

MELANCHOLY MODERNISM:  
GENDER AND THE POLITICS  
OF MOURNING IN  
*THE SUN ALSO RISES*

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THE RECENT TURN TOWARD GENDER ISSUES in Hemingway studies has made the author exciting and pressingly urgent once more.<sup>1</sup> This work has freed us from the myth of Hemingway as “He-Man of American literature”;<sup>2</sup> it has made it possible to see in his writing more than the stylistic and representational embodiment of invulnerable manhood—a masculinity courageously asserting itself in the face of unmaning and life-threatening dangers. Instead, we have become attuned to the cracks in Hemingway’s masculine armor. We have learned that manhood was for him a fraught and always fragile aspiration rather than an accomplished fact. For many of us, this has meant that what seems most moving in Hemingway now is his persistent struggle, against enormous psychic odds, to resist his ossification into a man whose gynophobic self-loathing leads him to despise all feminine “softness”—both within and without him.

My essay contributes to an understanding of this struggle in several related ways. I argue that *The Sun Also Rises* records the battle with special intensity; it stages Hemingway’s conflict between an autonomous and invulnerable masculinity on one hand, and an emotionally expressive and connected one on the other—a battle he resolves through the fetishization of style. This conflict is linked to the larger problem of loss in the novel. My broadest contention is that this loss records an external crisis that was not simply personal but social in character. I want, accordingly, to start by describing the social origins of the loss inscribed by the novel as Jake’s wound,

before moving on to theorize Hemingway's response to this loss, to link this response to American modernism more generally, and to offer a reading of *The Sun Also Rises* within the context thus elaborated.

The loss in question resulted from the crisis in masculinity that took place in the United States at the turn of the last century. Sociologist Michael Kimmel has chronicled this crisis with particular acuity. He suggests that the period from 1890 to 1920 witnessed the decline of a style of manhood by which men proved themselves as men in the volatile space of the market; to do so, they had to exert an almost obsessive control over the vagaries of their bodies, but could in the process wrestle a degree of autonomy, self-mastery, and power. According to Kimmel, the explosive spread of monopoly capitalism undermined this style of manhood. The opportunities for self-making afforded by small-scale capitalism began to disappear; men became increasingly reduced to parts in a bureaucratic machine, unable to achieve the sense of autonomy so central to the meaning of manhood they inherited. This transformation went hand in hand with challenges by women and ethnic minorities to middle-class male social power. And it gave rise to a widespread panic about the feminizing effects of modern urban living—a panic about the “feminization of American culture” produced by the shifts I’ve described. The result, according to Kimmel, was an intense nostalgia for the rugged autonomy—the physical potency and virile self-mastery—being eclipsed by structural transformations in American life (81–188).

American modernism, at least in one of its most dominant strands, represents a relatively cohesive set of expressive responses to this crisis. Modernists as diverse as Eliot, Cather, Fitzgerald, Faulkner, and Hemingway responded to the loss of autonomous manhood in a melancholic manner. That is, they were unable to mourn or fully “work through” the loss, in part because of the nature of their attachment to the masculinity whose loss they lamented—an attachment that the psychoanalytic distinction between mourning and melancholia can help us describe.

The distinction was first proposed by Freud in “Mourning and Melancholia,” whose title names two ways of responding to personal or social loss. Mourning is the process of a healthy grieving. In it, the person experiencing loss comes gradually to relinquish his or her attachment to the lost object, and so to accept the necessity of remedial substitution: the need to displace desire and attachment from the dead onto the living, in the form of “good enough” replacements for what the self has lost. The condition of this capacity to

mourn is a specific kind of object-relatedness. The mourner is able to relinquish lost objects because he or she has experienced them as separate all along. The ego has already come to grips with the painful reality of separateness—the experience of borders and edges, of an interval between “me” and “you,” with all the dangers of loss, abandonment, and betrayal that this entails. Because the other exists in this way as a genuinely external object, its loss can be felt as real and fully integrated by the mourner, without a catastrophic confrontation with the limits to infantile narcissism.

Melancholia, by contrast, is a reaction to loss from within an attachment to objects that does not acknowledge their difference from the self. In one sense, the object here is not an “object” at all, but a kind of narcissistic extension or prolongation of the ego. Freud writes that the melancholic’s “object-choice has been effected on a narcissistic basis, so that the object-cathexis, when obstacles come in its way, can regress to narcissism” (43). In other words, melancholia can result only when the attachment to an object is psychically archaic—when one loves in the other the image of oneself, because one has not learned to experience the other as having an independent existence outside of omnipotent fantasy. The melancholic responds to loss not by gradually relinquishing the dead in the name of substitutes, but, as Freud says, by “regress[ing] to narcissism”: by identifying the self with the other, incorporating the other into the self, and keeping him or her alive as an internally differentiated part of the ego. “The shadow of the object [has fallen] on the ego,” Freud writes (43). Entombing within itself the only “object” it deems worth having, the ego becomes existentially impoverished, unable to open up to new love, structurally inhibited and unresponsive.

The relevance of this process to Hemingway’s biography seems clear. If Carl Eby is right that the author’s masculine anxieties had their root in a failure of individuation—a difficulty in separating himself psychically from the maternal matrix—then Hemingway was perhaps almost clinically narcissistic. He defended himself against the trauma of loss entailed in separation/individuation by refusing to acknowledge the “otherness” of others, tending instead to treat them as narcissistic components of the self. One could in fact, with only slight distortion, rewrite Eby’s thesis about fetishism as one about melancholia. Hemingway sought through fetishistic practice to “ward...off castration anxiety and disavow...the anatomical distinction between the sexes by paradoxically erecting a hypercathected monument to both” (Eby 73). The fetish, in this sense, is a melancholic object, precisely because it

serves as a kind of narcissistic defense against loss, keeping alive a negated fantasy of maternal masculinity, and clinging to an inner image of the (m)other as essentially similar to the male self. The fetish thereby defends against the opening of that space separating self from not-self, masculine from feminine.

One might even speculate that Hemingway's suicide resulted from the failure of this fragile defense. Because fetishism contains a knowledge of the difference and separation it denies, and in Hemingway's case entailed a repeated identification with the fetishized female body (figured most insistently in his work by the tonsorial twinning of heroes and heroines), it's possible that the denial of such difference became increasingly difficult to sustain, and that the unmastered awareness of loss produced an equally unmasterable despair. A fetishist whose talisman loses its magic is, perhaps, a melancholy suicide.

In addition to biographical relevance, melancholia has here a cultural significance. At moments of profound social crisis, the melancholic process can become a general, collective condition, and this is what happened in American modernism's reaction to the loss of masculine authority and potency. It's crucial that this loss entails an ideal rather than a person. For ideals are, in some basic way, cathected narcissistically; they have to do with one's sense of self as much as one's relation to others. They speak to the self's constitution through incorporations of what a culture defines as valuable. The historical loss of a masculine ideal would seem almost inevitably to produce in men a narcissistic injury: a rupture between their actual selves and the exalted image from which history has severed them. The response to such loss would therefore be likely to develop along melancholic lines.

Such an injury *could*, of course, be grieved and fully worked through. But the modernists who interest me did not pursue this opportunity. In response to social trauma, they sought neither to renounce nor to rescue a disappearing ideal of male autonomy and power, but rather to insist on its enormous value and its inevitable loss. These writers pay homage to a type of virility that they argue is at once the best version of manhood *and* something that can no longer be socially incarnated—that cannot withstand the onslaught of a destructive and emasculating modernity. These modernists could be said to remain melancholically fixated on a lost masculine ideal that is fundamentally toxic, and that they themselves show to be unlivable. This fixation makes it impossible to mourn or fully work through their

losses—or to see in those losses an opportunity for reinventing masculinity in a less rigidly constrained, less psychically defensive, and less socially destructive fashion.<sup>3</sup>

## 1

*The Sun Also Rises* offers an especially fruitful illustration of this process. It traces a *doubly* melancholic pattern, staging Hemingway's paralyzing identification with two different, lost, and incompatible forms of manhood, neither of which he is able to relinquish. These forms of manhood are the sentimental and the hard. The loss of each, paradoxically enough, is figured by the phallic wound at the book's center. The novel responds to their loss by celebrating highly fetishized codes of speech and ritualized modes of behavior—*styles*—which seek at once to memorialize and to deny the amputation around which the novel turns.

The war wound clearly stands as the psychic yet physical sign of a lost masculine potency. Precisely because he was once "whole," and precisely because he has lost that wholeness in a war dividing the old world from the new, Jake bears an emblematically modern male consciousness, haunted by the memory of a potency and plenitude it cannot recover. The wound defines him as fundamentally lacking, devoid of authentic substance; it suggests that the thing which once gave content to identity by differentiating men hierarchically from women—the penis—is now both literally and structurally inaccessible. This state of affairs makes it extremely difficult for modern men to *be* men; the wound cuts them off from the anatomical source of their own undoubted virility—a source that, in our cultural imaginary, is the root of male social power as well. It reconfigures masculine identity in terms of a restless and unfulfillable desire, with satisfaction definitively deferred in the absence of an enabling organ. And the wound leads to an experience of love as a kind of "hell on earth" (*SAR* 35), remaking even the city of romance—Paris—as a "pestilential" place (80) where the plague of unfulfillment plays itself out without mercy.

But the wound also carries an opposite meaning: the loss of a genteel, sentimental, and implicitly feminine masculinity. Jake's amputation and his knowledge of its consequences in this sense differentiate him from Robert Cohn, at once a kind of premodern anachronism and a "steer" who doesn't know he's a steer (145–146). The problem with Cohn, in other words, is that he *has not himself been wounded*. There are other characters in the novel of whom

this is literally true—Mike, Bill, and Brett, for example. But they at least “know about” the wound; they have been metaphorically, if not literally, damaged, and have suffered the kind of disillusionment the novel in part approves.

Cohn, in contrast, continues to behave as if a host of values that the wound renders hollow are still in fact live possibilities. Most significantly, he continues to *believe*—that’s what makes him so distasteful and embarrassing to those who at least struggle to believe only in the impossibility of belief. He believes in “Literature” with a capital “L,” substituting books for lived experience (18, 49), comparing Brett at one point to Circe (148), and seeking even to live what he thinks of as the writer’s life of narcissistic unattachment (58). He believes in romance—the romance of faraway and exotic places, romantically described in turgidly romantic prose (17)—as well as the romance of mutually fulfilling love. He believes in outdated notions of chivalry, in a way that leads him to defend his “lady love” (Brett) against the corruption of her own promiscuity (182). And he believes, finally, perhaps above all, in traditional forms of meaningfulness, remaining oblivious to the wound that renders meaning something to be *made*, not inherited. This blindness makes Cohn unable to embrace the casual brutalities of modern sex, to see that his sexual encounter with Brett “didn’t mean anything” (185).

Such a portrayal is clearly meant to convict Cohn of sentimentality. To be both sentimental and a man is to be at least implicitly feminized. So Cohn is caustically said to have been “moulded by the two women who trained him” (52). He’s repeatedly shown to cry when he gets mad (57, 197, 206), to be incapable of drinking with the big boys (152), and to be essentially emasculated by both his evident pining for Brett and his willingness to “take” the verbal punishment dished out by the woman he’s trying to abandon (Frances). Far from guaranteeing his manly success, then, the absence of a wound works to castrate Cohn.<sup>4</sup> The actual loss of a penis, in contrast, functions paradoxically as the sign of real manliness,<sup>5</sup> saving Jake from the related perils of sexual pleasure and affective connections, from the risk of a sentimental softening that would render him, in Hemingway’s eyes, insufficiently “hard,” insufficiently modern—and therefore, insufficiently manly.

The wound thus carries the contradictory burden of two complex histories of loss—the loss of male power and potency on one hand, and the apparently more beneficent rupture with sentimental manhood on the other. This contradiction results from Hemingway’s inability to relinquish either male sentiment *or* male power, an incapacity intimately connected with the

meaning of his modernism. As previous suggested, Hemingway's work responds not just to a personal, but to a social crisis in masculinity. That crisis led many we've come to call modernists to engage in an intense masculinization of artistic production, consolidating the borders between art and not-art along explicitly gendered lines, and rejecting direct expressions of emotion as flabby, artistically unauthentic, insufficiently ironic—in short, feminine.<sup>6</sup> Hemingway of course participated in this modernist cauterization of affect. His style of affective omission and *The Sun's* repeated injunction against talking about “it” are both good examples of this proclivity.

But Hemingway also felt this cauterization as a devastating loss to the capacity for creative living and self-making. He therefore *identified with* the forbidden form of manhood and lovingly internalized a sentimental masculinity, in order to keep alive in secret affective possibilities that could not be openly acknowledged or grieved. This internalized perpetuation of affect accounts for the repeated slide of his fiction into a discourse of sentimental attachment, a slide most notable, in *The Sun Also Rises*, in the case of Pedro Romero.

The bullfighter is clearly meant to stand as a kind of exemplary code hero: he turns the meaningless violence of modern life into meaningful aesthetic spectacle, and does so through a “maximum of exposure” to the dangers of that violence (172). The terms of this conquest are virtually synonymous with Hemingway's own aesthetic practice. There is, to begin with, an expressive rigor inseparable from the grace of its gestural economy. A balletic “smooth[ness],” an absence of “contortions,” and a disinclination toward “waste[d]” motion all produce a “purity of line” that turns the ritualized action of the “show” into an expressive artistic performance. The *aesthetic* character of the bullfight, in other words, results from the matador's objectification of himself in a purely compositional pattern or configuration—a pictorial sequence of organized “lines.” That sequence is rendered meaningful by the physical danger that it courts. “[S]omething that [is] beautiful done close to the bull [is] ridiculous if...done a little way off,” because the condition of compositional beauty—the thing that makes the economy of gestures aesthetically powerful and significant—is the imminent and ceaseless pressure of the matador's literal death. This threat alone redeems Romero's beautiful self-objectifications, turning the bullfight into “something...with a definite end” instead of “a spectacle with unexplained horrors.” The capacity to work always “close to the bull” (171), to dwell as much as possible in the

bull's dangerous "terrain" (217), endows the otherwise "ridiculous" movements with beauty, meaning, and redemptive significance.

The ultimate logic of such a requirement is the physical fusion of man and bull, signaling the bullfighter's formal annihilation into the picture he composes. "Each time [Romero] let the bull pass so close that the man and the bull and the cape that filled and pivoted ahead of the bull were all one sharply etched mass" (221). Or again: "Romero's left hand dropped the muleta over the bull's muzzle to blind him...and for just an instant he and the bull were one.... Then the figure was broken. There was a little jolt as Romero came clear" (222). Frozen within this ecstatic embrace, "etched" together in a figure that crowns the bullfight's pictorial sequence, bull and man become for a moment formally indistinguishable "objects" within the aesthetic totality of the spectacle. This happens, however, precisely at the moment where the matador exerts his greatest subjective agency. The figures fuse as the sword enters—and then the perfect fusion is broken by the opening of a chasm between master and mastered, killer and killed, living subject and dead object. The continued mobility ("jolt") of the man brings the spectacle to a "definite end" by setting him off from the sacrificial stasis of the now-definitively objectified animal. In this way Romero completes his artwork and exits his objective alienation into art—accomplishing both with an heroic gesture that is equal parts artistry and ritualized brutality. Such a feat embodies most fully "grace under pressure": the code hero courts objectifying dangers while transmuting them into sacrificial forms from which his masterfully orchestrating agency ultimately manages to free him.<sup>7</sup>

Such a pattern of action is only *necessary* in the modern world—a world of phallic woundedness where male identity must be made. But Hemingway chooses to locate his hero in a spectacle drawn from *premodern* Spain. Because modernity has been cut off from masculine potency, one must return to the past to discover a manhood that can stave off chaos. Yet such a move risks contaminating Romero with some of the traditional forms of unmanliness the novel wants to reject. It risks, that is, making him resemble Robert Cohn too closely. The bullfighter's love is thus allowed to "mean something" that his status as code hero should prohibit. His romantic yearnings are hopelessly conventional in a way that makes him want to domesticate Brett (246). And his bullfighting is said to give "real emotion" through the "natural" "purity of [its] line," to express not just the "real thing" but the "old thing" that he was born with and no one else can ever learn (171–172)—to

figure, in short, the romantic expressivity that *The Sun Also Rises* elsewhere consigns to a dead past and derides as a sentimental illusion.<sup>8</sup>

The bullfight could thus be said to enact the bind of Hemingway's relation to affect. Neither Romero nor anyone else in the novel is as unsentimental, as un-affected, as something in Hemingway wants to make them. Jake betrays the code of *afición* by essentially pimping Brett to Romero in the name of his sentimental attachment to her. Brett herself requires this pimping because she has "to do something [she] really want[s] to do" (187)—because she retains yearnings for fulfillment that *The Sun Also Rises* elsewhere ridicules.<sup>9</sup> It may even be these sentimental lapses that make the novel appealing to us, saving it from Hemingway's proclivity toward the coldly dehumanized and austere. Without what the book reviles as sentiment, Romero's performance would be pure technique, incapable of eliciting the "real emotion" for which Jake and Hemingway value it. The bullfight itself would come close to embodying a fascist idealization of aestheticized violence. Jake would be little more than a callow and emotionally closed-down adherent of invulnerability. And Brett would be someone so scared of her feelings that she becomes involved only with those she can hurt because she will not risk loving them. What makes these characters likable is that they covertly perpetuate the yearnings they prohibit and revile as sentimental. To mourn this loss—to undo the prohibition—would recover the capacity to *be moved* in a way that need not be disparaged, and so to feel fully vital and alive without inducing a self-humiliation that requires the reflex of emotional deadness and expressive self-paralysis.

## II

But the danger of even this unexpressed affect is apparently danger enough. Hemingway therefore seeks to resuscitate the phallic masculinity whose loss ought to be guaranteed by the fact of Jake's wound. That masculinity is not simply mourned as a lost illusion of the past. Nor is it openly celebrated as an authentic content for modern men—a move forbidden by the modernist redefinition of manhood in relation to lack and loss. Instead, phallic manhood is melancholically idealized *as lost*, enlisted in an endless battle against the longed for disturbance of affect, but only once it has been displaced from a psychic content or meaning to a style. *The Sun Also Rises* celebrates such style, not only by lauding the aesthetically formalizing tendencies of Romero's matadorial technique, but also by insisting repeatedly

on the “how” as against the “what” (“I did not care what it was all about,” says Jake. “All I wanted to know was how to live in it” [152]). The novel celebrates codes of speech and forms of ritualized behavior which compensate for the lack of content or meaning in modern life, while also protecting their adherents from the dangers of unfettered intimacy.

This dual function—compensation and protection—is crucial to the workings of style in the novel. For example, to be a “good drunk” (152) is to cultivate a “style” of drunkenness that avoids excessively emotional outbursts of an affectionate or violent kind, even while courting the alcoholic pressure to *succumb* to emotional expression.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, in the fishing episode, Bill and Jake both acknowledge the wound that ought to undermine at least Jake’s professions of masculine prowess, and set about asserting that prowess by conquering the feminine waters and producing an aesthetic order from their chaos (120–125).<sup>11</sup>

The linguistic style of the novel and of its characters’ speech likewise works to compensate for the emotion it omits yet continues to yearn for. Perhaps the most central example of this strategy is the book’s refusal to specify the nature of Jake’s injury:

Undressing, I looked at myself in the mirror of the big armoire beside the bed.... Of all the ways to be wounded.... I put on my pajamas and got into bed.... I read [*Le Toril*] all the way through, including the Petite Correspondance and the Cornigrams. I blew out the lamp. Perhaps I would be able to sleep.

My head started to work. The old grievance. Well, it was a rotten way to be wounded and flying on a joke front like the Italian. In the Italian hospital...the liaison colonel came to visit me.... I was all bandaged up. But they had told him about it. Then he made that wonderful speech: “You, a foreigner, an Englishman” (any foreigner was an Englishman) “have given more than your life.” What a speech! I would like to have it illuminated to hang in the office. He never laughed. He was putting himself in my place, I guess. “Che mala fortuna! Che mala fortuna!”

...I lay awake thinking and my mind jumping round. Then I couldn’t keep away from it, and I started to think about Brett and all the rest of it went away. I was thinking about Brett and my mind stopped jumping around and started to go in sort of

smooth waves. Then all of a sudden I started to cry. Then after a while it was better and I lay in bed and listened to the heavy trains go by...and then I went to sleep. (38–39)

This is a justly celebrated passage, one at the center of debates over whether Hemingway's depiction remains ironically detached or succumbs to sentimentality. What strikes me about such debates is that critics rarely question the *value* of ironic detachment or of the omissions that enable it. The power of the scene derives in part from the fact that Jake declines to name the wound, as well as from his refusal to tell us what exactly he's feeling. Such omissions and understatements load his crying with an emotional intensity that resides in its very lack of specificity. He cries because of "it," and the Church tells him "Not to think about it," but the compulsively repetitive character of trauma requires him to return to "it," again and again. Attempts to name the wound, meanwhile, are rendered ridiculous by the Italian colonel's stumbling efforts to glorify it in words—efforts whose failure suggests that to name the injury is at once to trivialize and sentimentalize the unspeakable horrors of Jake's unmanning.

But at the same time, it is important to note the costs of this omission. There is a kind of gentility in the refusal to give the wound its name—a delicacy that Hemingway would seem to want explicitly to reject. This delicacy is less an expression of courage than a symptom of fear. To name the wound would be to give it a frightening psychic and physical specificity, raising the challenge of what it felt like to receive the wound, and what it feels like to have it. This would mean giving emotional content to Jake's illegible tears as well. Rather than linking those tears to Brett in some unspecified way ("I was thinking about Brett.... Then all of a sudden I started to cry"), naming would require Jake to specify exactly what the wound has made impossible for him.

This in turn would undermine a central fantasy of the novel, that Jake is unable to satisfy Brett sexually, and therefore she can't help but "*trompe*...[him] with everybody" (62). Hemingway must have known that such a scenario is absurd. Sexual intercourse is not the prerequisite to female sexual satisfaction—for most women, penetration alone is insufficient for orgasm. Hemingway's commitment to masculinity as a principle of penetration—a version of manhood that the truth of Jake's wound has rendered increasingly difficult to sustain—prevents him from saying this. Instead, he

and Jake engage in a melancholy taciturnity of style in an effort to make up for the loss of this masculine ideal. Left out of such a scenario is the possibility of a masculinity not committed to penetration as the sign of sexual mastery, one that can mourn the loss of phallic manhood in the name of a recovered capacity for receptivity, affect, and a sensuous pleasure unhampered by the will to power. Hemingway's fear of this receptivity leads him to romanticize unfulfillment—masculinity may not be unimpeachably hard anymore, but neither is it going to be soft. Instead masculinity must learn to tolerate a kind of perpetual if metaphorical hard-on. Desire cannot be satisfied in the absence of an organ to satisfy it, but this absence fails to compromise a phallic manhood imagined both as lost and psychically unrelinquishable.

In each of the cases I have described—drinking, fishing, speaking—a highly codified or stylized form of mastery invokes a knowledge it also disavows: knowledge of a phallic wound, knowledge of sentiment. The valorization of style thus functions precisely as a fetish, seeking to resolve the dilemmas of lost manhood by melancholically perpetuating what it pretends to grieve. Style defends against yet keeps alive the dual loss of sentiment and potency by serving as a kind of monument that ceaselessly speaks of the losses its erection seeks to silence. Style allows Hemingway and his characters neither openly to embrace lost affect nor to do without it, neither to lay claims to a hard masculinity nor really to renounce it..

In the case of phallic potency, the very irreparable character of loss bespeaks Hemingway's melancholic fixation. Because Jake is the victim of an amputation, his desire is *literally* unfulfillable. What he seeks but can never attain is less sexual satisfaction itself than a restoration of the penile object that cannot be recovered. The loss figured by his wound, therefore, can neither be forgotten nor mourned. It can't be forgotten because the penis remains absolutely constitutive of Jake's identity; the ultimate object of his desire is unforgettably inscribed as lost on his living body. And it can't be mourned because that would require the sober imperfection of displaced substitutes, and the *ideal* of phallic potency admits of no substitution.

Ideals by definition cannot be mourned—cannot be replaced with something like but different. Ambivalence is the prerequisite for productive grieving.<sup>12</sup> Although *The Sun Also Rises* offers a series of stylistic “substitutes” for the lost and idealized penis, the novel's fundamentally melancholic character results from the fact that these must fail. Style alone cannot fill the hole that constitutes modern masculinity, while filling that hole is, on

*The Sun's* own terms, both the only way to set the world right and an unacceptably sentimental denial of historical and psychic reality.

### III

The canonization of Hemingway—and of the strand of modernism to which I've linked him—has had the effect of perpetuating this melancholic bind. Canonical culture and criticism remain committed to a masculinity of affectless mastery, often perpetuated in the same breath that proclaims it dead. Indeed, our commitment to such disavowal is partly responsible for the cultural authority invested in this strand of modernism. These texts repeatedly allow us to recover, through the fetish of their monumental forms, a heroic masculinity and social potency often described as lost or impossible at the level of content. The masculinism of such modernism thus inheres in a privileging of style over substance, a kind of morality of form echoing the tendencies I have traced in Hemingway.

This is emphatically *not* to say that formal experimentation is inherently misogynist. Rather I'm suggesting that, for historically contingent but specifiable reasons, these modernists often honed their styles as weapons against the perceived effeminacy of affect and emotional effusiveness. To create a distinctive linguistic *style* was to find a way of expressing oneself without the "sloppy sentimentality" of direct emotional expression. Modernist art thus sought to extinguish the affective content of authorial personality, sublating that content in objective forms memorializing their expressive origins.

These are contentious claims with complex histories of debate. A range of modernists do not fit into the account I've offered, particularly given the canon's expansion to include figures less fully invested in the binaries of gender (and race).<sup>13</sup> My point is less to offer categorical statements about what modernism "is," than to provide a speculative outline of what seems to me one of its dominant aesthetic ambitions—an ambition that contributed to its canonization in the 1950s, and that continues to govern our critical judgments today.

But even if such speculations about style turn out to be of limited interest, the melancholic *content* of many modernist texts seems indisputable. Time and again, our modernists elaborate a vision strikingly similar to Hemingway's, wherein the object of ultimate value is a lost and un mournable masculinity. One thinks of Faulkner's obsessive delineation of southern patriarchs, each of whom he at once critiques as destructive, anatomizes as

dead, and idealizes as the last incarnation of a now historically impossible virility. Eliot also fits this paradigm, structuring *The Waste Land* around a mythically regal and regenerative masculinity, shown by the poem to be both necessary and inadequate to the task of shoring the self's fragments against ruin. Finally, both Cather and Fitzgerald contrast the destructive, commodified, and aesthetically tawdry present with a creative and expressively potent male past—a past that can no more survive in the modern world than it can be imaginatively relinquished.<sup>14</sup>

An adequate account of modernist melancholia would entail more detailed treatment of these figures, as well as an attempt to think of them in relation to other, less melancholic authors. It would entail a more full account of the socially destructive character of the melancholic pattern—its misogyny and homophobia, for example. But it would also entail, as part of our collective engagement with Hemingway and other modernists, an attempt to locate moments in their work where something less defensive happens: moments when an authentic mourning shatters the affectless armor of masculinity, promising new forms of social being that embrace the connective potential of habitually disavowed affect. This is perhaps the most urgent task to which the new Hemingway studies needs to address itself.

#### NOTES

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1. The key texts here are Comley and Scholes, Eby, Lynn, Modellmog, and Spilka.
2. From a Barnes and Noble catalogue, quoted in Modellmog 2.
3. Work on modernism in relation to mourning is just beginning. I'm particularly indebted to Seth Moglen's *An Other Modernism*, which, though not centrally concerned with masculinity, argues that modernism in the U.S. contains two distinct strands—one fixating melancholically on loss, and one seeking more progressively to mourn and project lost aspirations into the future. Other significant contributions to the field include Breitwieser and Ramazani.
4. This view of Cohn's unmanliness in part reflects Jake's need to disparage a potent rival. But the fact that Hemingway lets us see this in no way undermines Jake's judgments. The novel engages in strategies, particularly modes of second-person address, that construct readers as privileged insiders, seducing us into accepting both Jake's relatively benign evaluations and his more pernicious ones. See Wyatt 56–57.
5. See Modellmog (129) and Schwartz (53–56).
6. Huyssen's essay is the classic statement concerning the modernist equation of sentimentality with a debased mass culture, and of mass culture with femininity. See also Clark, esp. 1–41.

7. The aesthetic Hemingway imagines here is a hypermasculinization of T.S. Eliot's "impersonality," wherein authorial personality is both eliminated and sublated into compositional forms.
8. Schwartz also notes the sentimentalization/feminization of Romero (64).
9. My argument here extends the Davidsons' claims concerning the circularity and groundlessness of the Hemingway code (86).
10. Mike is a "bad drunk" not only because alcohol makes him behave aggressively toward Cohn, but because it brings out his excessively affectionate behavior toward Brett. See SAR 84–85.
11. Blackmore offers an interesting account of how the fishing sequence at once destabilizes gender binaries and reconsolidates them in homophobic fashion (63–65).
12. This statement attempts to complicate Freud's assertion that, unlike melancholia, mourning springs from a relatively unambivalent relation to the lost object. Such claims need to be supplemented by Klein's insistence on the *centrality* of ambivalence to successful grieving (152, 156–158).
13. See Baker, Benstock, Boone, and Clark.
14. Examples include Fitzgerald's *Gatsby*, as well as Cather's Captain Forrester in *A Lost Lady* and Tom Outland in *The Professor's House*.

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