

AUTHORSHIP AND ALIENATION IN
DEATH IN THE AFTERNOON AND
ADVERTISEMENTS FOR MYSELF

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In 1930, still smarting from compromises required of him by the publishing industry, Ernest Hemingway received a letter from an editor and pulled the “emergency stop” cord on the speeding train of his career. Crumpling the letter in his fist, he stepped out of the car and onto the platform of non-fiction; he stood there, in this empty page of a place, his eyes focused in the distance as though there he saw the Spanish bullfights he had long wanted to capture in words. But a shadow passed between his eyes and his object—a Hemingway-shaped shadow, both him and not him, through which he could not see clearly.

He admitted the shadow to his work, naming it “Author,” as if a separate identity might contain and isolate it, trying to preserve the kind of clarity on which he had earned his reputation as a writer. He tied it up neatly and stuffed it into Hell, leaving its figure slumped, presumed dead, on the platform behind him.

The train changed course for Purgatory.

In 1959, Norman Mailer, in whose baggage rested eight rejection letters for his last novel, alighted at the same station, and the same shadow greeted him or perhaps alighted with him. He already knew its name; he had used it well enough. He could no more shake it than Hemingway before him. He challenged it to debate, or perhaps a boxing match—perhaps, maybe later, to a bullfight.

The course changed again.

AS TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICAN WRITERS, Ernest Hemingway and Norman Mailer each strove to achieve lasting success and power as novelists, two of

their most revealing and thus interesting works in no way qualify as novels. These works, *Death in the Afternoon* (1932) and *Advertisements for Myself* (1959), occur at almost precisely the same point in their careers—after initial critical success for quasi-autobiographical war novels, after the consequent achievement of celebrity, and after a major disappointment when that celebrity alone was not enough to overcome the restrictive vicissitudes of their respective moments in publishing culture. Although their disappointments differed in degree—Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* was published with missing profanity and an enforced blurring of the direct, explicit prose that he preferred (Brucoli and Trogdon 119). Mailer's *The Deer Park* was rejected by eight publishing houses before a ninth (Putnam) picked it up solely because he was Norman Mailer (Mailer, *Advertisements* 230–231) and with their next full-length books, both writers took urgent stances against the capitalist imposition of the social, implicitly performative role of “authorship” over and against their shared goals as writers who sought to capture truth in language as a prerequisite to presenting their works publicly.

Their stances in response to the writer/author alienation would initially differ thus: Hemingway saw this alienation as a paradox and sought to eliminate it through force of will and pedantry. Mailer, having learned from Hemingway (and writing not as a Modernist but Postmodernist), embraced the paradox and gave it center stage. Neither approach solved or could resolve the problems faced by the creative writer who must by definition become public property once he or she achieves publication, let alone critical or popular success. Consciousness of this problem and their ensuing struggles with it, expressed in *Death in the Afternoon* and *Advertisements for Myself*, seems to have prevented both Hemingway and Mailer from publishing a fully-formed novel for a decade (Hemingway's *To Have and Have Not* [1938] was initially two long short stories, which he lumped together and published as a “novel” to quiet his critics). Their future success as novelists (which would in both cases be uneven) would depend for the remainder of their careers on how successfully each negotiated the inescapable alienation of writer from author that was intrinsic to mid-twentieth-century American authorship.

What is most curious is that both writers sought to address the question of authorship in such structurally complex, generically ambivalent works—so curious that the complexity and ambivalence themselves require critical scrutiny. Neither *Death in the Afternoon* nor *Advertisements for Myself* fit

neatly into any particular generic category. Both can be described as “non-fiction,” although that classification is at best reductive. They are problematic, difficult-to-classify works whose generic hybridity is intrinsic to their internal and external logics; in both cases, though, that fundamental pertinence defies ready legibility.

Both works include multiple genres. *Death in the Afternoon* presents readers with non-fiction reporting (on bullfighting), non-fiction self-reflection (on writing), short fiction (told by a character named “Author” to a character named “Old Lady”), dramatic dialogue (which reveals the drama as a morality play), and literary criticism (a pugilistic response to a critical piece by Aldous Huxley). All of the genres in *Death in the Afternoon*, save the non-fiction, occur within the frame of the Author/Old Lady dialogues. *Advertisements for Myself* includes both new and previously published material in the forms of non-fiction essays, polemics, poetry, a play, excerpts of fictional works-in-progress (and abandoned works), a facsimile of an advertisement (placed by Mailer himself in *The Village Voice*), and meditations and musings on all of the above plus the thousand or so other things that attracted Mailer’s attention during the writing and made it into the words.

Both works thus appear to be generic train-wrecks, the cacophony of a once-single voice and genre fractured and turned against itself by competing, unrelenting, and mutually exclusive internal and professional expectations. The cacophony was too great, the fracturing of their structural lenses too kaleidoscopic for either writer to produce a full-length novel for years.

On May 2, 1930, *Forum* editor Henry Goddard Leach approached Ernest Hemingway, requesting a celebrity statement on life, the universe, and everything: “To put it briefly, what we want from you is a statement of your personal credo, your convictions and beliefs concerning the nature of the world and of man . . . it would have to touch intimately on your own hopes and fears, the mainspring of your faith or the promptings of your despair.” In exchange, Leach offered the author of *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms*—and future Nobel prize-winner—\$500.

Hemingway was furious. He already had held Leach in contempt for the latter’s 1929 request for a short story of “about two-thousand words,” which Leach condescendingly reminded him must contain “narrative, or at least plot.” Hemingway’s response in 1929 had been to scribble angrily in the margins of stories in progress several pointed responses, including a never used story collection title, *Unsuited to Our Needs*. In 1930, his response to the more

fawning (but still condescending) editor was more subtle and more public and its effects far longer-reaching. It would play out in the first third of *Death in the Afternoon* in the form of a series of nine dialogues between an Author, who emerges out of the voice of the first-person narrator but is distinguished by the labeling conventions of dramatic dialogue, and an Old Lady. Unfortunately for the book's reception and thus for Hemingway's reputation, the only one who understood the purpose of the dialogues was Hemingway (and perhaps, much later, Norman Mailer, whose discussion of the problems of authorship refers readers to *Death in the Afternoon* in the first three pages of *Advertisements for Myself*).

Hemingway had long wanted to write "the bullfighting book." He first mentions the idea in his first letter to Maxwell Perkins, written when he was entering into contract with Boni & Liveright for his 1925 collection *In Our Time*. (By 1926, he would switch allegiance to Perkins's house, Charles Scribner's Sons, with *Torrents of Spring* and *The Sun Also Rises*.) After three of his first four books met with critical acclaim (*Torrents* was universally considered negligible, a brutish and immature attack on former mentor Sherwood Anderson), he felt he finally had the professional cachet to write the non-fiction book on bullfighting.

No one knows whether Leach's letter interrupted Hemingway's actual writing or merely his preliminary thinking about his next book. Although Hemingway establishes on the first page of *Death in the Afternoon* that this so-conceived "bullfighting book" will be as much about writing and authorship as bullfighting (the analogy is thoroughly developed throughout the book, hinging on the similarities in the economic, institutional and cultural mechanisms by which any art form is produced for a paying public), the first several chapters merely introduce the milieu, the spectacle, and its value to the writer, who tries in the night to remember which amongst thousands of details results in a feeling—for it is by strict focus on and adherence to such details, the narrator believes, a writer can convey real feeling and avoid cheap tricks and sentiment. The detail is the contrast between a gored matador's thighbone and his dirty underwear (20). Mailer would approve.

For the first six chapters, *Death in the Afternoon* promises to unfold as the observations of a writer (the narrative "I") engaging with the culture, history, form, and presentation of the Spanish bullfight and, by extension, the character of the Spanish nation and people. Even had Hemingway not delivered something far more difficult, problematic, and admittedly obscure,

the reading public (expecting something more in line with his war novels and Nick Adams stories) would have been surprised by this strange departure from fiction by the already restrictively codified “Ernest Hemingway.” Mailer mentions his own experience with such codification—one of many aspects of authorship—and how it can intrude into and contaminate the space of writing in *The Spooky Art*, when he reflects on this very intrusion:

“Sometimes, you can tell in advance you’re headed for trouble. Obviously, with a book about ancient Egypt, everyone would have been happier if some unknown author had written it. There might have been then a lively curiosity about the author. Who is this unknown and most curious talent? One hurdle I had to overcome with *Ancient Evenings* was knowing in advance that a lot of people would pick it up and spend the first fifty pages saying, ‘What is Norman Mailer up to?’” (qtd. in Mailer, *Spooky* 54).

Hemingway, spurred on by Leach’s insulting request as well as Aldous Huxley’s derogatory critique of him as uneducated and boorish (“Foreheads Villainous Low”), twisted his book into something more, which critics felt rendered it less: a tangential descent into a wildly allusive and allegorical discussion of the problems with art production, specifically the distraction and alienation forced on a working writer who must function as author (a discursive role as well as an object for consumption) before an obtuse and increasingly hostile public. This discussion takes the form of nine Dantean dialogues between an Author who, if you distinguish him from the narrator and from Hemingway at all (which initial reviewers, with the exception of Malcolm Cowley, did not) seems to come out of nowhere in order to ridicule and verbally abuse a prudish and hypocritical Old Lady, who emerges out of an imagined “crowd” to become, temporarily, a character, who allegorically stands for “the public.” The dialogues intrude seemingly at random in the first third of the book, after which they disappear entirely, whereupon Hemingway returns his focus to the writing/bullfighting/art/production conceit for the remainder of the book.

With the sudden intrusion of characters (the Old Lady and the Author her presence creates), the ostensibly non-fiction *Death in the Afternoon* takes on the first of several additional genres: dramatic fiction—more specifically, a morality play in nine acts (or nine circles) in which the Author, in return

for being rendered schizophrenic by the presence of Old Lady, drags her through Hell. The characters are very much mutual and mutually interdependent constructs (without the Old Lady, there is no Author), something else the book's initial critics missed, lacking access to Leach's letter, or perhaps predisposed to agree with Huxley's assessment of Hemingway's lack of education and subtlety.

Death in the Afternoon's nine Author/Old Lady dialogues function as a kind of Greek chorus, as each provides a space for reflection on the non-fiction bullfighting discussion that precedes it. These sections each describe a specific kind of danger to which both art and artist are susceptible within capitalist production; by content and structure these sections echo, with minimal fanfare, the nine circles of Hell from Dante's *Inferno*.

The fanfare is minimal but literal. The entrance of the Old Lady and the descent into hell are heralded by a trumpeter at the end of Chapter 6: "[T]he trumpet sounds and the very serious, white-haired, wide old man, his name is Gabriel, in a sort of burlesque bullfighter's suit . . . unlocks the door of the toril and pulling heavily on it runs backward to expose the low passageway . . ." (Hemingway 61–2). In the next chapters, Hemingway will literally burlesque the Armageddon wrought on art by the capitalist system of production, performing his erudition (in what he will reveal as a direct response to Huxley) by alluding to several dramatic forms and specific dramatic texts, including the morality play (one more burlesque than apostrophic), tragedy, and *Romeo and Juliet* (specifically the line "He jests at scars who never felt a wound"). His purpose, although never more overt than the passing reference to Gabriel and the Café Fornos (from *forno*, Italian for "Hell") (105), is to illustrate that authorship (as opposed to writing) is a burlesque performance, a low-comedy, symptomatic of a system of decay and putrefaction. He invites the careful reader to compare his Author to Dante's Virgil (addressed as "guide," "Master," and "Author" [1.85]) and to thus perceive the analogy and its scathing commentary on the degradation wrought on art and artist by the mechanisms of popular consumption.¹

Although Hemingway lifts the structure of his dialogues from Dante, the specific sins do not map exactly. Most of Hemingway's "sins" correspond directly to those described in *Inferno's* circles, but he orders them differently as required by his own analysis. Once past the "Limbo" of the uncommitted (Chapters 1–6), the narrator states that, "At this point it is necessary that you

see a bullfight" (63), and the Old Lady emerges from the imaginary public "crowd," and they begin their descent through the following circles:

Chapter 7: Decadent Artists (Dante 3: Gluttons)

Chapter 8: The Mean (Dante 4: Misers)

Chapter 9: False Messiahs, including Authors (Dante 6/8: Heretics/Frauds)

Chapter 10: The Lustful (Dante 2: The Carnal)

Chapter 11: Husbands who lead dangerous lives (no correspondence)

Chapter 12: Literary Critics (Dante 5: The Wrathful/Sullen)

Chapter 14: Impresarios, traitors to art (Dante 8/9: Flatterers/Traitors)

Chapter 15: Crimes against nature (Dante 7: The Violent)²

What Hemingway does not say, does not seem to need to say, is that the decadent system of art, artist, and audience is always measurable against a Platonic ideal reality in which the artist performs for the *aficion*. His approach is clever—too clever by half—and pugilistic, rendered palatable only when revealed (à la the man behind the curtain in *The Wizard of Oz*) as a deliberately contemptible construct: "What about the Old Lady? She's gone. We threw her out of the book, finally. A little late, you say. Yes, perhaps a little late . . . Shall we try to raise the general tone? What about higher things?" (190). The "we" in the narrative voice is telling *vis à vis* the contamination of the writer, he who occupies the space of observer and from it crafts his narratives, by the Author, revealed finally as a performance required by the system.

Once again in the voice of the singular, "I," the text responds directly and specifically to Aldous Huxley's accusation that Hemingway was too concerned with "Lower Things" and not nearly well-educated enough to speak as a public authority (190). Countering Huxley's critique, the narrator employs the words "writer" and "writing" twenty-two times in the next two pages as though it offers an antidote to the poison of authorship (191–2). By comparison to the kind of performance required by Huxley and, by extension, the entire economic system of cultural capital, the "importance" the writer locates in the contrast between Domingo Hernandorena's dirty underwear and the "clean, clean, unbearably clean whiteness" of his exposed thighbone is a "higher thing" indeed (20).

The generic complexity of *Death in the Afternoon* reflects that of the multiple roles played by the man, writer, author, authority, and public figure; Hemingway presents the problem of performative authorship in order to

deconstruct it (and to provide a windmill for his initial critics, all of whom turned their lances on it). With the Author unmasked, *Death in the Afternoon* returns to non-fiction prose and remains non-fiction prose until the end. Within the text, at least, the author/writer alienation was resolved; in professional and capitalist practice, however, the problem was irresolvable, and Hemingway would wrestle with it for the remainder of his life.

The structure of Mailer's *Advertisements for Myself* owes nothing to classical literary forms or Western canonical works. Mailer presents his pieces more or less chronologically, asserting his independent authority over his own presentation and performance, his own alienation. Yet its very focus on alienation and concomitant generic hybridity thus seems to owe too much to the shifting terrain of *Death in the Afternoon*, which is lauded in its opening pages. Whether Mailer borrowed consciously or unconsciously from the formal intricacy of Hemingway's work, the correspondence of topic, theme, and structural complexity, combined with the early specific mention of *Death in the Afternoon*, have compelling resonance.

At the time of *Advertisements for Myself*, Mailer was in a very similar career moment to Hemingway at the time of *Death in the Afternoon*. Mailer was slightly older (36; Hemingway was in his early 30s), and he had published three novels to Hemingway's two. But, like Hemingway, he had fought to get his most recent novel into print the way he wanted it. Like Hemingway, Mailer had edited that novel at the behest of his publisher. Unlike Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, which Hemingway and critics alike considered successful, even Mailer found his most recent novel, *The Deer Park*, less than successful. In some ways, *The Deer Park*'s effect on Mailer's reputation was as adverse as *Death in the Afternoon*'s proved for Hemingway's. For purposes of analysis, then, *Advertisements* can be considered analogous not to *Death in the Afternoon* as a whole, but rather to its Author/Old Lady dialogues.

Mailer's overt project in constructing *Advertisements for Myself* was more pointedly novel-oriented than Hemingway's. Whereas Hemingway set out to write a bullfighting book and ended up simultaneously producing both that and a strange appendage on alienation, Mailer states that *Advertisements*' purpose was to confront alienation head-on in order to "clear a ground" for his next novel, which was already underway (*Advertisements* 8).

In the opening paragraph of his "Note to the Reader," which precedes the two Tables of Contents, Mailer overtly distinguishes author and writer. "The author," he says, "taken with an admirable desire to please his readers, has

also added a set of advertisements, printed in italics” (7). In the next sentence, Mailer states that “[l]ike many another literary fraud, the writer has been known on occasion to read the Preface of a book instead of the book” (7). The distinction is subtle and probably instinctive; the role of the author involves production and requires awareness of his reader, whereas the writer is here presented as private consumer. That authorship is a fraught space is evident in Mailer’s ironic comment that he “will take the *dangerous* step of listing what I believe are the best pieces . . .” [emphasis added] (7).

Mailer then addresses the book’s structure with an explanation of his decision to provide two Tables of Contents, one chronological, provided for “anyone wishing to read my book from beginning to end,” and a second, organized by genre, “to satisfy the specialist” (7). That he considers formal decisions authorial, as opposed to writerly, is implicit in his overt conscious awareness of audience. It is thus not exceptional that a book concerned primarily with authorship reflects that concern in its structural form, and it therefore follows that its fractured structure reflects the shifting, multiple, and sometimes contradictory roles played by one man who is writer, author, authority (if only on himself), and celebrity. Further, as Mailer assigns interest in genre to “the specialist” (to whom he “offers” the second table of contents), his thinking implicitly extends alienation throughout other capitalistic roles—the “specialist,” or professional reader, will necessarily be always/already alienated from the text by virtue of its implication in their own labor. Mailer the professional writer thus extends a token of solidarity to the professional reader—that token being an acknowledgment that professionals must not relinquish awareness of hierarchies and protocols in the performance of their work, even when that work brings in a supposedly private space of consumption. Mailer’s conceptual thinking analogizes thus:

writer:author::reader:specialist
and
writer:reader::author:specialist

Further, Mailer implies that that the power of the author over the reader is distinctly unequal to the power of the author over the specialist, who asserts a different kind of ownership over the text, one necessarily implicated within capitalist production. Both general and professional readers are consumers, but the consumption that is leisure to one is labor to the other.

Mailer's seven "Advertisement for Myself" sections function analogously to Hemingway's Author/Old Lady dialogues, but whereas Hemingway burlesques qualities of readers into a character, Mailer's approach is more direct. Speaking as author, he addresses the reader throughout as "you" (as Hemingway does just prior to the entrance of the Old Lady and Author and immediately after their unceremonious *exeunt*). Perceiving Mailer's project thus does not require the mental acrobatics whereby one watches Hemingway's Author judge quick and dead readers. The Harvard-educated Mailer, having other things to prove, simply tells the reader in his "specialist" table of contents that his "advertisements" comprise the "Biography of a Style" (15). Mailer's author is the author; Mailer acknowledges that his readers can and will decide their own roles for themselves.

This acknowledgment, however, renders Mailer's experience of authorship no less performative nor any less alienating than Hemingway's. His "First Advertisement for Myself," a lengthy if perhaps not entirely self-conscious response to Hemingway generally and *Death in the Afternoon* in particular, establishes alienation as intrinsic to the writer/author distinction on its opening page:

There was a time when Pirandello could tease a comedy of pain out of six characters in search of an author, but that is only a whiff of purgatory next to the yaws of conscience a writer learns to feel when he sets his mirrors face to face and begins to jiggle his Self for a style which will have some relation to him. (17)

Mailer develops this point by describing his struggle with Hemingway and Hemingway's struggle with himself, concluding that he has come "to have a great sympathy for The Master's irrepressible tantrum that he is the champion writer of this time" because to be any less "is tiring, much too tiring" (19).

Despite Mailer's apparently visceral understanding of the struggle Hemingway dramatized in *Death in the Afternoon*, he, like Hemingway's initial critics, seems to have missed the Dantean lens through which Hemingway refracts that struggle: "Hemingway has always been afraid to think, afraid of losing even a little popularity" (20). (This is especially ironic given that Hemingway's popularity took a nose-dive *because* he thought.) Mailer does provide a caveat, giving "credit to the man, he's known the value of his own

work, and he fought to make his personality enrich his books,” especially in *A Farewell to Arms* and *Death in the Afternoon*, both of which are exemplary of how “[a]n author’s personality can help or hurt the attention readers give to his books” (21).

Mailer’s preliminary conclusion regarding the problem of alienation is, again ironically, that “[t]he way to save your work and reach more readers is to advertise yourself, steal your own favorite page out of Hemingway’s unwritten *Notes From Papa On How The Working Novelist Can Get Ahead*” (21). Seemingly unaware of the problem that those “unwritten” notes are implicit in *Death in the Afternoon*’s Author/Old Lady dialogues (and the consequent problem that those dialogues had the opposite of their intended effect), Mailer indulges in some gymnastic contortions of his own. Despite the fact that the “First Advertisement” does “steal” that page (topically and thematically, however un-self-consciously), and despite the fact that Mailer states how unsuited he is to that sort of self-advertisement, both happen within exactly that sort of advertisement in the service of that sort of advertisement.

It seems evident that Mailer missed at least the “thinking” part that structured Hemingway’s burlesque according to Dante’s circles of Hell, yet one page further finds Mailer listing his own “sinners” or “criminals,” which map as neatly onto Hemingway’s as Hemingway’s do onto Dante’s: “I must get better at overriding the indifference which comes from the snobs, arbiters, managers and conforming maniacs who manipulate most of the world of letters” (22). Mailer further defines his struggle as wanting to “write so well and so strongly as to call my shot, but unfortunately I may have fatigued the earth of rich language beyond repair” (22). Writing “so well and so strongly” was the ambition of both writers. Both discovered they could not call their shots (Hemingway in publishing *A Farewell to Arms* and after publishing *Death in the Afternoon*; Mailer in trying to publish *The Deer Park*). Both writers acknowledged the contamination and depletion of their central resource, language (Hemingway’s Author addresses this equally overtly, warning that “all our words from loose using have lost their edge” [71]). The six and a half declarative pages of Mailer’s First Advertisement thus provide an eerie echo of all nine Hemingway dialogues in both generalities (content) and specifics (language)—in the thirty years between their publication, nothing about authorial alienation had changed.

Mailer’s identification of the stakes of the struggle against this alienation in his “Second Advertisement” echoes the pre-dialogue “unbearably clean”

moment in *Death in the Afternoon*. In this “Second Advertisement,” Mailer recounts two experiences: the writing of and the alienation resulting from the success of *The Naked and the Dead* (91). He situates his subject position during its writing as one of forever lost innocence in which writing was a space of “humility” and incredible creative fluidity in which he could “write twenty-five pages of first draft a week” (91), feeling all the while that “it seems to be at dead center” (92). Its success had the lasting effect of catapulting him abruptly into a role for which he was unprepared: “Naturally, I was blasted a considerable distance away from dead center by the size of its success . . . My farewell to an average man’s experience (which he had needed to write the novel to begin with) was too abrupt,” and “I had been moved from the audience to the stage—I was, on the instant, a man—I could arouse more emotion in others than they could arouse in me” (92). Like Hemingway’s writer sitting in the stands, witnessing Hernandorena’s goring, Mailer figures the writer’s role as one of audience member; like Hemingway’s Author in his dramatic dialogue, Mailer figures authorship as a performative role that necessarily alienates author from writer by virtue of relative exposure to the raw materials of writing and the process of production. Both Hemingway and Mailer place tremendous value on the kind of clarity that being “in the audience” allows. But whereas in Hemingway’s time, the illusion remained that struggle could result in victory, by Mailer’s, that illusion had been shattered, at least for Mailer.

The analog to Hemingway’s response to Huxley may be found in Mailer’s “Third Advertisement,” in which he discusses the mostly negative reviews for his second novel, *Barbary Shore* (105–107). The “Fourth Advertisement,” which recounts in substantial detail his experience trying to publish *The Deer Park*, goes beyond the limits of *Death in the Afternoon* and serves as the central scene in which readers are finally shown, not told, what it means to be an author.

The “Fourth Advertisement” stands as the pivotal act in Mailer’s *Advertisements*, the act that elevates the collection from a “great wreck” and “rag-tag collection” (Castronovo 179) to a narrative that has its own intrinsic drama, identified by David Castronovo as the “symbolic tale of one tormented consciousness trying to stay alive” (180). Although Mailer’s use of dramatic form is never as overt as Hemingway’s, he too was a product of highly canon-centric literary exposure, and despite his anticipation of full-blown Postmodernism, he remained subjugated to his innate internalization

of classical Western literary form, in which the physical center of any narrative contains the pivot moment: the moment at which things that were previously only possible become either inevitable or impossible.³

On the surface, the “Fourth Advertisement” presents in explicit detail the problems Mailer had selling—not writing, selling—*The Deer Park*. From an original editorial objection to six words stems an epic exposition of the underbelly of mid-century American publishing that encompasses eight major publishing houses, censorship, broken contracts, and the reverberations of that conflict back into the once-private space of writing in which Mailer experiences an epiphany regarding what is wrong with his novel to begin with—that it takes place in the wrong voice, the wrong tone—resulting in a complete rewrite in which those six words, once so important as to break a relationship with a publisher, ended up changed anyway—but in the service of art.

The voice in which Mailer recounts this quietly ironic drama is thus the most gentle, most wry, most humble of any of his multiple voices that appear in *Advertisement for Myself*, for it is in this Advertisement that the reader sees Mailer see the dirty underwear of mid-twentieth century American publishing, and his own implication within it, in stark, revealing contrast to the clean, clean, unbearably clean whiteness of his own commitment to his art. Whatever else one can say about Mailer or Hemingway—and there is much, and much of it not complimentary—the impact of such moments is what elevates words on a page to something more, something that one might imagine can, however briefly, transcend the process of publishing and render its endemic alienation invisible. That it will return is inevitable, but such moments reveal why both men persisted in their struggle.

At least partially because of the way the profession of authorship worked in the American Twentieth Century, both men hit a point in their careers where they realized that they had surrendered a kind of control over their perceptions and voices, and they both struggled with it—with similar formal havoc resulting from that struggle. It is in the very superficiality of their similarities that *Death in the Afternoon* and *Advertisements for Myself* reveal that they share one profound identity. Despite differing aesthetics and denotative purposes, in these works, both men say, “Wait”; both men say, “No” before giving the lie to their absolutes and saying, “Yes” by publishing these works at all. Both imperative and absolute are revealed by their respective structural forms, and this point serves as well as any as a place to understand

Hemingway and Mailer as writers, as authors, as public figures, and as creative individuals. *Death in the Afternoon* and *Advertisements for Myself* are many things, but chief amongst them is this: both are way points of self-definition in a necessarily doomed struggle in which both self-styled heroes nonetheless conclude, “It matters.”

NOTES

1. The specifics of how, why, and to what effect Hemingway constructs this allegory are presented in full in Justice, “A Pilgrim’s Progress into Hell: *Death in the Afternoon* and the Problem of Authorship” in *The Bones of the Others*, 92–118.
2. There is no dialogue in chapter 13; for an expanded table of correspondence, see Justice, 105.
3. This is perhaps most evident in Shakespeare’s plays, usually occurring in III.ii, and subsequent literary works pre-dating Modernism (Dickens’ *Bleak House* contains a striking meta-example; its central pivot occurs in iambic pentameter), but the phenomenon is hegemonic and not limited to literary prose writing. Bullfights and symphonies work on the same sort of narrative arc.

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