the observer cause his report of the action to be fragmented because of the powerful emotions welling within him. These same emotions are engendered in the reader through his reading of the observer's account and the reader's subsequent identification with the narrator. Mr. Rovit expresses the above idea this way, "This substitution of the logic of reaction for the logic of

48Short Stories, p. 127.
49Rovit, p. 47.
reported action may be one of the determinants in forcing the reader's identification with the narrator." Undoubtedly this substitution does take place in much of Hemingway's impressionistic fiction, but perhaps "eliciting" or "drawing out" would be a more appropriate verb.

We see much the same effect in this passage about the great bullfighter Belmonte in The Sun Also Rises:

... the public, who wanted three times as much from Belmonte, who was sick with a fistula, as Belmonte had ever been able to give, felt defrauded and cheated, and Belmonte's jaw came further out in contempt, and his face turned yellower, and he moved with greater difficulty as his pain increased, and finally the crowd were actively against him, and he was utterly contemptuous and indifferent. He had meant to have a great afternoon, and instead it was an afternoon of sneers, shouted insults, and finally a volley of cushions and pieces of bread and vegetables, thrown down at him in the plaza where he had had his greatest triumphs. His jaw only went further out. Sometimes he turned to smile that toothed, long-jawed, lipless smile when he was called something particularly insulting, and always the pain that any movement produced grew stronger and stronger, until finally his yellow face was parchment color, and after his second bull was dead and the throwing of bread and cushions was over, after he had saluted the President with the same wolf-jawed smile and contemptuous eyes, and handed his sword over the barrera to be wiped, and put back in its case, he passed through into the callejon and leaned on the barrera below us, his head on his arms, not seeing, not hearing anything, only going through his pain. When he

50 Ibid., p. 48.
looked up, finally, he asked for a
drink of water. He swallowed a little,
rinsed his mouth, spat the water, took
his cape, and went back into the ring. 51

Here the reader is painfully aware of what Edmund Wilson
calls "the tragedy or falsity of a moral relation" 52 behind
the surface of what is occurring before the reader. The
reader's admiration for Belmonte's courage is strengthened
because the matador does his best under the worst of condi­
tions and does not complain of his pain or try to excuse
himself because of it. The reader, observing these events
as though they were literally unfolding right in front of
him, is able to encompass the totality of what is occurring
and hence Hemingway's account of what happened is perhaps
"truer" than the events would appear to an actual bystander.

The final example of this last category of Impressionism
is taken from the last few lines of A Farewell to Arms.
Lieutenant Henry has just been informed of Catherine Barkley's
death and goes to the door of her room:

'You can't come in now,' one of the
nurses said.
'Yes I can,' I said.
'You can't come in yet.'
'You get out,' I said. 'The other
one too.'

But after I had got them out and
shut the door and turned off the light
it wasn't any good. It was like say­
ing good-by to a statue. After a while
I went out and left the hospital and
walked back to the hotel in the rain. 53

51 The Sun Also Rises, p. 214.
52 Wilson, p. 344.
53 A Farewell to Arms, p. 332.
So much is felt by the reader and yet purposely left unsaid by Hemingway; and precisely by leaving them unsaid, the young Lieutenant's emotions are evoked even more strongly.

These, then, are the five categories into which I have divided Hemingway's use of the impressionistic technique. Perhaps these are not all the divisions which could be made, but at least these will serve as the major categories.
CHAPTER III

IMPRESSIONISM AS A CRITICAL GAUGE

Having hopefully demonstrated in the previous chapter that Hemingway is indeed an Impressionistic writer, I intend now to turn to the second part of my avowed purpose: namely, to employ Impressionism as a critical gauge in evaluating the corpus of Hemingway's work. Like any other writer with such an extensive career, Hemingway wrote a number of what can only politely be described as "nonsuccesses." Such works as To Have and Have Not and Across the River and Into the Trees must be considered as not representing his highest level of writing, and hence must be included in any list of Hemingway's "failures." That Hemingway also had his literary "successes" is evident from a listing of his works including such giants as The Sun Also Rises, A Farewell to Arms, For Whom the Bell Tolls, and The Old Man and the Sea - surely some of the most significant fiction of the twentieth century.

Hemingway's works which were characterized above as failures furnish few examples of effective Impressionism. Hence these nonsuccesses were excluded from the preceding chapter. However, in the present chapter these works can
be used to good advantage as contrasts to Hemingway's superior works in order to show the artistic achievement of the Impressionism in the latter group. Therefore this chapter will be concerned with a comparison of these successes and failures in an attempt to determine if Impressionism might be one of the criteria for selecting those Hemingway works which will live and those which will not.

The Impressionistic technique imposes certain structures upon any writer attempting to write in this mode, and Hemingway's efforts in this technique are naturally subject to such regulations. Cassell's Encyclopedia of World Literature enumerates these demands as being requisite for a writer utilizing the Impressionistic technique: "... elimination of reflection about things; the surrendering of his personality in order to 'assimilate' the object of his study in its entirety; the finding of combinations of words which correspond to the characteristic qualities of the observed object in all its aspects, impressing them upon the senses of the reader in such a way that he shares the experience of the author."54 Even a cursory examination of Hemingway's writing will reveal that he followed these demands in his best work. Indeed, such a perusal will indicate that these demands are at the core of his aesthetic creed.

In his most effective writing Hemingway presented scenes or objects to the reader as they were, without reflection or

authorial comment. His often-stated desire to reproduce truthfully only what he saw and heard precludes his allowing such reflection or comment to cloud that reproduction. In this desire Hemingway followed Conrad, "who insisted on putting down what he saw and never what his intellect inferred."55 Such a stringent aesthetic credo leaves no room for anything which might interfere with the transfer of "the way it was."

The second of these Impressionistic demands is the submersion of the author's personality. Ford Madox Ford called this aspect "the main and perhaps most passionate tenet of Impressionism."56 The Impressionistic writer must not comment, or narrate, or intrude himself into his reader's consciousness. It is vitally important to the effectiveness of the Impressionistic technique that the author remain as invisible as possible. By so doing, the writer brings his subject more sharply into focus, and eliminates the distraction of his presence. Hemingway followed this tenet of Impressionism very closely, particularly in his early short stories. In speaking of this aspect of Hemingway's style, Willard Thorp says that the young writer set out "to let actions and events educe the reader's emotional response, not force it from him by description or reflection or direct statement."57

55Atkins, p. 66.


57Willard Thorp, American Writing in the Twentieth Century (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1960), p. 188.
Hemingway himself said:

No matter how good a phrase or simile he may have if he puts it in where it is not absolutely necessary and irreplaceable he is spoiling his work for egotism. Prose is architecture not interior decoration, and the Baroque is over.58

What Hemingway implies here is that the greatest sin for a writer is indefinite or vague writing. Any author who behaves "egotistically" harms his creation by making it less distinct, and hence less real. "Interior decoration," that is, the author's personality, or sentimentality, or morbidity, or any "over-metaphysical tendency in speech,"59 should be scrupulously avoided. Significantly, when Hemingway himself stuck to "architecture," as he did in his greatest works like For Whom the Bell Tolls, his work is at the height of its effectiveness; by common assent of his critics.

On the other hand, when Hemingway lapses into "interior decoration" he frequently produces near parodies of his own style. Such a grotesque as Across the River and Into the Trees is the result of one such failure of discipline. In this particular novel the reader frequently encounters such passages as this:

'I understand,' the Gran Maestro said and he looked at Renata and his heart rolled over as a porpoise does in the sea. It is a beautiful movement and only a few people in this world can feel it and accomplish it.60

58Death in the Afternoon, p. 191.
59Ibid., p. 95.
60Across the River and Into the Trees, p. 203.
Hemingway uses this trite metaphor not once, but twice! Unable to take his own advice, he clearly spoiled his work for egotism as *Across the River and Into the Trees* is replete with Hemingway's opinions of and about everything and everyone.

The last of the "demands" made upon the Impressionistic writer deals with his choice of words. Hemingway almost always took great care in choosing precisely the right word. In this sense he seems at first very close to Flaubert's principle of the "mot juste." But, while Hemingway admired Flaubert, he did not adhere to the French writer's principle of the exact word. Flaubert's exact words were chosen from an enormous vocabulary, encompassing much of the world's literature and many of its languages. With Hemingway, however,

... the exact word is the word most likely to occur to the unsophisticated, or the consciously unbookish, character. It is the word which puts the least strain upon the intellect, the most simple and so undiscriminated word.61

In a sense such common words as those used by Hemingway are more "real" perhaps than the more sophisticated terms chosen by such sagacious writers as Flaubert and Maupassant. Hemingway's words usually strike right to the core of the reader's consciousness. The reader is neither caused to refer to a dictionary nor marvel at the beauty of Hemingway's vocabulary. He was not concerned with words, but the totality of their effect. Thus Hemingway's word choice is appropriate to an

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Impressionistic prose style since his vocabulary does not interfere with the reader's experiencing what is being presented to him. It must be remembered that Hemingway always sought both truth and simplicity; and although he undoubtedly knew the "two dollar" words, he consciously chose not to use them.

However, Hemingway is not always able to follow that tenet of Impressionism calling for the selection of only those words which allow the reader to participate in the author's experiences and emotions. In *Across the River and Into the Trees*, for example, Hemingway used more "blank check" adjectives than he had ever done before. Terms such as "fine" or "beautiful" do not really describe, nor do they communicate; yet they abound in this novel. In addition, the reader finds such unbelievably gauche passages as these:

"Get my and your bag out and park her up there and check your oil, your water and your tires." 62

"Is your lovely wife and are the children well?" 63

"Now, Daughter, let us resume the having of the fun." 64

In such passages as these the reader's attention is not focused upon the emotion, the impression, or the sense of what is occurring; but rather on the device, the way of

62 *Across the River and Into the Trees*, p. 37.
saying what is being said, and this destroys the scene's sense of immediacy. Such clumsy writing as this shatters the bond of illusion which so closely unites the author and the reader in Hemingway's successful prose. The cumulative effect of such faults is an unreal, trite, unbelievable, and wholly subjective narrative which is clearly non-Impressionistic and almost anti-Hemingway in tone.

In *Across the River and Into the Trees* expertise has become exhibitionism. Gestures, manners, and customs of living, whose treatment had been effective and even poignant in earlier Hemingway works, have become unintentionally comical and even ludicrous. Such effects are successful only when they are understated and not shouted or boasted about, but in *Across the River and Into the Trees* they are rather heavy-handedly blared at the reader and thereby made ridiculous. For example, the whole business of Colonel Cantwell's wounded hand is overdone; and such bits as the Colonel always sitting with his back to the wall and his flanks covered rather humorously smacks of Grade B western movies. Such statements as Cantwell "reaching accurately and well for the champagne bucket" and Renata chewing "well and solidly" on her steak make the reader suddenly and completely nauseous. These clumsy effects make a parody of the grace of execution which is Hemingway's hallmark.

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65 Ibid., p. 154.
66 Ibid., p. 127.
These faults are the result of two major defects in the novel's construction - a lack of discipline, and the absence of the proper authorial distance. Any novel so constructed must inevitably fail, and _Across the River and Into the Trees_ does so most emphatically. But more importantly for our purpose, such defects effectively bar Hemingway from writing in the Impressionistic style - the style which previously proved so effective for him.

Almost every statement that Hemingway made concerning the art of writing fiction emphasized scrupulous truth-telling. Indeed, his style is essentially an attempt to render truth with the greatest possible exactness, without cliches or rhetorical elaborations. But in _Across the River and Into the Trees_ truth and simplicity are woefully absent, and the book degenerates into a parody of the famous Hemingway style - a parody, incidentally, which is more devastating than any written by other writers. The Colonel's belligerent, boasting, self-indulgent braggadocio becomes increasingly obnoxious until, for the first time in his literary career, Hemingway's prose seems false. The only reason (that I can discover) for this lapse in discipline, and the resulting disaster, is that perhaps the legend, not the man, wrote this book.

The novel's other structural defect - the lack of proper authorial distance, is undoubtedly the result of the fact that _Across the River and Into the Trees_ is Hemingway's most autobiographical book. Hemingway was so intimately
involved with the character of the Colonel that he lost both the discipline and the perspective which had so rigidly monitored his other works. Never before had there been so many parallels between Hemingway himself and his protagonist. Both Hemingway and Cantwell had ambitious journalist-wives; both had taken part in the capture of Paris in 1944; both had a great fondness for hunting; and both developed the habit of washing down pills with champagne. However, the two most striking parallels are between the ages of the two men. Both men were nineteen when they were first wounded on the Fossalta River in Italy; and the Colonel is fifty-one when he dies at the novel's end - Hemingway's age to the year when Across the River and Into the Trees was published.

Since he was so close to the hero of this novel, Hemingway was extremely uncritical of both the Colonel and the book in general. As a result he allowed the book to violate many of the aesthetic principles which he had so strictly followed for decades. This is the lapse to which Philip Young refers when he writes: "The discipline which once kept Hemingway from the self-indulgence of chronicling his every opinion, taste and whim broke down utterly."67

Paradoxically, Hemingway himself insisted that Across the River and Into the Trees was his greatest novel. It is with regard to this book that he made his famous statement about having been through algebra, geometry, and trigonometry and now having moved into Calculus - a remark which apparently

no one understood but Hemingway himself. Carlos Baker goes
to great lengths to defend this novel, calling it a prose
poem on the theme of the three ages of man, and a "rubric
of the course of time." Significantly, Baker has rarely
seen fit to wax so symbolical over Hemingway's other works.
Baker makes much of the novel's supposed "double-meaning"
effect, and of the idea that Cantwell must use Renata to
purge himself through confession. Perhaps this is so.
Perhaps both Hemingway and Cantwell felt the need for con­
fession. But confessions are for the ears of priests only;
they are frequently embarrassing to the layman. Unfortunately,
embarrassment is exactly the reaction frequently felt by the
readers of this novel; the same type of embarrassment felt
by one who inadvertently opens the door of an occupied bath­
room.

I have dwelled upon this "failure" of Hemingway's at
some length because it demonstrates convincingly the relation
between Hemingway's mature, successful style, and Impres­
sionism. Nowhere else, perhaps, is it so evident that
Hemingway's fiction is only effective when it adheres to the
principles of the Impressionistic style. Nor in any other
work are the disastrous results of his deviating from these
canons so harshly exhibited.

As already noted, Hemingway was very conscientious in
his striving after truth, especially in the rendering of

68 Carlos Baker, Hemingway: The Writer as Artist (Princeton,
New Jersey, 1963), p. 266.
emotion. Significantly for our purposes, the most truthful portrayals of emotion occur in those passages where Hemingway writes in the Impressionistic style. These same sections are also among his most powerful and moving pieces of writing. Only when the tight discipline which produced such passages is relaxed does Hemingway's work "fail" in its attempt to make the reader see.

Some Hemingway critics account for his fictional and non-fictional lapses by asserting that they were written not by Hemingway the man, but by Hemingway the legend. This assertion may be true; however, it is important to note that when the legend writes, Hemingway's rigid aesthetic discipline vanishes. This disappearance occurs when Hemingway himself intrudes his own beliefs and feelings into the narrative in such a way that the work's illusion of reality is shattered. Such an illusion is of course at the very core of the Impressionistic technique, and hence when the legend writes, Impressionism as well as aesthetic discipline disappears.

Hemingway continually shatters this illusion throughout his worst novel, Across the River and Into the Trees. The narrative - what little there is of it - is constantly being interrupted by the Colonel's (and Hemingway's) opinions on everything and everyone. For example, the Colonel's remarks about Dwight Eisenhower are not really essential to a supposed conversation between two lovers. In answer to his nineteen-year-old girlfriend Renata's question about
Eisenhower, Cantwell says:

'Strictly the Epworth League.
Probably that is unjust too. Also complicated by various other influences. An excellent politician. Political General. Very able at it! 69

Such comments as this eventually destroy all of the novel's illusion of reality and effectively kill the reader's interest.

Edmund Wilson was apparently referring to this lack of discipline when he wrote:

But for reasons which I cannot attempt to explain, something dreadful seems to happen to Hemingway as soon as he begins to write in the first person. In his fiction, the conflicting elements of his nature, the emotional situations which obsess him, are externalized and objectified; and the result is an impersonal art that is severe and intense, deeply serious. But as soon as he speaks in his own person, he seems to lose all his capacity for self-criticism and is likely to become fatuous or maudlin. The artist's ideas about life, or rather his sense of what happens and the way in which it happens, is in his stories kept deep below the surface and conveyed not by argument or preaching but by directly transmitted emotion: it is turned into something as hard as a crystal and as disturbing as a great lyric. When he expounds this sense of life, however, in his own character of Ernest Hemingway, the Old Master of Key West, he has a way of making himself ridiculous. 70

Notice the words Professor Wilson uses to describe Hemingway's effective prose - "externalized," "objectified," "impersonal."

69 Across the River and Into the Trees, p. 125.
70 Wilson, p. 621.
All of these adjectives are indirect descriptions of the Impressionistic technique. The very opposite of this technique (and the marks of Hemingway's failures) are those terms Wilson uses to describe Hemingway's writing at its poorest - "fatuous," maudlin," "ridiculous."

These last three words are a short description of Colonel Cantwell, the protagonist of *Across the River and Into the Trees*. In this novel Hemingway apparently completely lost the discipline which had held in check his tendency toward autobiographical chest-thumping. Colonel Cantwell has no discipline; he is completely non-objective and almost solely concerned with himself. In short, he is fatuous, maudlin, and ridiculous. What is even more important for the purposes of this discussion is the fact that in this entire book only rarely does Hemingway approach the Impressionistic type of prose which characterized his most effective writing.

In fact, much of Hemingway's career can be arranged in reference to this one aspect: discipline. This has been well stated in *The Novel of Violence in America* by W. M. Frohock:

Hemingway's varying career can be summed up in reference to this discipline. He adheres to it in the early short stories and the first two novels, and they are admirable. In the 1930's either he runs away from the discipline or it runs away from him; he preaches it, rather raucously, but has such great trouble with the practice that it is hard to admire much that he writes. And then, in a third stage, he returns to it again - not with complete success, because the job that he tackles is
bigger than any of the earlier ones, but with enough success so that it is once more possible to regard him as a major novelist.\textsuperscript{71}

It is important to note here that the absence of Impressionism coincides with the absence of this discipline; and that the converse is true also, namely, that when the discipline is there then Hemingway's prose is most often effectively Impressionistic.

Professor Frohock's book was published in 1950, before the appearance of Across the River and Into the Trees and The Old Man and the Sea, and hence it could not take into account what I consider to be a fourth and fifth division in Hemingway's work. After the tremendously successful For Whom the Bell Tolls Hemingway wrote no full-length fiction for ten years. Then in 1950 he published what is perhaps his worst book, Across the River and Into the Trees. This book seems to represent a fourth stage in the body of his work. In a sense this work may be considered the nadir of his career because it is his least disciplined book and an all-around failure. Then, in a fifth stage, the pendulum swung all the way back the other way, and Hemingway brought forth that little masterpiece, The Old Man and the Sea. Significantly, the latter book returns to the Impressionistic style, and avoids the faults which ruined Colonel Cantwell's story.

\textsuperscript{71}W. M. Frohock, The Novel of Violence in America (Dallas, Texas, 1950), p. 168.
This fluctuation in Hemingway's aesthetic discipline is repeated in the appearance and disappearance of that other enemy of Impressionistic writing, the intrusive author. Here again one finds roughly the same five divisions or stages in Hemingway's career. In the short stories, The Sun Also Rises, and A Farewell to Arms, Hemingway wisely restrained his impulse toward autobiography and his tendency to thrust himself into the narrative. By this I do not mean to imply that these facets are not present in this initial segment of his writing, but only that they do not become oppressive and spoil the effects which he was striving to achieve. But in the thirties, during approximately the same period in which both his popularity as a writer and the legend surrounding him were growing, Hemingway himself began to intrude more and more into his writing. This was the period in which he published Death in the Afternoon and Green Hills of Africa. Here the scrupulous attention to truthful, clean-cut presentation is blurred by what Nemi D'Agostino calls "the impulse to confession and exhibitionism, is marred by rhetoric and sentimentality, and dimmed by a new sophisticated attitude." This phase of Hemingway's career is ended in 1940 by For Whom the Bell Tolls. This novel is tightly disciplined and avoids the defects which mar Across the River and Into the Trees. After this disaster, which marked the fourth stage of his career, Hemingway

[72Nemi D'Agostino, "The Later Hemingway," The Sewanee Review, LXVIII (Summer, 1960), 482.]
attained the heights again with *The Old Man and the Sea*. It is significant that in his last full-length fictional work Hemingway returns somewhat to the effective style which had stood him in such good stead in the past. Significant also is the fact that Hemingway himself does not intrude into, and thus spoil, Santiago's story.

I do not mean to imply here that Hemingway's career can be exactly divided into three, four, or five sharply delineated divisions, but only that such stages are helpful in examining the whole of his work. Such divisions are useful in noting the fluctuations in Hemingway's prose, and illustrating how Hemingway's use or non-use of Impressionism coincides with these fluctuations.

Hence it can be seen, hopefully, that those elements which characterized Hemingway's poorer works - lack of discipline, authorial intrusion, and an autobiographical tendency - are also inimical to the Impressionistic style of writing. The most moving passages of Hemingway's Impressionism occur in those works which contain his greatest writing - the short stories, *The Sun Also Rises*, *A Farewell to Arms*, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and *The Old Man and the Sea*. By contrast, those works in which the above elements are present and thus preclude his writing in the Impressionistic style are those works which must be counted as his failures. The demands made upon Hemingway by Impressionism - objectivity, impersonality, concise word choice - also paid him an additional dividend: they prevented him from falling
prey to those very elements which tended to negate his talents.

Thus it seems that Impressionism can be used as a critical gauge in Hemingway's work. The presence or absence of Impressionism is at least partially responsible for those works by Hemingway which will continue to enthrall readers.
Aside from the article by Harry Levin mentioned previously, relatively few critics have discussed Hemingway's fiction from the standpoint of style. This lack seems particularly incongruous, because the aspect of his work which seems to be the most obvious point for comment is in fact the least discussed. Perhaps the foregoing pages have added something to this general area of Hemingway criticism. Perhaps, also, these pages have fulfilled the two-fold purpose outlined in the preface by showing what Impressionism is and how it is manifested in Hemingway's fiction, and how Impressionism might be used as a critical gauge of his work. Hopefully, this essay has contributed something to our knowledge of this significant aspect of Hemingway.

In his introduction to *Men at War* Ernest Hemingway said:

> A writer's job is to tell the truth. His standard of fidelity to the truth should be so high that his invention, out of his experience, should produce a truer account than anything factual could be. 73

Hemingway was so successful in telling the truth that many of his readers, particularly during the 1930's, began to interpret their own experiences in relation to what they had read in his books. Apparently Hemingway's accounts frequently seemed truer than their own experiences.

The fact that much of Hemingway's writing still affects his readers in this manner is a tribute to his high standard of fidelity to truth, and to his remarkable Impressionistic prose technique which so effectively involved readers in the action portrayed. Hemingway's forte was not

\[\ldots\] to describe what he saw, but to describe himself seeing, to convey the complex of feeling which was invoked in him or in an invented character when that character was placed in an appropriate situation of tension.\(^{74}\)

When Hemingway successfully presents this feeling and tension then the reader knows not the way it was, but the way it is.

It is perhaps fitting that the subject of this thesis should have the last word. Speaking of this matter of "presented vision" Hemingway said:

All good books are alike in that they are truer than if they had really happened and after you are finished reading one you will feel that all that happened to you and afterwards it all belongs to you; the good and the bad, the ecstasy, the remorse and sorrow, the people and the places and how the weather was. If you can get so that you can give that to people, then you are a writer.\(^{75}\)

\(^{74}\)Rovit, p. 55.

\(^{75}\)Baker, p. 73.
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