

JIVE-ASS AFICIONADO:
WHY ARE WE IN VIETNAM?
AND HEMINGWAY'S MORAL CODE

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IN *WHY ARE WE IN VIETNAM?* NORMAN MAILER ALLUDES to James Joyce twice (126, 149), and certainly his 1967 anti-war novel has a Joycean feel. It incorporates the same sort of monologic stream-of-consciousness narrative and language play as we saw in *Ulysses*, all tinged with the “color” that put *Ulysses* on trial in America for obscenity. But Mailer’s novel is also richly evocative of that other great modernist writer, Ernest Hemingway.

Hemingway was conspicuously singled-out with a few adjectives when Mailer told an interviewer six years earlier that if he has “one ambition above all others, it is to write a novel which Dostoevsky and Marx; Joyce and Freud; Stendhal, Tolstoy, Proust and Spengler; Faulkner, and even old moldering Hemingway might come to read” (*Conversations* 76). A close reading reveals that *Why Are We in Vietnam?* may actually be that novel, but I’ll leave it to future critics to explore how it would have appealed to the sensibilities of the other writers mentioned. I’m going to focus on Hemingway, because apart from echoes of Joyce’s style, his influence here seems most prevalent.

As Laura Adams observes, “three of the most powerful influences on Mailer’s scheme of things have been war and Ernest Hemingway and the intersection of the two” (173). Mailer told an interviewer that Hemingway’s death made him feel “a little weaker” (*Conversations* 71), no doubt because he had felt a connection. Like Hemingway, Mailer wrote about boxing, he wrote about bullfighting, he talked tough, he hung out with tough friends, he went to war, he wrote about war, he backed the underdog, he infuriated feminists, he was suspicious of governmental structures, and he seemed to

take special delight in writing fiction that shocked readers or showcased his “insider” knowledge. “Hemingway and Fitzgerald are important imaginative figures in my life,” Mailer told the *Washington Post Book World* in 1971, explaining that “in Hemingway and Fitzgerald, it’s the sensuous evocation of things. The effect on the gut is closer to poetry” (*Conversations* 189).

Why Are We in Vietnam? Mailer seems to have borrowed a number of things from Hemingway, including the narrative structure for the novel, Hemingway’s “iceberg theory” of omission, the attempt to make the reader actually experience the fiction in his “gut,” and thematic elements that reflect the code and code heroes that Robert Penn Warren and Philip Young recognized during the early years of Hemingway scholarship.

In the spring of 1924 Hemingway had written the lower-case *in our time*, which consisted of eighteen vignettes drawn from the young writer’s journalistic observations of political upheaval, war, and bullfighting, published in an edition of only 170 copies. For *In Our Time* (1925), which was released by a major publisher in a first edition of 1,335 copies, he elevated two of those vignettes to stories and used the other sixteen as interlocutory chapters inserted in front of each of the longer new stories that he had crafted, most of which involved a coming-of-age protagonist named Nick Adams. To solve the problem of having an extra vignette, Hemingway broke the last story—“Big Two-Hearted River”—into Parts I and II. Interestingly, as Michael Reynolds reminds, Hemingway later said he always intended the vignettes to function as “chapter headings,” explaining, “‘You get the close up very quietly but absolutely solid and the real thing but very close, and then through it all between every story comes the rhythm of the *in our time* chapters’” (qtd. in Reynolds 233). As Hemingway further clarified for critic Edmund Wilson, his intent was to “give the picture of the whole between examining it in detail” (Hemingway, *Ernest* 128).

That’s exactly how *Why Are We in Vietnam?* is structured with similar effects that it has on the reader. Just as Hemingway’s short stories focused on Nick and the personal lives of people “in his time,” while the vignettes served as newspaper-headline reminders of the violent, larger world that was affecting individual psyches, so, too, Mailer’s highly personalized and detailed narrative of sixteen-year-old D.J.’s hunting trip with his father, his father’s business associates, and his best friend Tex in the rugged Brooks Range of Alaska is intercut with “Intro Beeps” that serve the same function and add “rhythm” as did Hemingway’s vignettes. The chapters in *Why Are We in*

Vietnam? focus on the story of the hunting trip, while the Intro Beeps are digressively vocal *tour de forces* that give Mailer the chance to evoke a broader world by allowing D.J. the freedom to rant about things outside the constraints of narrative. For one thing, the Intro Beeps feature the narrator as an eighteen-year-old, so there is a broader prospective already involved. D.J. at eighteen is wiser than D.J. at sixteen, who is recalled in the main narrative. In the Intro Beeps D.J. thinks and “speaks” in an even more pronounced stream-of-consciousness while at a dinner party his parents throw for him the night before he and Tex are scheduled to ship out to fight in Vietnam. It is in these numbered Intro Beeps where D.J., unfettered by storytelling, can rant and ramble about more general and abstract topics like the teachings of Marshall McLuhan, the Canadian philosopher who warned that the media and the constant bombardment of pop culture messages would have a deleterious effect on the human condition (Mailer, *Why Are We in Vietnam?* 8). It is these big-picture concerns that surface mostly in the Intro Beeps and do indeed remind the reader of a world outside the hunting narrative of the novel, just as listening to a radio dee-jay makes one aware of the source and also other listeners—a “broadcast” that is simultaneously reaching a larger world. And that in itself can be unsettling. “As D.J. suggests,” one critic observes, “society acts as a kind of succubus upon the unconscious of Americans so that ‘you never know what vision has been humping you through the night’” (Wenke 123).

Although the white noise of media forms a powerful current that runs through the whole of D.J.’s Intro Beeps, the young narrator also weaves in his musings about bullfighting, machismo, existential dread, and Freudian theories on the centrality of sex and sexual issues. It is also in these Intro Beeps where Mailer teases readers by having D.J. insist, as early as Beep 4, that he may not be a white, young, and virile genius from Texas after all—maybe he’s really the voice of Black America:

I, D.J., am trapped in a Harlem head which has gone so crazy that I think I am sitting at a banquet in the Dallas ass white-ass manse remembering Alaska am in fact a figment of a Spade gone ape in the mind from outrageous frustrates wasting him and so now living in an imaginary white brain. . . . (Mailer, *Why Are We in Vietnam?* 58)

As Adams notes, “Although D.J. can ‘see right through shit’ [49], he is not emancipated (he is only a ‘presumptive philosopher’ [93], and the reader has no alternative but to confront the narrative’s white noise” (127). Hemingway famously remarked, “The most essential gift for a good writer is a built-in, shockproof, shit detector. This is the writer’s radar and all great writers have had it” (Hemingway, *Conversations* 128). Though D.J. has enough “radar” to make connections between corporate power, “yes men,” sexual acts, hunting, power-brokering, commercialism, and politics, he seems as affected by society’s white noise as he hopes his own “broadcasts” will be on readers, listeners, anyone within psychic earshot. And his voice deliberately shifts so many times that it is hard for anyone to get a “fix” on him.

Hemingway’s *In Our Time*, not coincidentally, produced a similar effect. Michael Reynolds puts it best: “Eliot used so many voices in *The Wasteland* that it was hard to say when he was speaking. When Hemingway finished *in our time*, he achieved something of the same effect” (125). The same is true with D.J., whose narrative voice encompasses a disc jockey’s Hipster talk and bemused take on society, philosophical riffs from a deep thinker, more standard narration, and anger-fueled rants that suggest a disturbed side we suspect will come out in full flower once D.J. finds himself in Vietnam: “That’s how they talk in the East, up in those bone Yankee ass Jew circumcised prick Wall Street palaces—take it from D.J.—he got psychic transistors in his ear (one more gift of the dying griz) which wingding on all-out pickup each set of transcontinental dialogues from the hearts of the prissy-assed and the prigged. Fungatz, radatz, and back to piss” (Mailer, *Why Are We in Vietnam?* 151). Yet, the more he gets close to his father or describes the hunt in detail, the more D.J. settles into a less provocative, more evocative narration that comes closer to a standard-issue voice, if there is such a thing:

On and on they go for half an hour, talking so close that D.J. can even get familiar with Rusty’s breath which is all right. It got a hint of middle-aged fatigue of twenty years of doing all the little things body did not want to do, that flat sour of the slightly used up, and there’s a hint of garlic or onion, and tobacco, and twenty years of booze gives a little permanent rot to the odor coming off the lining of the stomach. . . . (133)

That the multiple voices and structure of *Why Are We in Vietnam?* derive from *In Our Time* seems even more likely when one considers Mailer's ending. Curiously, like Hemingway, Mailer also breaks his final narrative installment—Chapters Ten and Eleven—into two, although there is no logical reason for doing so. The tenth chapter ends, “And the boys slept” (197); the eleventh begins, “And woke up in three hours. And it was black, and the fire near to out” (199), in what is most probably a reference to Hemingway's narrative divisions for “Big-Two Hearted River”—inexplicable to the reading public unless, of course, one considers Hemingway's desire to incorporate all of the vignettes from *in our time*. Here, Mailer apparently has a little joke at Hemingway's expense, breaking up the narrative but then actually drawing attention to the break by juxtaposing the two chapters with no Intro Beep between them, using conjunctions to show they should or could have been one, and positioning the final Intro Beep at the very end of the novel, the way that Hemingway ended his book. By so doing, Mailer engages in an intertextual dialogue with his literary “papa,” as he does with other literary forebears in the interlocutory sections.

It is in the Intro Beeps where Mailer situates his attempts at creating a new American fictional voice by invoking the book that Hemingway said begat modern American fiction—Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* (Hemingway, *Green Hills* 23)—which D.J. talks about in Intro Beep 1. The next major, irreverent young voice in American fiction was undoubtedly Holden Caulfield, J.D. Salinger's hero from *The Catcher in the Rye*, to whom D.J. refers in Intro Beep 2, along with “Call me Ishmael” Melville (Mailer, *Why Are We in Vietnam?* 26). With these references, Mailer obviously was drawing attention to young D.J. as a new American Adam with a new and distinctive voice that, like his predecessors, questions or indicts current society for its misguided thinking and behavior.

Just as Hemingway opted for irony in his title—Philip Young suggests the likelihood that *In Our Time* is a “sardonic allusion to a well-known phrase from the Church of England's Book of Common Prayer: ‘Give peace in our time, O Lord’” (5)—Mailer took the title of an address that President Lyndon Johnson gave at Johns Hopkins University in the spring of 1965 (“Why We Are in Vietnam”), in which Johnson presented his case for American involvement, then turned Johnson's explanatory title into a question . . . which, of course, it was becoming by the spring of 1966 when Mailer began *Why Are We in Vietnam?* Why was America in Vietnam, and more importantly,

why would there be, at the time Mailer was inspired to write this novel, still such flag-waving support for Johnson's war?

As historian John Hellman reports, it begins earlier, during the presidency of John F. Kennedy, whose "well-publicized interest in the Special Forces made them extensions of the commander-in-chief, just as the Hunters of Kentucky and the Rough Riders had once magnified the respective images of Andrew Jackson and Theodore Roosevelt" (44). Hellman identified the Green beret as a "contemporary reincarnation of the western hero" who "personified the combined virtues of civilization and savagery without any of their respective limitations" (45–46)—which helps to explain why the bestselling novel to come out of the Vietnam War era wasn't any of the realistic accounts that generated support for the anti-war movement, but rather Robin Moore's *The Green Berets*, published in 1965. This flag-waving novel that lionized the Special Forces reached Number 5 on the bestseller list in hardcover, and when it appeared in paperback that same year, "buyers at drugstore racks made it what *80 Years of Best-Sellers* calls 'the phenomenon of the year, with 1,200,000 printed in only two months,'" Hellman writes. It inspired former Green Beret Barry Sadler to record his "Ballad of the Green Berets," which vaulted to Number 1 on the *Billboard* charts and "reportedly induced so many enlistments of young men hoping to become Green Berets that the Selective Service was able to suspend draft calls during the first four months of 1966" (Hellman 53).

If Mailer found such early support for the war maddening, in this anti-war novel he again takes his cue from Hemingway, whose famous "iceberg theory" dictated, "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" (Hemingway, *Death* 192). Hemingway felt that the writing becomes more powerful by omitting things you know, and the quintessential examples of the theory in practice are to be found in the short story "Hills Like White Elephants," in which a couple avoids talk of a pregnancy and abortion, and the final story from *In Our Time*. Of "Big Two-Hearted River, Pts. I & II," Hemingway wrote, "The Story was about coming back from the war but there was no mention of the war in it" (*Moveable* 76). Nick is a young veteran who not only finds no hero's welcome; his favorite wilderness fishing area looks like a war zone, blackened by fire. And that

external devastation mirrors the interior landscape of his war-ravaged soul. No mention of the war is necessary.

Mailer accomplishes nearly the same thing by titling his book with a blunt question and then appearing to avoid it for the length of the entire narrative. “Vietnam” is mentioned only once in the book . . . and on the final page, in the final sentence. It is almost as if the character of D.J. took on a life of his own and steamrolled in whatever direction his voice could take him, and to whatever end. The mention of the word is, in fact, so shocking by the time we hear it that it almost has the feel of authorial intrusion. And Mailer was well aware of the gap that could be created between a strong fictional character living in the text and the author himself. As he wrote in an essay on “Miller and Hemingway”:

[I]f we take *The Sun Also Rises* as the purest example of a book whose protagonist created the precise air of a time and a place, even there we come to the realization that Hemingway at the time he wrote it could not have been equal to Jake Barnes—he had created a consciousness wiser, drier, purer, more classic, more sophisticated and more graceful than his own. He was still gauche in relation to his creation. (*Pieces* 91)

Partly that is because Hemingway, through his narrative personae, was determined not to describe “or depict life—or criticize it—but to actually make it alive. So that . . . you actually experience the thing” (Hemingway, *Ernest* 153). Laura Adams was the first to see a similar technique at work in *Why Are We in Vietnam?*, although she stopped short of drawing the connection to Hemingway in identifying the “radical promise” of Mailer’s novel, which is that the reader will not only receive an adequate account of the way things are in America (“know what it’s all about”), but also experience at the level of sensibility remission from the cultural plague that is “an ultimate disease against which all other diseases are in design to protect us” (Adams 124). Adams concludes, in language that makes us think of Hemingway’s goals, “The radicalized or ‘shamanized’ reader, whose silence has been rewarded, participates in Mailer’s attempt to reintegrate the old, now suppressed, human circuitry with the baneful new” (124). And this happens, as it does in Hemingway, through detailed description and a compelling new narrative voice. As one critic astutely observes, D.J. makes us experience the

narrative more viscerally “through language that is a free and manic association of puns, obscenities, hip slang, jive-talking rhyme, technologese, and mutated psychological jargon” (Wenke 123). D.J.’s voice is such a dominant and constant presence that the very act of listening to him makes us feel as if we are indeed “experiencing” D.J. and his concerns, rather than simply reading about them.

Like Hemingway’s Nick Adams, D.J. is also bursting with existential dread—though for neither young man is it a philosophical position. Rather, it is a near-paralyzing condition that afflicts them both, despite Mailer’s hero being more flippant about it. Hemingway’s young Adams was so shocked after he suddenly “realized that some day he must die. It made him feel quite sick” (Hemingway, “Three Shots” 14). Nick is the first of many Hemingway alter egos who experiences the pangs of existential dread, which Jake Barnes succinctly summarized: “It is awfully easy to be hard-boiled about everything in the daytime, but at night it is another thing” (*Sun* 34). D. J., meanwhile, is “up tight with the concept of dread”:

ever read *The Concept of Dread* by Fyodor Kierkegaard? No, well neither has D.J. but now he wants to know how many of you assholes even knew, forgive me, Good Lord, that Fyodor Kierkegaard has a real name, *Sören Kierkegaard*. Contemplate that. You ass. (Mailer, *Why Are We in Vietnam?* 34)

D.J. too has a moment in which he recognizes his mortality, and “D.J. breathes death—first time in his life—and the sides of the trail slam onto his heart like the jaws of a vise . . . like attack of vertigo when stepping into dark and smelling pig shit, that’s what death smells to him” (136). With Harry, Hemingway’s dying hero from “Snows of Kilimanjaro,” he sensed death’s presence and “he could smell its breath” (Hemingway, “Snows” 54). But of all the things that D.J. and the Hemingway heroes share in common, it’s an ostensible cure for dread—a moral code for doing things precisely and with passion—that gives them a sense of importance as well as being, and offers both respite from those dread-full nights and the courage to confront the possibility of death by day.

As Barry Leeds notes, “The story of the hunting trip embodies certain mythic elements (notably the initiation into manhood of D.J. and Tex) and proceeds along a line of progressively more crucial conflicts between man

and nature” (181). But the conflicts also manifest themselves as an alpha male competition and a clash of values over the right and wrong ways of doing things—what Hemingway dubbed “*aficion*” in *The Sun Also Rises*: “*Aficion* means passion. An *aficionado* is one who is passionate about the bullfights. All the good bull-fighters stayed at Montoya’s hotel; that is, those with *aficion* stayed there. The commercial bull-fighters stayed once, perhaps, and then did not come back” (131). In *The Sun Also Rises*, *aficion* is linked to bullfighting, but Hemingway scholars have extended the term to apply to the Hemingway code hero and code aspirant who live according to principles that elevate them above others. As Robert Penn Warren observes,

Hemingway’s characters are usually tough men, experienced in the hard worlds they inhabit, and not obviously given to emotional display or sensitive shrinking. . . . His heroes are not squealers, welchers, compromisers, or cowards. . . . They represent some notion of a code, some notion of honor, that makes a man a man, and that distinguishes him from people who merely follow their random impulses and who are, by consequence, “messy.” (79)

For the Hemingway hero, this meant high standards and an equally high skill level, whether it is keeping his lines “straighter than anyone” as Santiago did in *The Old Man and the Sea* (Hemingway 32), or knowing “how to blow any sort of bridge that you could name,” as with Robert Jordan in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (4). And in the matter of hunting, it means precise, accurate shots that make for clean and humane kills.

Someone familiar with Hemingway will find it difficult to read *Why We Are in Vietnam?* without thinking of *Green Hills of Africa*, Hemingway’s fictionalized account of his much-anticipated 1934 safari with his wife, Pauline, and Key West best-friend Charles Thompson—a safari which, according to biographer Michael Reynolds, “degenerated badly,” turning into an alpha-male contest of measurements between Hemingway and Thompson (162–65). But more than that, it was a contrast between Poppa’s (Hemingway’s) *aficion* and Karl’s (Thompson’s) apparent indifference to or ignorance of the higher values.

Poppa’s values are established early in the novel. In addition to insisting that guns be kept clean and in perfect working order and becoming angry if they’re not (Hemingway, *Green* 146), he also has a keen sense of the “rules” of

hunting. “God damn them,” he says of Karl and his guides and bearers. “What the hell did he have to blow that [salt] lick to hell for the first morning and gut-shoot a lousy bull and chase him all over the son-of-a-bitching-country spooking it to holy bloody hell”—too much shooting at the wrong place, which spoils the hunting for miles, and then a bad shot that makes the animal suffer (148). D.J. has a similar reaction when he watches his friend squeeze off a bad shot on a wolf: “Tex took him down with a shot into the gut and at first he could have been there dead, the animal fell and for an instant the hills clapped together” and “D.J. was on with the blood, he was half-sick having watched what Tex had done, like his own girl had been fucked in front of him and better, since he had had private plans to show Tex what real shooting might be” (Mailer, *Why Are We in Vietnam?* 68–69). Hunting is linked to manhood in both Hemingway’s and Mailer’s novels, and though “Rusty’s got cunt in him” (120), D.J. is “the only one not to shoot at the female grizzer” (121).

In *Green Hills*, Poppa’s superior skills and knowledge are demonstrated later, when he insists on going after kudu at dusk, leaving the guide who insisted, “Hunt tomorrow” (Hemingway 164). Then, confronting the kudu he knew would be there, Poppa “saw the bead centered exactly where it should be just below the top of the shoulder and squeezed off” (165). And when he thought it ran off into the forest they pursued and he shot again, only to realize that he had felled the first one with a clean shot and a second one as well, he was even more ecstatic that he hadn’t just wounded the first animal. Both had trophy racks, and there was much elation . . . until they got back to camp and saw that Karl had somehow bagged a bigger one (205). The hunt was pure competition, not recreation, and that’s the way the hunting trip plays out in Mailer’s novel.

Like Pop, the Great White Hunter in *Green Hills*, and Wilson in “The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber,” Big Luke is the big expert on hunting in his particular stretch of wilderness, and his derision or validation of those who hire his services somehow matters. It does to D.J., who himself has already pronounced similar judgment on the “medium-grade and high-grade asshole” (Mailer, *Why Are We in Vietnam?* 50) that compete in his corporate culture. Even Rusty, the corporate “father” as well as D.J.’s, is in it hoping to bag a big-enough bear for Big Luke to say that he got off “a fair shot” (51)—just a little show of approval, which is all, one suspects, that D.J. ever wanted from his father.

The closest D.J. comes to that approval is when he and Rusty break off from the rest of the group as Hemingway's hero did—"Son, let's split from Luke the Fink cause he ain't going to get your ass or mine near a grizzer" (123). Alone and apart from the main competition, they become "real good, man, tight as combat buddies" (128). Rusty tells D.J. how much he learned about hunting from his father and passes on this bit of advice, which ironically D.J. already knows: "the only time a good man with a good rifle is in trouble is when he steps from sunlight into shadow, cause there's two or three seconds when you can't see" (132). Together they decide to let an old caribou pass without shooting at him and stick to the grizzly they're trying to bag—and the bear, which is "about as frightening as a stone-black seven-foot three-hundred-pound Nigger," (135) provides D.J.'s chance to shine, perhaps because he knows how a "bear" of this metaphorical nature thinks, him being a "black-ass cripple Spade" from Harlem, and all (208). In the matter of black culture, white noise, and an elevated form of hunting that respects nature, D.J. has *aficion*. There are "those who know and those who do not know when a very bad grizz is near to you (a final division of humanity) and D.J. knew, and D.J. was in love with himself because he did not wish to scream or plead, he just wished to encounter Mr. D., big-ass grizz" (140).

When a grizzly bear charges them and both men fire, wounding it, their disparate level of *aficion* is also made clear. Rusty's impulse is to blame the absent guide for "sticking us around the chimney" (142). D.J. is more tuned in to nature and the dynamics of the natural world, and he realizes that "no man cell in him can now forget that if the center of things is insane, it is insane with force" (143). Although Rusty is hesitant to pursue the wounded grizzly into thick brush, as Francis Macomber was reluctant to pursue the lion early in "The Short Happy Life," D.J.'s self-encouragement—"That's it"—echoes what Wilson told Macomber who seemed suddenly cheerful and determined to face the lion. "After all, what can they do to you?" Macomber says, and Wilson responds, "That's it. . . . Worst one can do is kill you" (Hemingway, "Short Happy" 25). D.J. would rather face God than "look into the contempt and contumely of that State of Texas personified by Gottfried Tex Hyde Jr." (Mailer, *Why Are We in Vietnam?* 143).

Another interesting Hemingway-Mailer crossover occurs when both men shoot at the grizzly and only D.J. has the nerve to walk close to make sure he's dead. Yet, Rusty ("wetting his pants, doubtless") takes credit for the kill shot, ultimately choosing the respect of the other hunters over the respect of his

son, none of which is lost on D.J. After the grizzly is felled by both men shooting and Rusty takes the credit, he forever alienates his son: "Final end of love of one son for one father" (147). That is different from a similar scene in *Green Hills* in which Poor Old Mama and Poppa shoot at a lion, and while the "killing of the lion had been confused and unsatisfactory," Poppa nonetheless gives the credit to his wife, even after seeing that the bullet dug out of the animal came from his gun (Hemingway 36–37). As Foster notes,

D.J. breaks spiritually with his father when, out of habits of competitive vanity and self-justification, his father claims the grizzly bear that D.J. has mortally wounded, violating not only the father-son bond as reinforced by the hunt (stalking their dangerous quarry D.J. sees himself and his father as 'war buddies') but also the sacred blood bond between killer and prey. (20)

Would D.J. have gone off to war a different man had his father given him the credit?

Mailer says in the introduction to *Why Are We in Vietnam?* that he had intended to write about a murderous Charles Manson-style clan in Provincetown, but began with a chapter on hunting bear in Alaska as "a prelude," with the boys "still young, still mean rather than uncontrollably murderous" so that "the hunting might serve as a bridge to get them ready for more" (Mailer, *Pieces* 10). As Foster summarizes,

High on pot, the prose of the Marquis de Sade and William Burroughs, and the cheerfully psychotic inspiration that he may be the voice of a 'Harlem spade' imprisoned in the body of the son of a white Dallas tycoon, he tells the story of how he got that way. It is an initiation story (new style) as *An American Dream* was a new-style story of sacrifice and redemption. (19–20)

How D.J. got that way explains how America got where it is, and why, by novel's end, a boy who has enough aficion to know right from wrong in the matter of hunting etiquette seems suddenly hot to board that plane for "Vietnam, hot damn" (Mailer, *Why Are We in Vietnam?* 208). Unless, of course, he is the voice of an ironist who asks which is worse, Harlem guiding Dallas or vice versa? The Hipster or the Redneck?

Ultimately, it is Mailer and D.J.'s adoption of the Hipster mind-set and way of talking that sets them apart from others, even more so than the hunter's code of honor. And being an insider—someone who knows what the outside world can only imagine—is perhaps the most crucial element of *aficion*, as Hemingway detailed it. "Jake achieves prominence in the group because he is the aficionado," Linda Wagner-Martin observes. And with Barnes as narrator (*The Sun Also Rises*), "Hemingway tries to use that mocking, quasi-humorous tone that he chooses for his *Esquire* columns during the 1930s, for *Green Hills of Africa*, and for some of his stories" (10). In *The Sun Also Rises*, the Pamplona hotel owner who has *aficion* and who boards bull-fighters that share his *aficion*, puts his hand on Jake Barnes' shoulder and smiles. Jake writes,

He always smiled as though bull-fighting were a very special secret between the two of us; a rather shocking but really very deep secret that we knew about. He always smiled as though there were something lewd about the secret to outsiders, but that it was something that we understood. It would not do to expose it to people who would not understand. (Hemingway, *Sun* 131)

Likewise, in *Green Hills of Africa*, Poppa's prowess and hunting *aficion* earns him a special tribal handshake "using the thumb which evidently denoted extreme emotion" (Hemingway 167); later, he asks what it means, and Pop explains, "It's on the order of blood brotherhood but a little less formal," and quips, "You're getting to be a hell of a fellow" when he hears that the Massai have accepted Poppa into their circle (206).

"Hip makes for a livelier vocabulary, a more stylish way of carrying oneself, more and better orgasms," writes one critic (Dupee 101). The Hipster, which D.J. embraces, is a culture whose Mandarin language is understood only by members of an exclusive group, the same as with Hemingway's heroes. "The Hipster is, of course, only one of many possible realizations of the 'new consciousness' of which Mailer is the prophet," Foster concludes (26); and prophets are always insiders. By the end of *Why Are We in Vietnam?* it has become clear that D.J. is indeed an insider with a unique and prophetic voice. He's also a true aficionado. But the disturbing question (and the force behind what power the novel possesses) is, as Mailer was fully

aware, of *what*? More and better orgasms? As Hemingway's war-wounded hero quips at the end of *The Sun Also Rises*, "Isn't it pretty to think so?" (247).

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