

A VISIONARY HERMENEUTIC
APPROPRIATION: MEDITATIONS
ON HEMINGWAY'S INFLUENCE
ON MAILER

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[T]here is nothing in the critical field that should be of greater philosophical interest or prove more rewarding to analysis than the progressive modification of one mind by the work of another.

—Paul Valéry (*Leonardo, Poe, Mallarmé* 241)

I. PROLOGUE

Norman Mailer and Ernest Hemingway. This phrase brings into proximity two prominent twentieth-century American writers. The phrasal contiguity of the two names suggests an arrangement that at first glance conceals more than it reveals. For, upon reflection, their proximity sketches out areas that often tend toward more pronounced darkness rather than light. One repeatedly thinks about Hemingway's influence on other writers. Colleagues at various academic conferences refer to it. It appears in scholarly journals, popular magazines, and newspapers. Still one does not readily see what might constitute Hemingway's influence on Mailer, that is, aside from what amounts to and is derided by some critics as Mailer's imitative behavior in the worst meaning of the adjective.

Mailer's imaginal thematics, which often touches on the phantasmagoric, his baroque stylistics, and his distinctive intellectual concerns, all seem to be divergent from those developed and practiced by Hemingway. Does this

mean, then, that the conjunction “and” in my initial verbless and therefore as yet inactive sentence misleadingly sets forth commonalities between the two writers? I think not. Because I would expect one may at least adumbrate a theoretical common ground between them. The conjunctive “and” will exceed its usual grammatical function and eventually carry out an exceptional task. The promise of latent and multiple vistas of the connection between Mailer and Hemingway, which as yet remain unknown, will still become known. However, the fulfillment of this promise requires wide-ranging conceptual meditations and may take a long and nonlinear course. The meditative approach I am proposing will offer an inkling of possible signifying links between Mailer and Hemingway.

Clearly, Hemingway and Mailer’s names are heavily laden with literary, cultural, religious, educational, and socio-political implications. They often connote factual differences, even inevitable conflicts. Consequently, now and again, the differences may seem to be unbridgeable and militate against the prospect of serious comparative studies of the commonalities between the two writers. Since such study endeavors to go beyond wading in the shallows of mere superficial similarities and comparisons, the complexity of its conceptual framework will also proportionally increase. But I would like to go straight to my conclusion and confirm that such a study is indeed realizable, in spite of undeniable obscurities, or paradoxically because of them. For such seemingly impenetrable areas force us to rethink our theoretical guiding principles of literary influence and reconfigure constitutive elements.

Happily, Mailer’s own preoccupation—if indeed not outright obsession—with Hemingway as a singularly distinctive man and writer renders my effort somewhat easier. Mailer’s own articulations of his connection with Hemingway will allow me to make intelligible possible shared literary-philosophical views and aspirations. His passionate fascination with Hemingway communicates itself as a combination of theoretical and experiential interests and practices. Altogether, they indicate a space where a serious study of their affinities and visionary literary kinship may come to light as viable. Such likelihood may not be easily discernible if one only limits oneself to the more traditional influence imitation theories. It would seem to me applying such theories to Hemingway and Mailer as tutor and tyro may well prove to be an egregious over-simplification and therefore more aporetic than heuristic. In my view, the whole problematic of Mailer’s relationship

with Hemingway sets in motion a pervasive expectant mood. A Heideggerian sense of ontological disclosures gives the impression of emerging from it, providing the clearing where the two language artists practiced their profession. This clearing also permits crisscrossing meditations, interpretations, and associative musings. As we well know, Mailer and Hemingway's personalities and works tend to elicit such activities in their readers.

As a result, in due course I shall propose and will attempt to develop a subcategory to the traditional theory of influence to make intelligible the nature of Hemingway's unusual influence over Mailer's imagination. I classify it as *visionary* hermeneutic appropriation as influence. I hope the general theoretical thrust of such classification differentiates it from the more direct and more easily discernible thematic and stylistic influence as imitation. It will provide us with a useful working concept. I hope the reader will find it less daunting in its logic and practice than its designation at first might suggest.

It would seem helpful to begin our task of examining the particular mode of influence Hemingway exerted on Mailer with a brief overall assessment of Hemingway's widespread influence on twentieth-century American writers, including Mailer. I shall then proceed to Mailer's own appraisal of Hemingway's influence on the writers of his generation. Above all, I will examine Mailer's perception of Hemingway's influence on himself as arguably one of the most ambitious writers of his own time right along with the older Hemingway. This sequence will make it possible to study how Hemingway's influence on Mailer characterizes itself as a highly differentiated case.

II. HEMINGWAY'S TRANSPARENT INFLUENCE ON SOME NOTABLE AMERICAN WRITERS

There are many American writers who appear to have made Hemingway's work and way of life their own. They have done so through direct influence and imitation. Two interrelated operations make the effects of such influence intelligible. First, there is a process of phenomenological hermeneutics in the sense that Martin Heidegger understood it as interpretation and understanding. Analogous to the task of gods' messenger Hermes, the reader-writer endeavors to understand Hemingway's work in the context of his or her own interpretation of it. In practice, this task is readily achievable as a given in human heuristic activities without considering the more technical underpinnings of hermeneutics as such. The act of interpretation permits

the reader to understand the meaning of a given text as an intended object of his or her own consciousness. It carries in it the reader-writer's individual desires, fantasies, dreams, daydreams, culture of reading, and socioeconomic circumstances. In short, each interpretation carries in its fold the interpreter's prior lived experiences. Second, the text, thus read, implies a concomitant epistemology, which the reader-writer can appropriate.

On the plane of his way of life, as Mailer so well knew, Hemingway also exercised an exceptional charismatic influence on readers and writers. To some extent, he still continues to do so. One thinks of his way of life as an instance of Martin Heidegger's "*Dasein*," a genuine way of being human, which would be open to various interpretations and imitative practices. In a way, Hemingway as an individual makes available to us a specific semiological text, as it were. If so inclined, one can engage with it through simple imitation or more labyrinthine paths of influence.

The uncommon influence that Hemingway exercised on readers and writers is largely due to his instinctive inclination to write open-ended fiction and creative nonfiction. Even at the lexical and syntactic levels of his work, the slide from vivid denotation to unrestricted connotations guarantees unlimited interpretive semantics. Based mostly on lived experience and its endless twists and turns, opacities and vagaries, unpredictabilities and mysteries, his fiction and creative nonfiction are largely unlimited enterprises in the domain of signification and interpretive disclosure. For Hemingway the purity of heart was to will everything, which embraces Kierkegaardian belief on the plane of the unity of the whole of existence. Nearly all of Hemingway's sentences, as in all good fiction, are potentially polysemic and subject to an endless existential hermeneutics as are the lived experiences they try to recreate imaginatively. The truth of such fiction can only be regarded in the plural: truths.

Thus, Hemingway initiates a dialogue with all of his potential reader-writers, to which they can respond emotionally, cognitively, and even actively pursue either by imitation or under the enchantment of influence. "Read anything I write for the pleasure of reading it," he said in "The Art of Fiction," an interview with George Plimpton. "Whatever else you find will be the measure of what you brought to the reading" (229). It would be hard to find a keener or more accurate description of existential hermeneutic activities and modes of recreating and making a text your own.

To sum up: the combined agencies of three phenomenological operations in the act of reading make it possible for any reader of Hemingway to read

his work according to his or her own desire and knowledge. They are dialogics, that is, the art and science of dialogue as it burst upon consciousness; hermeneutics, the method of interpreting and comprehending the scriptural work or text guided by the clusters of one's desire and knowledge; and, finally, recreating the text in the light of all these three operations.

At this point, one may state that Hemingway's attentive readers, reader-writers, and critics (the other group of reader-writers) who may have an interest in the domain of literary influence either have taken mental notes or have made up their lists of writers influenced by Hemingway. It seems to be an irresistible activity. It may well be that each list brings forth the reciprocal effects of the texts read, in turn reading and analyzing the readers and list-makers.

Taking into considerations the nature of Hemingway's influence, I should like to offer a list of writers I consider to have been apparently influenced by him. I limit the list strictly to American male writers and include such diverse names as Dashiell Hammett (1894–1961), James M. Cain (1892–1977), Walter van Tilburg Clark (1909–1979), John Hersey (1914–1993), Robert Ruark (1915–1965), Charles Bukowski (1920–1994), Vance Bourjaily (1922–), Jack (Jean-Louis) Kerouac (1922–1969), Cormac McCarthy (1933–), Richard Brautigan (1935–1984), Elmore Leonard (1935–), Raymond Carver (1938–1988), and Hunter Thompson (1937–2005).

This list is illustrative, of course—not at all intended to be either critical or exhaustive. It is at best exploratory and suggestive. I am aware that in each writer's case the affinities with Hemingway and the extent and depth of his influence on him substantially differ. What does remain constant, however, is the existence of an inevitable vestige of the dynamic dialectic of uniqueness and influence, going from clear-cut direct imitation to intricate indirect influence in fictional conception and execution.

III. HEMINGWAY'S NONTRANSPARENT INFLUENCE

Hemingway's style had an ability to hit the young writers in the gut, and they weren't the same after that.

—Norman Mailer (“Mailer Talking” 298)

My intention in treating Hemingway's influence on American writers at some length has been to show the nature and extent of the problem Mailer

was facing in dealing with Hemingway's pervasive and detectable influence. Placing Mailer within my list would not have done justice to his own unique place in the history of twentieth-century American letters. For this reason, I made no mention of either his name or, I must add, Nelson Algren's (1909–1981). I would say Hemingway's influence on them falls into a different category. One may think of it as profound but not readily intelligible influence. They were two writers who were truly “hit in the gut” hard and for good and keeps by Hemingway. But the essence of how they experienced that radical influence remains mostly nontransparent.

Once one understands how—and how hard—with what lasting effects Hemingway as a writer “hit” a younger fellow-writer like Mailer in the “gut,” consequences can then be explored. A proper definition and explication of it may then emerge. Mailer and Algren both came to *embody* Hemingway's influence, identifying with him, each in his own way. The result was the development of affinities with him, both as men and writers. Even though the nature, scope, and intensity of their kinship with Hemingway greatly varied, they both went beyond the boundaries of the dialectic of direct imitation and influence. As enlightening and fascinating as it is to compare simultaneously Mailer and Algren's relationships with Hemingway, it would fall beyond the perimeters of the present study.¹

Accordingly, I would like to add the category of nontransparent influence to the broad sphere of Mailer-Hemingway studies. I designate it as visionary hermeneutic appropriation, primarily as it applies to Mailer. I shall later devote a section to its definition. To my mind, the critical narrative of Hemingway's influence on Mailer belongs to the logic of this other sphere of influence, which sounds a bit technical but bears out to be less so in practice. I deem it to be a useful concept and place it as a category within the general theory of influence. I am persuaded it will provide forays into uncharted territories. Basically, it will embrace the proximal and the distal, the familiar to the unfamiliar, the expected and the unexpected from within and without the immediate and known boundaries of studies of Hemingway's influence so far done.

IV. MAILER'S RECOGNITION AND ASSESSMENT OF HEMINGWAY'S INFLUENCE

In “Prisoner of Success,” an interview with Paul Attanasio, Mailer stated with exceptional lucidity:

Hemingway occupied the center in every way, not only coming from the Midwest, but he occupies the very center of writing itself. Anyone who's ever read a newspaper can feel how good a writer he is—he uses a vocabulary that if anything is smaller than the average newspaperman's vocabulary. And he does wonderful things with it. So no matter how serious or superficial a reader you are you sense very quickly that you are in the hands of someone who truly can write well. Then, of course, he wrote about things that are very, very interesting to men. There aren't very many women going around saying Hemingway is a great writer. I am willing to bet more American women who are good writers have been influenced by Proust than by Hemingway. But for men he's central: the anxieties he feels about being a man cover all the anxieties; it's almost impossible *not* to identify with his work. (*Pontifications* 131–32)

Clearly, this citation is long, but well worth providing. It is well conceived, admirably stated, and far-reaching. As the most stridently ambitious writer of his generation, one can unquestionably see the implications of Mailer's awareness of all things Hemingway. Mailer shows a keen sense of the truth and the astonishing expanse of the influence Hemingway exercised during his lifetime. Hemingway's work went beyond regional influence and extended itself to national and international levels.

With striking insight Mailer goes to the very mysterious heart of Hemingway's magical influence as a creative writer: mastery of the alchemical power of everyday American speech as poetry. With remarkable accuracy, he perceives that the prominence of Hemingway as a writer resides in the wonderful things he does with the English language or, more precisely, with the American colloquial speech. Mailer sees the rare enchantment that Hemingway can work by eliciting a feeling in the reader that true wonders await him or her merely by reading on. He also hints at his appreciation of Hemingway's meiotic style, and what he could achieve with a minimal poetic diction at the lexical and semantic levels of the language. It is little wonder that Mailer also liked to read the Belgian born French writer Georges Simenon's detective Jules Maigret series. Simenon, too, practiced a totally unornamented, uncluttered, minimalist style that approached Hemingway's.² Hemingway, too,

admired Simenon's fiction, which he originally discovered in the 1920s in Paris.

Let us take a closer look at Mailer's view of Hemingway's centrality to twentieth-century American writing. In any human community our fellow human beings always surround us in the circle of their ontological presence as the horizon of our life. As a consequence, the notion of occupying the "very center" in such communities spells out a position of unquestionable eminence and prominence. Mailer readily credits Hemingway with the central position in writing in the community of writers in America. In a *Playboy* interview, conducted by his son John Buffalo Mailer, he spoke of Hemingway's "prodigious influence for young American writers. He taught a lot of us how to look for the tensile strength of a sentence" (*Big Empty* 122).

Combining these related declarations about centrality is irresistible. First, because lexically "center" indicates the principal, pivotal, and radial point within a circle or sphere. The center comprises the focal point of the circumference that it defines. Second, the grammatical notion "sentence" defines the foundational, generative, syntactical unit of language. The sentence constitutes the center of our meaningful oral and scriptural discourse. It follows then that the maximal stress that a sentence as the basic unit of discourse may bear is essential. The sentence must do so without syntactically imploding into semantic nonsense. Mailer's statements pay austere but high homage to Hemingway. The older writer comes through Mailer's considered opinion as the high priest of creative writing in twentieth-century American writing. Judged by any standard, that is high praise, spontaneously offered. At the same time, it bears witness to the challenge that Hemingway as a writer posed to Mailer and how he dealt with it.

V. OUTLINE OF A VISIONARY HERMENEUTIC APPROPRIATION

Examples of greatness lie about us, living texts of renown. Let each set before himself the greatest in his line, not so much as something to follow as something to spur him on.

—Baltasar Gracián (*The Art of Worldly Wisdom* 25)

The centrality Mailer attributes to Hemingway among American writers would be seldom, if ever, far from his own mind during his writing life. It acquired the invisible center in his own gravity in his own writing. Initially,

Mailer's comments about Hemingway were inspired by genuine fascination as well as frequent intimations of irritation. One may generally regard his irritation as making an effort not to be captivated by the older writer, in the sense of being creatively captured and subjugated. His sporadic early resentment toward Hemingway would seem to be prompted by the inclination to declare himself as the rightful archetypal son and inheritor of the master's place. Yet this declaration had to be couched in a language that permitted him to continue to be a unique, talented, and independent writer. At times, I would imagine it implied that he, Mailer, would someday be considered an undisputed literary genius in his own right. He would become the new literary champion of the world. So, at the outset, his ambivalence toward Hemingway betrays a telltale sign of a justified Oedipal resentment as the master's self-appointed heir apparent.

In the fullness of time, Mailer developed a larger and steadier perspective on Hemingway and his work. I very much regret that he did not regard it necessary to devote a book to the subject. It would have been a remarkably enlightening book. His decision not to do so might very likely have been due to his ample but widely dispersed observations on Hemingway. "If one is going to make a statement about Hemingway," said Mailer as early as 1955, "it can be done either by posing a riddle or else one has to write at least ten thousand words to say something new in the critical literature" ("Intimate" 26). Mailer ended up by saying and writing nearly as much on the subject and implying more during his writing life. One hopes that a Mailer scholar will gather these observations in a collection, which will no doubt prove to be instructive.

Mailer's comments on Hemingway in their aggregate manifest his own distinctiveness as an individual and writer. Concomitantly, there is a pervasive sense of identification with Hemingway through the agency of empathetic imagination. Mailer's empathy with Hemingway and his early reservations about him make up the strong antithetical pole of a dialectical synthesis. From a theoretical standpoint, this dialectical synthesis is replete with critical import. For the general patterns of Mailer's gravitation to Hemingway bear testimony to French poet and critic Paul Valéry's belief in the truth of "philosophical interest" that "the progressive modification of one mind by the work of another" possesses (241).

In the absence of any transparent, extensive, unmediated stylistic or thematic influence by Hemingway on Mailer, my formulation of influence as

interpretive and visionary offers a new but specific theoretical reconfiguration of constitutive elements of influence. It provides a key to rendering our incomprehension of Mailer's literary relationship with Hemingway less so. For me, the interrelated operations of interpreting lived experience, elucidating its epistemology, and putting the whole process through a transformative imagination forms Hemingway's influence on Mailer. Briefly put: It is a way of making written words by one writer the flesh and blood of another. It confers magical powers of creativity on the writer as the reader. As a result, on the plane of interpretation, this modality of reading involves the immediate effects of our conscious and unconscious activities of the psyche as thoughts, emotions, dreams and their correlates as myth.

On the cultural plane, visionary hermeneutic appropriation brings into play the whole range of our familial, social, cultural, and educational inheritance. All of our prejudgments, prejudices, and received notions, as well as our capabilities to create and imagine the world, enter into it. On the side of appropriation of our interpretation, it functions within the psychological structures of sympathetic imagination, identification, projections, and transformations through textual intermediations. In short, it amounts to our vision of the writer's work. Henceforth, I use the visionary hermeneutic appropriation to indicate the modality of Mailer's relationship to Hemingway and I shall refer to it as visionary hermeneutic appropriation in the context that I have just formulated it.

In the interest of taking just a step further the concept of the visionary in hermeneutic appropriation, I wish to emphasize how it plays in the theoretical concept. By visionary, I mean to point out a kind of unconscious intervention that renders our imagination active, making it capable of audacious undertakings. Additionally, I would attribute to a quality of inspiration, a work of animation more akin to its Latin etymology of "to inspire" (*insp r re*) or to "breathe upon" or "breathe into." It seeks to enliven, quicken, and heighten the senses. Inspiration as such coincides with *pneuma* in its etymological Greek meaning as "breath," which approximates its quasi-theological meaning as "vital spirit."

If we integrate visionary hermeneutic appropriation within its twin phenomenological appearance in our consciousness and its existential implications in our experience, the term would then impart a sense of imaginative apprehension and alignment. This is so because one may perceive it as a type of conversion that would be justifiable. As conversion, it carries in it a

combined sense of artistic and spiritual adhesion and adherence. As such, it would differentiate itself from the passivity and inertia that usually characterize imitation and influence. Applied to Mailer's attitude toward Hemingway, the whole process characterizes itself as a freely chosen mode of dynamic commitment and fidelity to an imaginatively energizing ideal. What it categorically refuses is a type of willy-nilly literary seduction. The entire enterprise demands an authentic self-transformation and renewal of identity from within. Therefore, certain perceived affinities and empathies between Mailer and Hemingway are more or less analogous to spiritual and religious longings as influence.

I would like to convey a recollection that may put the concept of Mailer's visionary hermeneutic appropriation of Hemingway in a clearer proper perspective. I remember reading French philosopher Gabriel Marcel's effort to tell his readers that although he had read German philosopher Karl Jaspers' essay "*Système de philosophie*" (Philosophical System), his own essay "*On the Ontological Mystery*," had *not* been *directly* influenced by it. Marcel explained that Jaspers' "terminology" and his "spiritual and religious orientations" were quite different from his own (6). Marcel then added, "Nevertheless, I feel obscurely that I owe a real debt to this noble and profound thinker [Jaspers], and I am anxious to acknowledge the *inward* and almost *indefinable* influence which he has exercised on our own mind" (6). I consider this statement to be an elegant, touching acknowledgement. This "inward" and "indefinable" and perhaps ultimately ineffable influence, with all that it implies, is precisely what I mean by visionary hermeneutic appropriation as influence. I detect it in Mailer's inward and often ineffable responses to Hemingway. This is precisely my reason for differentiating among literary imitation, influence, and visionary hermeneutic appropriation.

VI. SEARCH FOR ELEMENTS OF MAILER'S VISIONARY HERMENEUTIC APPROPRIATION OF HEMINGWAY

Literary influence remains endlessly curious.

—Norman Mailer (*Spooky Art* 99)

I would say that searching for the components of Hemingway's nontransparent but nonetheless true influence on a writer such as Mailer could resemble the psychological mechanisms of paranoia. Or at least it may appear

so to readers with a psychoanalytic proclivity and sensitivity. One may think of it as the “hermeneutic of suspicion,” formulated by French philosopher Paul Ricoeur. The logic of Marxist hermeneutics essays to explain the role of economic class in determining our consciousness as Freudian psychoanalysis does with the unconscious. This type of intellectual and scholarly paranoia (*para* + *nous*) requires that the conscious mind extend itself beyond the limits it ordinarily imposes upon itself, because it suspects its own motivations. In so doing, the paranoid mind suspects the existence of correspondences hitherto gone undetected, engaging in thoughts and acts to unveil and disclose them. Such paranoia may impel the scholar to see mysterious influences lurking in everything everywhere.

It is perhaps preferable to the “*naiveté*” that is the dialectical opposite of paranoia, to use English psychoanalyst Donald W. Winnicott’s vocabulary. Literary critical paranoia may indeed be of help here to the extent that it mobilizes our sensitivities to look for what often lies hidden below the exhausted surfaces of our scholarly work. The paranoid critic of influence studies joins Mailer’s “[c]ertain artists, those who see associations and connections everywhere” mentioned in his “The Metaphysics of the Belly” (*Cannibals and Christians* 265). In any case, let us not forget the example of the venerable Sir Isaac Newton and his apple.

There is no discernible evidence that Mailer directly imitated Hemingway to any appreciable degree personally or as a writer. I do not believe he became the “neo-Hemingway tough guy who patronize[d] boxing and bullfighting and bars,” as Joseph Glemis dubbed him (Mailer, “Norman” 156). Mailer was too proud, too conscious of his own place in American letters to be a straightforward and unsophisticated follower, borrower, and/or imitator. With him it was all much more complicated than that. On the one hand, as an individual he worked hard to learn, say, how to box, which is a punishing way of imitating anyone. He was also interested for some time in bullfighting and other sports. But he was willing to pay the price for the lived experience of boxing, whose semiotics and metaphysics in his mind had much to do with the language arts, as it did for Hemingway. In *The Executioner’s Song* Mailer consciously and transparently adopted Hemingway’s less ornate, intentionally stripped-down narrative style. I would go as far as to suggest that Mailer’s creative nonfiction such as *Armies of the Night* might have been inspired by Hemingway’s prototypes of creative nonfiction in *Death in the Afternoon* and *Green Hills of Africa*. It is our common

knowledge that some critics have mentioned Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* (1966) as the source of inspiration for Mailer's creative nonfiction. But the two examples of Hemingway's experimentation with the genre texts precede Capote's effort by three decades. Given Mailer's astute mind and his trust in Hemingway as a writer, this possibility would appear to be more convincing than its supposed alternative.

On the other hand, Mailer's shared literary interests with Hemingway's were considerably broader and deeper. They grew out of Hemingway's fundamental literary-philosophical concerns such as courage and bravery modes of transcendent behavior. As well-integrated spiritual and corporeal strength, courage offered both men the proper deportment required to find salvation in extremis. They also had in common a vision of living the possibilities of their gender as maximal manhood firmly rooted in the body. I would think that the aim of such vision for Mailer was not machismo as a sense of masculine entitlement. I would suspect a merely assumptive masculine entitlement as a given would have made its embodiment emasculating to him rather than an existential adventure. At its best and in its profoundest sense, it was a matter of seamlessly lodging the psyche within the body as whole and entire. For that reason, they sought a second process of embodiment for their world for posterity within the body of the language of the art of fiction. As Hemingway had predicted, this approach to fiction would then produce a world whose truth would be truer than true. Language had the power to bring cohesion to the chaotic world of lived experience as it bursts upon our consciousness. And the truth of this cohesive world would then be available to anyone who could read. These are complex matters and need more clarification. I shall delve more probingly in due time.

If Mailer thought of Hemingway as worthy of imitation as a way of life and a writer, on a particular plane of reflection one cannot altogether dismiss it as trivial. Literary imitation yields much that is of interest about the imitator and the imitated. Imitation as transformative action has none too simple an origin and a history of development. Imitative acts, literary or otherwise, exceed the pejorative notion of "aping" in the current vernacular; that is to say, mindless mimicking, passively embraced at a low level of intellectual and artistic engagement. Such prejudices or prejudgments still play a part in a hierarchical study of influence. Nevertheless, such received ideas

ignore too much such as, for example, the psycho-philosophical and aesthetic sense of imitation as *mimesis*.

Mimetic activities have a well-defined origin and long developmental history of spontaneously assembling, organizing, and ordering our perception of the world's realities. In relation to Mailer and Hemingway, they still fall within the purview of visionary hermeneutic appropriation. Imitation and influence follow us with their compelling biological and atavistic impact as our genetic and familial inheritance at the time of our conception and henceforth throughout our life. Embedded in our familial, religious, cultural, societal and educational patterns of life and in the deep structures of language, imitative behavior permeates our life. Indeed, extensive theories of learning and pedagogical practices derive from them. Imitation and influence relentlessly precede and proceed us wherever we go. They ally themselves with the force that Freud attributes to the super-ego, whose effects as educative processes remain mostly unconscious or at least quasi-conscious. Various patterns of imitations and influences in their aggregate track all the developmental stages of our life. We can only move beyond them in acts of genuine creativity, acts that at once confirm their existence and transcend them in appropriation.

On the plane of the arts, *Mimesis* provided the philosophical and aesthetic matrix for classical and neo-classical paintings in the Renaissance period. Much later, as realism, naturalism, and impressionism they created new forms of artistic perception. It even sustained the foundational aesthetics of abstract impressionism and abstract painting as "non-figurative art," or "non-objective art." For instance, representations of moods and combinations of quasi-unconscious states of mind in the impressionism of Claude Monet, the post-impressionism of Vincent van Gogh, Paul Cézanne and, later, Jackson Pollock are all mimetic operations. Abstraction in painting merely reverses the direction of the mimetic gaze from without to within and vice versa. Incidentally, Hemingway was acutely cognizant of such mimesis, particularly as he found it in the works of Paul Cézanne.

Thus, one needs to be cautious in accusing Mailer of impersonating Hemingway or directly imitating him. As a writer he was interested in understanding the violence and brutality in such war and the so-called "contact sports." For the trajectory of imitative behavior covers large and varied expanses, some of which are grounded in spirituality, which everyday language pejoratively relegates to "aping." Imitation as a legitimate, indeed essential,

activity persists, as strongly in childhood echolalia as it does on the mystical level that Thomas à Kempis accords it in his *Imitation of Christ*. In its profoundest sense, imitation may lead to a *visionary conversion* that I attribute to Mailer's relation to Hemingway as visionary hermeneutic appropriation. Imitation would then come forth as transformative action in the process of forming new a new identity. I believe that was one of the contemplative aims that the writer of *Imitation of Christ* had in mind. In this light, the true imitation would appear to be seeking a truth not available otherwise, either to the imitated or the imitator.

Contemporary critical thought habitually disregards such imitative efforts as ultimately derivative, producing no more than redundant, second-hand truth, hardly expected to provide original knowledge and understanding. It is because we often forget that our primordial inclination toward imitative behavior serves us as a catalyst at all levels of human educative processes. To be totally impervious to imitation is to be *uneducable*. To imitate is to change, and, strictly speaking, no change is death in the midst of life. As transient as it often proves to be, what makes imitative behavior possible is the freedom to change, to be, with intelligence and luck, better than one might have been otherwise. It implies freedom that solely change can elicit, as is evident in the early games in which children dress up and act as grownups.

Hemingway often serves Mailer as a trampoline for further conceptual and creative modifications of his own desires, conscious or otherwise. In general, perhaps the meditative attitude I have adopted in this essay is in and of itself an imitative example to the degree that it draws from the patterns of traditional meditative literature in general. I would like to end this section by citing a fine story Mailer recounts about Nelson Algren giving a class on writing and inviting Mailer to sit in. Mailer recalls,

He [Algren] read a story by one of the kids. Third-rate Papa. Afterward, I said to Nelson, "Why did you pay that much attention? He was just copying Hemingway." And Algren, who was ten years older than me and knew that much more, said, "You know, these kids are better off if they attach themselves to a writer and start imitating him, because they learn a lot doing that. If they're any good at all, sooner or later they'll get rid of the influence. But first, they have to get attached to somebody." That was useful. (*Spooky* 76)

VII. MAILER'S VISIONARY HERMENEUTIC APPROPRIATION AND BLOOM'S THEORY OF ANXIETY OF INFLUENCE

Can the particular concept of visionary hermeneutic appropriation that I ascribe to Mailer in his relationship as a writer to Hemingway find a justifiable place within the context of Harold Bloom's magisterial *The Anxiety of Influence*? Bloom forcefully applies his theory to Hemingway's influence on Mailer. I maintain that such placement is possible on the condition that I relegate my own formulation of influence in the Mailer-Hemingway case to a category within Bloom's own theory of anxiety of influence as an *exception*. This effort necessitates a brief exposition of Bloom's justifiably elaborate theory of influence.

In *The Anxiety of Influence*, Bloom offers an analysis of the phenomenon of influence in the development and maintenance of the "poetic," in which the poetic is to be taken in its traditional sense of literature as a whole. We owe Bloom a large debt of gratitude for this work in the field of influence studies. Passionate, dense, and erudite, one can only underestimate it at one's own great loss. Bloom analyzes how "poets" guarantee continued literary creation, and dissemination as influence, while paying an exorbitant but necessary price for it in the anxiety of influence.

Bloom informs us that "[t]he precursors flood us, and our imagination can die by drowning in them, but no imaginative life is possible if such inundation is wholly evaded" (154). Concise, astute, and confident, it is a truly compelling statement. *The Anxiety of Influence* legitimately demands that we attempt to periodically test it here and there. Such probes keep the theory of anxiety of influence supple, flexible and therefore applicable to new demands made upon it by new literary visions. I find this exploratory probe to be warranted in the Mailer-Hemingway case. Such activity, I hope, accords *The Anxiety of Influence* the attention it so highly deserves as relevant to our contemporary concerns.

My line of reasoning demands more elucidation. In the essential chapter "Clinamen or Poetic Misprision" in *The Anxiety of Influence* Bloom states,

What gives pleasure to the critic in a reader may give anxiety to the poet in him, an anxiety we have learned, as readers, to neglect, to our own loss and peril. This anxiety, this mode of melancholy, is the anxiety of influence, the dark and daemonic ground upon which we now enter. (25)

Elaborating further on it, he adds, “Poetic influence—when it involves two strong, authentic poets—always proceeds by a misreading of the prior poet, an act of creative correction that is actually and necessarily a misinterpretation” (30). He stresses, “The history of fruitful poetic influence . . . is a history of anxiety and self-saving caricature, of distortion, of perverse, willful revisionism without which modern poetry as such could not exist” (30).

These are strong arguments, well conceived and precisely stated. Far-reaching in their ramifications, they sound severe, determinant, even formidable and daunting. All the same, I acknowledge their validity in a psychoanalytically inflected general theory of literary influence as Oedipal in its origin and unfolding in one of the multiplicity of forms. Bloom underlines as given the enormous influence writers undergo as they internalize their literary culture and the accompanying psychological guilt that it causes. Citing Mailer as an example, Bloom informs us,

“The burden of government,” [Samuel] Johnson brooded, “is increased upon princes by the virtues of their immediate predecessors,” and he added: “He that succeeds a celebrated writer, has the same difficulties to encounter.” We know the rancid humor of this too well, and any reader of *Advertisements for Myself* may enjoy the frantic dances of Norman Mailer as he strives to evade his own anxiety that it is, after all, *Hemingway all the way*. (28, emphasis added)

Oddly, in “First Advertisement for Myself,” the introductory piece to *Advertisement for Myself*, what Bloom perceives as “frantic dances” would seem like ritualistic dances. Mailer performs them as he prepares to affect a kind Jungian metanoia to re-form his divided psyche to bring about self-healing and renewed creative energy. The “rancid humor” of it derives from the struggles of the psyche of a writer torn apart between a sense of utter defeat and megalomania. “Defeat has left my nature divided,” declares Mailer, “my sense of timing is eccentric, and I contain within myself the bitter exhaustions of an old man, and the cocky arguments of a bright boy. So I am everything but my proper age of thirty-six, and anger has brought me to the edge of the brutal” (*Advertisements* 17). On the other hand, he immediately confesses, “In sitting down to write a sermon for this collection, I find arrogance in much of my mood,” which is an understatement (17).

Later, as it was his inclination, Mailer extravagantly predicts, “it is my present and future work which will have the deepest influence of any work being done by an American novelist in these years” (17). His contradictory statements make intelligible a psychological swing between defeat and a sense of manic exaltation, a type of bipolar depression that he may have shared for sometime and to some degree with Hemingway. They detract from his confidence in his claim of eventual superior influence and puts it in question. But I would say his vacillations in self-assurance are much to his credit. Because, sad to say for him and for us, Mailer came to acknowledge later in life that his prediction that his work will have “the deepest influence of any work being done by an American novelist in these years” did not transpire—at least not in any appreciable way.

On a certain plane of critical thought, one may argue *Advertisements for Myself* constitutes Mailer’s own treatise on influence. In a letter to George Plimpton, Hemingway refers to the book as “the sort of ragtag assembly of his [Mailer’s] rewrites, second thoughts and ramblings *shot through with occasional brilliance*” (*Ernest* 912, emphasis added). If by “ragtag” Hemingway meant that the books contents were diverse and lacking in cohesion in appearance or composition, that might well have been true. But the fact remains that Mailer intentionally structured it as such, as he did, say, in *Cannibals and Christians*. But Hemingway’s remark on the text being “shot through with occasional brilliance” is right on the mark. Hardly noticeable, Mailer’s attempts in this text culminate in discovering and establishing a viable, working out a dialectical synthesis between himself and Hemingway as men and writers. Mailer’s articulation of the subject falls into that hard-earned occasional brilliance of the text. Did Hemingway realize this in his own way? It is entirely possible.

Mailer’s own sense of “defeat” will not cease tormenting him unless and until this Hemingway matter is truly settled once and for all. “Every American writer,” writes Mailer plainly, “who takes himself to be both major and macho must sooner or later give a faena which borrows from the self-love of a Hemingway style” (*Advertisements* 19). “Faena” is an unusual but pertinent word to use here in connection to Hemingway and the way Mailer proposes to deal with his contemporaries. Faena denotes a series of final ritual passes at the bull that a matador carries out in bullfighting. It occurs immediately before the *kill*, the moment of truth, to highlight a matador’s skill. On the other hand, to perform “a faena which borrows from the self-love of a

Hemingway style” connotes at the same time a moment of pride in the truth of accomplishment as well as exhibition narcissism and a touch of brutality.

The main point, however, is Mailer laying claim to Hemingway’s vision through the agency of his own interpretation of it. It will make it possible for him to identify with Hemingway for better or worse and for good and for keeps. Mailer tells his readers, “I have come finally to have a great sympathy for The Master’s irrepressible tantrum that he is the champion writer of this time, and of all time, and that if anyone can pin Tolstoy, it is Ernest H.” (19).

Confined to the framework of this essay, I would propose that *Advertisements for Myself* is Mailer’s valiant form of confession and initiation into a visionary hermeneutic appropriation, which approaches a kind of literary conversion. It represents a writer’s self-transformation and regeneration as a genuine response to another writer’s thought and work. It does so, however, without any illusion, compromise, and least of all sentimentality. In no way such conversion implies loss of creative uniqueness and integrity, just the contrary.

In relation to Bloom’s general theory of influence, I would relegate Mailer’s hermeneutic appropriation to the “state of exception,” as Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben. Agamben defines the “state of exception” in reference to Saint Paul’s word “*katarego*,” roughly translated as “I deactivate” in his First Letter to the Corinthians. Agamben calls it “messianic *katarg sis*,” or messianic deactivation (104). He further clarifies it as a “law that is simultaneously suspended and fulfilled” (104). I find it useful to compare “messianic *katarg sis*” and visionary hermeneutic appropriation, because both concepts fully connote fidelity and flexibility. As Agamben points out, “In our tradition, a metaphysical concept, which takes as its prime focus a moment of foundation and origin, coexists with a messianic concept, which focuses on a moment of fulfillment” (103–4). What sanctions such coexistence “is the idea that fulfillment is possible by retrieving and revoking the foundation, by coming to terms with it” (104).

VIII. MAILER’S VISIONARY INTERPRETIVE APPROPRIATION AND THE OEDIPUS COMPLEX: “THE STATE OF EXCEPTION”

In an interview, Mailer scholar and critic Michael Lennon elicited from Mailer the following keen remarks on the perception of his relationship to Hemingway:

The more I know about writing, the more of an achievement Hemingway's style becomes to me. I know his flaws inside out. I've loved and hated him *as if he were my own father* for years. There is so much he did for one, so much he didn't do. *Truly the relationship you have to him is as a father.* But he is a remarkable writer. His sense of the English language, I'd say, is virtually primitive in its power to evoke mood and stir the senses. (*Pontifications* 161, emphasis added)

Now, one needs to pose the question: Are there detectable traces of an Oedipal guilt and anxiety in visionary hermeneutics appropriation that I attribute to Mailer in relation to Hemingway? My answer is a modified yes. Freudian psychoanalysis teaches us that the Oedipus complex is a universal *concept*, not merely a limited and localized *notion*. As such, it affects us all. However, it would be justifiable to remind ourselves that the degrees of the intensity of Oedipal complex and Oedipal guilt vary widely. The differentials of extent and intensity affect the quality and acuity of the Oedipal complex and therefore its consequences. As Freud in *Totem and Taboo* so perceptively recognized, the ritual slaying of the father and the birth of Oedipal guilt among the primitive horde were not the only result or the most consequential of patricide among them. The sons also engaged in vital subsequent rituals of atonement for their irreversible and unforgivable act. So the killing of the primal Father was an immensely ambivalent act. They partook of the totemic meal as an act of atonement. It was not in the least purely a revengeful, cannibalistic devouring of the father's body. The totemic meal set in motion an unending series of significant revitalizing, self-generating imaginative powers.

Thus, killing of the father and partaking of his flesh were essentially rituals of *embodying* him in order to *appropriate* his magical powers as patrimony. Partaking of the totemic meal was then not an altogether negative and negating ritual, far from it. Parallel to patricide, but going in the opposite direction, another force lurked behind the bloody event, which paves the way for a wider hermeneutics of patricide among the primitive horde. The sons also interpreted the killing of the father as rituals of self-preservation and regeneration through corporeal appropriation, integration, and identification with him. Taking the father's body and blood had all the identifying or distinguishing marks characteristic of the sacrificial and the sacramental.

So the emphasis was not entirely on patricide; it rather emphasized rituals of sacral nourishment, embodiment, atonement, salvation, and continuation. At the center of it was, however, the principal of *redemptive atonement*, which approximated a mode of “sacrament of reconciliation,” to borrow a term from Catholicism. The redemptive atonement prevented their guilt from bordering on permanent paralysis and enslavement.

In a parallel fashion, the permanence of the work of art establishes potent traditions that exercise massive powers. Specifically, the literary work of art within a linguistic community tends to firmly fix us within its scriptural power and authority. Such authority parallels that of the slain father of the primal horde, as Mailer so astutely discerns in Hemingway. When allied with our own unconscious desires, this authority internalizes itself and becomes psychologically astonishingly potent. It is then likely to lock our literary creative impulses within its sway. More often than not, they succeed in doing so at the expense of our imaginative potentials. Literary traditions imbed and enclose us in clusters analogous to our given genetic matrix with their spider’s web of mysterious determinative effects.

Consequently, what confronts a creative writer such as Mailer and Hemingway, both of whom desire to establish a new fictional world with its own epistemology. Such a goal can only realize itself through exploration of new themes and their attendant stylistics. The problematics of how to come concurrently into possession of the enormous inherited wealth of tradition and surpass it is a thorny one. For some writers, it becomes an insurmountable problem, because it demands an alchemical inner process of transformation of the writer’s literary inheritance. Ready acceptance or radical rejection of literary influence sets up psychological tensions that surface in a writer’s lived experience as Oedipal guilt and its inevitable anxiety, which Bloom has so brilliantly detected and elucidated.

From this perspective, visionary hermeneutic appropriation, which through the alchemy of imagination in literature, allows a writer such as Mailer to now and then transform or at a minimum negotiate with the given as the received body of preceding literary works. In this fashion, Mailer could manage to be paradoxically both old and new and come to grips with the determinism of the Oedipal guilt. Symbolically, one might say Mailer appropriated the father’s body, mainly Hemingway’s, in order to support his own life of imagination. Accordingly, Mailer perceived the process not so much as emulation but rather what I have called interpretive appropriation.

To put it somewhat differently, the warp and woof of influence may be at once *determining and liberating*. We are all rooted in this paradox, particularly artists as innovators. At one and the same time, we remain identifiable individuals while we undergo change and evolve or devolve biologically, psychologically cognitively, affectively, and creatively. In its most inclusive meaning, to be susceptible to hermeneutics of influence is tantamount to permitting the inflow of interpretive knowledge to inscribe itself on our consciousness and body, submitting the knowledge thus acquired to further processes of internalization for adoption or rejection.

As a tribute to Mailer's own instinctive talent for theorizing, I would imagine that the event of "poetic influence" also makes itself known to him as a specific and singularly privileged modality of rediscovery and reconfiguration of our world as well as remaining totally anchored in it. In Mailer's case, beyond "poetic influence" there are also strong illuminating instances of reaffirmation of the self in acts of "active imagination," as Carl Jung has put it. In Mailer's situation, active imagination is capable of alchemically transforming the self from a state of hermeneutic appropriation to the ecstasy of conversion. In this context, one cannot but wonder if alchemy has not always been fundamentally about the psyche. I would suggest that such alchemical states in creativity are moments of integration of the derivative *chronos* (clock time) with inner time *kairos*, combining our present creative impulses and our collective literary past as it projects both into an imagined future. *Kairos* is the temporal dimension of our hermeneutic appropriation.

IX. CONSTITUTIVE THEORETICAL COMPONENTS OF MAILER'S VISIONARY HERMENEUTIC APPROPRIATION

As a relatively young writer, Hemingway wrote, "A thousand years make economics silly and a work of art endures forever, but it is very difficult to do and now it is not fashionable." But he added, "those who practice it now wish to cease their work because it is too lonely, too hard to do, and it is not fashionable" (*Green Hills* 109). As a creative writer with strong genuine intellectual interests, Mailer was aware of the permanence of the literary arts. He realized the enduring power of literary works of art. He recognized how they exert their considerable influence within literary traditions; and how they tend to firmly fix us as a writer within their scriptural authority in a given lingual community and sometimes beyond it. He was also cognizant of the loneliness and difficulties that flow from the problematic of how to place

oneself within the long line of language artists and still remain free and work out one's own identity as a unique creative writer. Furthermore, Mailer could not remain passive to the pressure of new visual arts such as the cinema and particularly television and later the internet, all vying for popular attention. They have tended to make serious creative writing less fashionable.

Mailer was most desirous to do creative writing that would simultaneously find a large readership and still shed light on matters hitherto unknown, therefore incomprehensible, even the unknowable. His tendencies to tackle such phenomena generate a knotty problematics for any writer. I would propose that Mailer's solution to the problematics as well as the troublesome notions of the new versus the traditional was to conceive literature as a type of advanced evolutionary process. There would be stages of development within which each writer finds himself or herself, working out a proper strategy of creative survival. From his vantage point, what would set apart such developmental stages was the difficulty to choose between essential and nonessential among the constitutive elements of the inherited literary culture and the present literary trends. Therefore, in tandem, he would take from tradition what was essential to him as a starting point. He would then embark upon remaking the inherited literary tradition in his own novel ways. It is a bit similar to the ways that one may receive and dispense of one's inheritance. In *Advertisements for Myself*, Mailer writes,

[I]f I have one ambition above all others, it is to write a novel which Dostoyevsky and Marx; Joyce and Freud; Stendhal, Tolstoy, Proust and Spengler; Faulkner, and even old moldering Hemingway might come to read, for it would carry what they had to tell another part of the way. (477)

His gratuitous quick jab at Hemingway notwithstanding, in this passage Mailer makes an effort to position himself in the canonical ranks of his literary forbearers and contemporaries. Persuasively, they also include the historian Oswald Spengler and two towering figures of nineteenth- and twentieth-century intellectual history—Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud. There is an evident suggestion in this selection of illustrious names of the necessity Mailer finds in having a vision of the human world as an integral whole. In the interview "Literary Ambitions," he tells Lennon,

I grew up under the shadow of Marx and Freud. Both men, independently, created an entire world system. *They had a vision of all existence.* That impressed me immensely. I was nothing if intellectually ambitious when I was young and wanted to come up with similar vision that would comprehend everything (*Pontifications* 169, emphasis added).

Here, Mailer the creative writer meets Mailer the intellectual and putative theoretician. Be that as it may, he was neither a philosopher nor a psychoanalyst, certainly not in their restrictive academic classifications. But as a novelist, he discovered the imaginative unity of the world of fiction, with its unifying imaginative logic and “worldmaking” powers, to use Nelson Goodman’s apt language. In Tolstoy and Stendhal, the imaginal geographies and histories of Russia and France found their well-integrated expressions in the melancholy accounts of war and peace. Spengler traced the history of the Western world in what he considered to be its downward spiral. Proust made the rich domain of memory of things past his own. James Joyce made Dublin the capital of the world through lingual, linguistic, and fictional magic. Karl Marx attributed to the dialectics of matter and history materialism Godlike powers; and Sigmund Freud rendered the unconscious the all but supernatural ruling principle of the psyche.

Each one of the writers cited by Mailer attempted to “totalize” their world, to use a more technical term introduced by Jean-Paul Sartre. In one way or another, they all allowed Mailer to have a steady view of the world in its totality albeit on the plane of the fictional. In this way, for Mailer, the logic of this literary conception is at one with that of philosophy, psychoanalysis, and history. He believed he had “a coherent philosophy,” as he told Lennon, adding, “I believe we could start talking about virtually anything, and before we were done I could connect our subject to almost anything in my universe” (*Pontifications* 170). For Mailer, this coherent literary philosophy eventually shapes up as a cosmology in *On God: An Uncommon Conversation*.

Among his contemporaries, Mailer mentions novelists William Faulkner and Hemingway. They too, each in his own way, valiantly sought to create an imaginal vision of the world that was entire unto itself. Faulkner’s goal was to represent the entire history of a region, the American South, by his fictional Yoknapatawpha County, which simultaneously transcended all historical and geographical boundaries and became universal in its wide array

of its human implications. And, specifically, there was Hemingway, who as a young writer believed

[t]he great thing is to last and get your work done and see and hear and learn and understand; and write when there is something that you know; and not before; and not too damned much after. Let those who want to save the world if you can get to see it clear and as a whole. Then any part you make will represent the whole if it's made truly. The thing to do is work and learn to make it. (Hemingway, *Death* 278)

I should think that this passage would be magical music to Mailer's ears. In my mind I hear the voice of the young Hemingway reaching out to Mailer like a keening over the years and putting a powerful spell on him. It is direct hard-hitting talk about an unspeakably tough profession, which Mailer may well have noticed and admired. For the young Hemingway, it was all a matter of the senses and the comprehension that precedes understanding. It made a fragmented and constantly changing world whole. All that remained for a writer to do was getting it down on paper and making the world whole and entire. It represents the great totalizing function of a writer of fictional knowledge. It is a world in which a writer attempts to capture in language the human way of being. As Martin Heidegger reminds us "language belongs to the closest neighborhood of man's being" (189).

One might speculate that for Mailer the phenomenon of language as omnipresent and inexhaustible matrix of all significations makes the "lifeworld," *Lebenswelt* of German phenomenology, translatable into fiction. The interweave of language and the lifeworld are proportionately boundless. One may judge the enigmatic nature of the affect Hemingway has on Mailer to emanate mostly from his fictional world as total lifeworld. What Mailer wanted was to *embody* as much as possible Hemingway's vision of this lifeworld on various levels of his own psyche and its interpretive work. He did so concurrently as *viva activa* and as *viva contemplativa*.

Thus Mailer could speak of *his own world*, of *his own philosophy*, and finally of *his own cosmology* and mean it. Writing fiction offered both Hemingway and Mailer means of synthesizing their lived experiential vision. No matter how compressed or dilatory their style might be, or how distinct their thematics the practice of a new aesthetics of lived experience seems to give their

fiction its unity. In “The Existential Aesthetic,” Mailer maintained that “of all of the philosophies, existentialism approaches experience with the greatest awe: it says we can’t categorize experience before we have experienced it. The only way we’re going to be able to discover what the truth about anything might be is to submit ourselves to the reality of the experience” (213). Mailer’s statement is true whether one is a religious or an atheistic existentialist, because it is rooted in the phenomenology of experience, within which religious or atheistic experiences also dwell. Similarly, it is true whether the experience is physical, psychical or psychosomatic, as I am convinced all experiences are. This new experiential aesthetic theoretically approximated the Quantum Mechanics of the fictional discourse for Hemingway and Mailer.

Lived experience appears to be an unchangeable given of the human condition, which would fall within the concept of “facticity” (*facticité*) of Sartrean philosophy. Paradoxically however, lived experience, *le vécu* of French phenomenology, bursts upon creative intentional human consciousness and can turn into the ground of an alternative world of literary alchemy through interpretive activities. Hemingway and Mailer fully comprehended that fiction emerging from lived experience was the Tao of fiction, as it were, dealing as it did with *the real of the real*. I believe they both trusted the validity and efficacy of this alternative fictional truth. Mailer found in such fiction what was the possibility of expressing the inexpressible and of comprehending the seemingly incomprehensible in the diverse, specialized conceptual discourses of his time that fragmented our world.³

In my opinion, Mailer committed himself to a visionary fiction constituted by lived experience that was a sort of lingual religion, alchemy, and magic for him and Hemingway. Within such fiction, the body became the nodal point of psychosomatic phenomenon of lived experience, making possible an indissoluble subjective-objective union with the enviroing world. This *corporeal* comprehension presented a universal oneness that verges on the mystical for both writers. The human body as an indivisible continuum is the agency that makes lived experience possible. It legitimately permitted Hemingway and Mailer to go beyond the trappings of realism and solipsism. Such fiction miraculously invades the interstices of imaginal space-time through its inexhaustible connotative potential of language. Both writers, one after another, discovered in such vision of literature what Carl Jung has called alchemy’s “holy technique.”

**X. MAILER'S INTERPRETATION OF THE CONCEPT OF MANHOOD
HEMINGWAY'S "DISCIPLINE"**

In *Advertisements for Myself*, Mailer writes,

I was one of few writers of my generation who was concerned with living in Hemingway's discipline, by which I do not mean I was interested in trying for some second-rate imitation of the style, but rather that I shared with Papa the notion, arrived at slowly in my case, that even if one dulled one's talent in the punishment of becoming a man, it was more important to be a man than a very good writer, that probably I could not become a very good writer unless I learned first how to keep my nerve, and what is more difficult, learned how to find more of it. (265)

In this passage, Mailer offers an analysis of Hemingway's "discipline" and makes it his own by living within its punishing demands. The Hemingway "discipline" as he sees it is a matter of existing "in-situation," of being subject to the givens of a writer's life, and of transcending them through keeping one's nerves and engaging in lifelong creative and conciliation with it in sober give-and-take operations. From an existential standpoint, the most exigent aspect of being in-situation (*in situ*) describes the condition of unpredictability. Mailer was acutely aware of this condition and its attendant dread. In "Existential Aesthetics," his interview with Laura Adams, Mailer points out, "we find ourselves in an existential situation whenever we are in a situation where we cannot foretell the end" (213). He apprehends being in-situation as a courageous existential mode of engaging in acts of becoming a man. These are acts whose foremost quality is unpredictability, which require that our mind and body remain unbreakably whole in an unspeakably broken world. That wholeness comprises the secret of the emergence and survival of a very good writer.

The mind-body continuum as the primal presence of the human presence in the world is then the essence of Hemingway's discipline. I suspect that Mailer is empathetically projecting upon Hemingway what he himself already desires or possesses as a large but somewhat slumbering unconscious drive. Accordingly, Mailer believes that for a truly good male writer the most effective way of being a writer is to fulfill the highest potentials of his gender. His life revolves around becoming fully man, subjecting himself to

punitive masculine trials such as boxing and everyday acts that he deems to manifest bravery. He deems courage, bravery and the honor they entail indispensable to attaining the primeval promise of being. As he clearly expresses it in *Cannibals and Christians*, “Masculinity is not something given to you, something you’re born with, but something you gain. And you gain it by winning small battles with honor,” that is, with courage (201).

Of course, by the same logic of gender potential, neither is femininity given. All writers, male or female, struggle to define themselves within their given gender. They make daunting forays into the vast mysterious terrains of the human condition through language and imagination housed in the unimaginable complex of the body. If authentic, these forays put all serious writers *in extremis*. It reminds one of Simone de Beauvoir’s assertion that “[o]ne is not born a woman, but rather becomes, a woman” (267). Admittedly, there may be differences between Mailer and Beauvoir’s statements, but the general thrust of them is identical. They basically attest that mere physiological givens or societal determinations of one’s sex do not totally determine one’s gender possibilities.

From the depths of the preceding elucidation of Mailer’s interpretation of Hemingway’s discipline surfaces a specific philosophy of creative writing. I detect in it the upsurge of an integrative mind-body continuum, anchoring the writer squarely in our world and conferring upon him or her the courage to be and to write. The truth of mind-body wholeness belongs to the sphere of the writer’s lived experience and produces its own distinctive ontology and resultant epistemology.

XI. THE BODY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

[T]he human being even as he or she dreamed or theorized was unmistakably a bag of guts, with motor devices and pleasure-seeking organs attached.

—Malcolm Bowie (*Lacan* 15)

We have seen that in Mailer’s philosophy of the art of creative writing, the desired developmental process of becoming a man is one of battles fought well and honorably fought. Such freely chosen fights are adventures into the unknown; but whether won or lost they always bestow upon the fighter-writer a brave new way of being human. Of the role of the body within such

fights and its vicissitudes, Mailer wrote, "Writing impinges on that body; writing depends ultimately on that body" (*Spooky* 126). "I believe that is one of the reasons I've been so interested in prizefighters," Mailer discloses (125–26). One may expand the import of his disclosure to bullfighters and other athletes where Hemingway's well-known concept of courage as "grace under pressure" applies.

I see the philosophical sense of the concepts of mind-body wholeness as *embodiment* in Hemingway's "discipline" in Mailer's work as having the signifying function of transcendence. It goes beyond what Mailer derisively thought would be "to sit at a desk and squeeze words out of yourself," which in and of itself, is an extraordinary activity (125). Mailer goes as far as saying, "I think one has to develop one's physical grace. Writers who are possessed of some may tend to write better than writers who are physically clumsy. It's my impression this is so" (77). And it may well be so, because one may advance the argument that the unconscious is well anchored in the body and regulates vital functions, including the brain.

Mailer tells us "Hemingway suffered from the honorable need to be the equal of his male characters, particularly since he used the first person so much" (95). I believe that is because the mind and body for Hemingway also acted as an indivisible whole within the context of lived experience. To a large extent, this is also true of Mailer's fictional characters such as Stephen Rojack in *An American Dream*, even though Rojack is not directly drawn from his creator's experiences. The psycho-philosophical inferences of the body in writing privilege it as a totally integrated psychosomatic agency of apprehension of our world. It would seem to me, in the inherent interest of rendering human existence more comprehensible, it may well be that on a certain plane of integration Hemingway and Mailer found the aim of their fiction was to recognize the indissoluble unity of the organic, the inorganic, and the psychical in our bodily presence as the fundamental of mode of human presence in the world. As French psychoanalyst Didier Anzieu also has noted, the "body is the bedrock of the mind" (61). As such, the body calls forth an infinite series of corporeal relationships with the world between, which immensely enriches Hemingway and Mailer's philosophy of fiction.

It is of interest to note that even on the level of fantasy, for Mailer the body finds its nearly mystical expression in corporeal identification and communion with Hemingway in a roundabout way. In *The Fight*, his book on the Muhammad Ali-George Forman fight in Zaïre, Mailer writes, "To be

eaten by a lion on the banks of the Congo—who could fail to notice that it was Hemingway’s own lion waiting down these years for the flesh of Ernest until an appropriate substitute had at last arrived?” (92).

XII. CONCLUSION

I trust I have shown Mailer’s visionary interpretation and appropriation of Hemingway comprises a mode of influence whose thrust and effect are genuinely original and creative. As such, it is a theoretical influence. By theoretical I would like to communicate mainly the etymological sense of the adjective in Greek as *theoria*, which conveyed an act of viewing or beholding, of having a vision that entitles the beholder to holding or possessing what is beheld in his or her own way. So it may be “Hemingway all the way,” but magically in Mailer’s own entirely visionary interpretive way with all its startling twists and turns, leading us always to territories best known to him.

NOTES

1. Following the logic of visionary appropriation in this essay, I am currently engaged in writing a study of Hemingway’s mode of influence on Nelson Algren.
2. On Mailer’s appreciation of Georges Simenon’s detective fiction, please see Dwayne Raymond’s *Mornings with Mailer* (174). For more extensive discussions of Hemingway’s meiotic stylistics and the role that the concepts of primal silence and the invisible plays in it please see my articles “The Aesthetics of Silence,” and “The Aesthetics of the Visible and the Invisible.”
3. Please see my essay “The Prose of Life: Lived Experience in the Fiction of Hemingway, Sartre, and Beauvoir.”

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