Faulkner and Hemingway
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It could have been a riposte in an ongoing duel, or merely an objective view of a few American writers. It was probably some of both, though it sounded a lot like a confrontational, challenging response to an undergraduate’s question. While answering questions in a University of Mississippi Creative Writing class in April 1947, Faulkner was asked to rank his contemporaries. His answer initiated the definitive episode in his ongoing dynamic with Hemingway:

Q: Who do you consider the five most important contemporary writers?
Q: *If you don’t think it too personal, how do you rank yourself with contemporary writers?*

A: 1. Thomas Wolfe: he had much courage and wrote as if he didn’t have long to live; 2. William Faulkner; 3. Dos Passos; 4. Ernest Hemingway: he has no courage, has never crawled out on a limb. He has never been known to use a word that might cause the reader to check with a dictionary to see if it is properly used; 5. John Steinbeck: at one time I had great hopes for him—now I don’t know.¹

Faulkner could have meant this ranking as an impartial, even off-the-cuff, observation. More likely, he wanted his rating to have a more competitive tinge, in that he “chose to annotate his choices as he went along, developing reasons for his rankings” and disparaging two seemingly lesser coevals.² Faulkner places himself first among living writers, since Wolfe had been dead almost nine years at the time of the ranking. Although Faulkner’s pantheon of writers includes Hemingway, his placement and commentary prompted “a mild farrago of statements which kept him busy off and on for a decade.”³ Regardless of whether Faulkner—ostensibly a private, noncombative writer—meant to be provocative, Hemingway saw this as a shot across his bow. His placement of Hemingway below both himself and Dos Passos proved central to the Faulkner–Hemingway rivalry, because it led to the only known direct communication between the two men—four letters in all, in which they added to their mutual canon of rivalry and shared influence. Faulkner’s ranking was pivotal because it gnawed at Hemingway for years to come; he could not, or would not, let it go. As always, Hemingway was particularly attuned to criticisms that Faulkner made of him. He was even more angered by these particular remarks because they called some level of his courage into question.

**DECIPHERABLE SCARS AND TERRIBLE OBSESSIONS**

This ranking and its reverberations came toward the end of a decade in which Faulkner and Hemingway had each struggled to maintain his brisk publication rate of the 1930s. Both men, to recall James Watson’s analysis of Faulkner’s public persona, still directed their attention to “self-presentation and performance” in negotiating the artistic and public sides of their individual personae. They were, as this chapter’s epigraphs show, affected by their

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¹ Qtd. in Inge, 71.
³ Walser, 172.
writing and emotional problems as they struggled with literary contribution and popular appeal. Hemingway saw his trade as a creative illness, while Faulkner doubted his ability and dedication. Although only Hemingway would travel to Europe to cover the war, in 1940 he and Faulkner sensed that a second world war was coming, and perhaps that this potential conflict and its global effects would intensify their own writing and competition.

For Faulkner, the 1940s ended better than they started. For most of the decade, he continued to work in Hollywood primarily to make money and had continuing emotional and marital troubles, due in part to his alcoholism and rekindled affair with Meta Carpenter. Despite most of his work being readily unavailable in hardcover, Faulkner felt, as he wrote to Haas, that he was not finished creatively. His guarded optimism in 1940 was partly due to the three books he had published since 1938: *The Unvanquished, The Wild Palms,* and *The Hamlet.* During the 1940s, he would leave a few more “decipherable” scars—such as *Go Down, Moses, Intruder in the Dust,* and *Knight’s Gambit,* though not without some struggle. Arriving mid-decade, *The Portable Faulkner* helped reignite his public success. By decade’s end, Faulkner had renewed “the process of creation.” This recharged creativity would lead to a number of books and honors: among them, *Collected Stories, Requiem for a Nun,* *A Fable,* the Nobel Prize, two National Book Awards, and two Pulitzer Prizes.

Although Hemingway would receive similar honors in his lifetime, the 1940s were troublesome for him as well. His artistic fate was different from Faulkner’s in the decade that began with the bestselling *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and ended with the much-criticized *Across the River and into the Trees,* a period in which he published an introduction to *Men at War* and a handful of articles for *PM, Collier’s,* and *Holiday.* During such creative fallowness, he experienced serious writing and emotional problems, even as he was working on *Across the River and into the Trees* and what would become *Islands in the Stream.* He never lacked public recognition from various articles and photographs chronicling his activities with Gary Cooper, Joe DiMaggio, Marlene Dietrich, and others. He, for instance, was one of the select clientele at TootsShor’s New York restaurant, joining such famous patrons as Frank Sinatra, Joe Louis, Jackie Gleason, and DiMaggio, whom Hemingway would later glorify as “the Great DiMaggio” in *The Old Man and the Sea.* Through his public associations with the “Yankee Clipper” and “Old Blue Eyes,” “Papa”

4. See David Earle’s *Re-Covering Modernism,* which discusses Malcolm Cowley’s “prejudice against the popular form” in declaring Faulkner “effectively out of print” in *The Portable Faulkner,* when numerous Faulkner works were available in mass-market paperback (203).
became known more for his image than his literary output or avant-gardism. His problem, as he saw it, was that he gave the reading public no new fiction for nearly ten years—only journalism, an essay on writing and war, and personality profiles for *Life*, the *New Yorker*, and other periodicals.

Emotionally, this decade was grueling for Hemingway, and his emotional troubles went hand in hand with his writing problems. At Martha Gellhorn’s behest, she and Hemingway were divorced in December 1945, and he soon married Mary Welsh in March 1946. He had initiated his first two divorces from Hadley and Pauline, but he was agitated by Martha’s urging their divorce before he himself could, vilifying her in much of his subsequent work and correspondence, which she returned in some of her own. That Gellhorn was such a successful and active journalist who frequently traveled throughout their marriage seemed, to Hemingway, a slight at his masculine ego, just as her initiation of their divorce seemed. As we might imagine, such persistent psychological problems complicated his writing. By the mid-1940s, he had seen and covered the war, but writing about it imaginatively was not as seemingly effortless as it had been in the 1920s and 1930s:

For five years now he had written no fiction. In his writing room was an almost forgotten fragment of a Bimini story that referred back to the island’s heyday as a rumrunner’s haven during prohibition. Other than that, he had used up most of what he knew from the previous decade, but his recent war experiences were filled with useable material. So the difficulty was not the subject matter, it was the act itself—sitting down alone with pencil and paper to put down the words in their effective order.7

Hemingway’s desire to be the author-as-celebrity was taking its toll on the author, who was seemingly not “alone” enough to focus on his work. To his mind, it would be difficult to outwrite Steinbeck or Dos Passos if he could not create anything worthy of publication. If he could not match them—whom he thought far inferior to himself—then surpassing Faulkner may have been out of the question. Though he intended to keep publishing in the 1940s and 1950s, he published only two books after *For Whom the Bell Tolls* in his lifetime—*Across the River and into the Trees* and *The Old Man and the Sea* (winner of the Pulitzer Prize). His late productivity paled in comparison to Faulkner’s, potentially increasing his personal and professional anxiety. As he wrote to Scribner in 1940, his daemonic—though flagging—competitive spirit drove him to outwrite his predecessors and contemporaries. Because of his minimal artistic output in the decade, he felt himself devalued in this

ongoing competition with other authors, first and foremost Faulkner.

Although it would soon crescendo by the late 1940s, the Faulkner–Hemingway rivalry, as well as its nuanced psychological influence, was at a diminuendo for some of the decade. Because their writing and individual artistic acclaim had slowed, their mano a mano contest quieted as each man tried to renew his creativity and mitigate the drain of external circumstances—Hemingway’s celebrity, Faulkner’s work in Hollywood, both men’s struggling marriages—on their writing. Because of their own various problems, they could have felt inferior to their milieu; if they felt their individual creative drives to have diminished, then both may have been increasingly anxious about who controlled their symbolic contest. Such mutual wariness seems to have brought Faulkner to revive their duel when he ranked himself as the best of living writers in April 1947. Faulkner’s writing problems and struggles with what became A Fable perhaps fueled his assertion of his own superiority vis-à-vis the literary field, while Hemingway’s “disease” of writing inflected his overreaction to Faulkner’s remarks.

In the 1940s, Hemingway’s Men at War, Faulkner’s screenplay for To Have and Have Not, and Faulkner’s ranking further stratified their rivalry and manifested their dual psychocompetitive influence. Beyond their published texts, their letters of this decade (primarily to Malcolm Cowley) contain numerous cross-references and appraisals. In corresponding with a major literary critic, the authors indirectly sparred with and debated each other. Cowley was often audience to their varied assessments and, after 1947, their thoughts about Faulkner’s ranking. With an anthology, a screenplay, letters, and a highly charged comment in the 1940s, the authors added to a joint oeuvre of allusive and sparring texts that shaped their personal aesthetics, rivalry, and contending canonical places.

FAIR PLAY?

The early 1940s was a time of war. “The enormous wealth, energy and population increase released by Europe’s industrial revolution in the nineteenth century had transformed the world. [. . . ] It had built the infrastructure—schools, universities, libraries, laboratories, churches, missions—of a vibrant, creative and optimistic world civilization.”8 This second global war affected soldiers and civilians, the latter troubled by “the inexorable progress from light to heavy duty” as America entered the war but realized that

combat would not end quickly.\(^9\) America’s intellectual, emotional, and literary landscapes would feel the far-reaching effects of such a vast, destructive war. One cultural mechanism for understanding the war’s effects was the literary anthology. “Wartime,” Paul Fussell shows, “was notably the age of anthologies.”\(^{10}\) The era’s many anthologies—\textit{A Subtreasury of American Humor} (1941), \textit{This Is My Best} (1942), and \textit{American Harvest} (1942)\(^{11}\)—stemmed from the desire in both anthologist and reader to survey “the heritage” as a way of seeking an answer to the pressing question, What are we fighting for? The war forced everyone back onto traditional cultural possessions and responses and forced people to consider which things were valuable enough to be preserved and enjoyed over and over again. If the enemy insisted on the principle \textit{Ein Volk, Ein Reich} [“One People, One Kingdom”], the principle of variety honored by the anthologies was a way of taking an anti-totalitarian, anti-uniformitarian stance, a way of honoring the pluralism and exuberance of the “democratic” Allied cause.\(^{12}\)

Early in the war, Crown Publishers sought to capitalize on the popular importance of anthologies in what became \textit{Men at War}. Sensing the strong link between war and writing, and aware of the potential benefit of foregrounding a seasoned, masculine writer in the project, Crown enlisted Hemingway to help augment this “age of anthologies.” Readers of \textit{Men at War}, it was thought, would arrive at a broader understanding of war’s “traditional cultural possessions and responses” in part because of Hemingway, whose military experience was tightly woven into his art and whose war writings became bestselling books and popular films.

Considering Hemingway’s vast, much-publicized military experience—World War I, the Greco-Turkish War, the Spanish Civil War, the Sino-Japanese War—he was fittingly involved in a project to collect “the best war stories of all time,” as the front cover proclaims. In March 1942, before he and Martha Gellhorn went to cover the war themselves in, respectively, May 1944 and September 1943, Hemingway took on this editorial job as a homefront literary contribution to the war effort. In the late winter of 1942, Max

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10. Ibid., 244.
11. Interestingly, \textit{This Is My Best} contains Hemingway’s “The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber” and Faulkner’s “That Evening Sun Go Down” in a collection that, in editor Whit Burnett’s words, provides “a panorama of time and place, presented to us by the best guides we have in America, the creative writers of our time” (xiii).
Perkins had talked to Crown’s Nat Wartels, who had met Hemingway in Cuba and run the idea of the anthology by him. Having arranged the deal’s specifics with Crown, Perkins noted on March 12 that Wartels wanted to include excerpts from *A Farewell to Arms* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*: “[i]f you want us to avoid it we will, but I myself would not be against it at all, if proper compensation were given. Anything that spreads a writer’s public is to his advantage.” Ever astute, Perkins sensed that *Men at War* would enhance Hemingway’s acclaim, especially since he had published little since *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and was, at the time, frustrated with a projected (but never-published) story collection. Hemingway agreed to edit and introduce *Men at War*, published on October 22. His introduction comments on the selections and the artist’s responsibilities when writing about war. As he told Perkins on May 30, he upheld high aesthetic standards by focusing on the facts of war in his selections, introduction, and his own fiction. In contrast, much of Hemingway’s journalism was self-promoting. “Voyage to Victory” (*Collier’s*, July 22, 1944), for instance, focuses on Hemingway’s skills as map-reader and impromptu navigator on an LCV(P) (that is, a “Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel”) during the invasion of Normandy. As in much of his journalism, the focus of “Voyage to Victory” is split between the invasion and Hemingway himself, who often exaggerated—even invented—his military experiences. Such journalism notwithstanding, a May 1942 letter to Perkins notes Hemingway’s dedication to his craft:

> It was the writers in the last war who wrote propaganda that finished themselves off that way. There is plenty of stuff that you believe absolutely that you can write which is useful enough without having to write propaganda. [ . . . ] We have had Steinbeck’s [*Bombs Away*] and I would rather cut three fingers off my throwing hand than to have written it. If we are fighting for what we believe in we might as well always keep on believing in what we have believed, and for me this is to write nothing that I do not think is the absolute truth.

Hemingway later confessed to Perkins that he intended “to try to make this book into a good weapon” as a non-propagandistic collection to help soldiers and civilians understand war historically and artistically. Although his only new contribution to *Men at War* would be his sixteen-page introduction, Hemingway wanted to stand by his aesthetic principles in what he wrote and

16. Ibid., 320.
in what he selected for the book, hence his dedication to conveying “absolute truth” in his editorial persona. An added element of this “truth” was his competitive temperament and ways of negotiating himself in relation to other writers, as one of his selections reveals.

Nearly 1,100 pages long, *Men at War* collects such diverse authors as Winston Churchill, Theodore Roosevelt, Xenophon, and Rudyard Kipling. *Men at War* also contains excerpts from *A Farewell to Arms* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, the NANA dispatch “The Chauffeurs of Madrid” (May 22, 1937)—and Faulkner’s “Turn About.” Hemingway’s essay and collection of war writings attempted to show that war was neither mysterious nor glorifiable, which he knew from rugged personal experience: “A writer’s job is to tell the truth. His standard of fidelity should be so high that his invention, out of his experience, should produce a truer account than anything factual can be.” One such “good writer” himself, Hemingway aesthetically allied himself with such past models as Tolstoy, Stendhal, Kipling, and Crane (included in *Men at War*), while distancing himself from Arthur Guy Emprey (whose “Over the Top” was “a pitiful piece of bravado writing”) and Dos Passos (whose *Three Soldiers* is “unreadable today”), both of whom were left out. Always passing literary judgment, Hemingway illustrates that he is conversant with and experienced in literary and military matters, thus reprising his writer/active man persona as editor-veteran.

In this intellectual-experiential role, Hemingway thought that “Turn About” was worthy of inclusion with his own war writing and, maybe a bit begrudgingly, that Faulkner was on a par with him. By anthologizing his own work with “Turn About,” he associated himself with but one-upped Faulkner. Hemingway’s only direct commentary about the story is in the introduction: “For excitement and for a great story which should do much to make us appreciate and understand our British allies, read ‘Turn About,’ by William Faulkner.” Hemingway had outlined his opinions on the contents and deleted selections in the same May 30 letter to Perkins quoted above: “I have read over 370 galleys and have thrown out much of the worst stuff [ . . . ] Have got him to put in some good flying stuff” and to cut a

18. Ibid., xiv, xv.
20. Ibid., xxii.
lot of disingenuous, confusing material.\textsuperscript{21} By implication, “Turn About” is “good flying stuff,” not “phony” or “disorganized,” and merits inclusion. Hemingway lauds Faulkner indirectly, but his competitiveness prevented him from offering overt praise. Hemingway included “Turn About” and ostensibly equated Faulkner with Tolstoy, T. E. Lawrence, and he himself. Yet, the choice of “Turn About” suggests Hemingway’s desire to look better, since some of his own superior work was also in the anthology. \textit{Men at War} shows Hemingway misrepresenting Faulkner’s abilities, separating himself, and seemingly writing about war better than Faulkner had—all while offering a level of praise and respect.

Faulkner had published “Turn About” in \textit{The Saturday Evening Post} in March 1932 and, soon thereafter, worked with Howard Hawks to adapt the story into \textit{Today We Live}, released in the spring of 1933.\textsuperscript{22} Collected in the “War is the province of chance” section (which included the \textit{Aeneid}’s section on the Trojan Horse and \textit{War and Peace}’s account of the Battle of Borodino), Faulkner’s story depicts aerial and naval combat episodes in which the American Captain Bogard and British torpedo boatman Claude Hope join forces. Seemingly out of his element in Captain Bogard’s American Handley-Page early in the story, Hope proves himself helpful in combat: he loads and fires the Lewis machine gun on his own, and his face wears a look of “childlike interest and delight” during the mission. Faulkner notes in particular “the click and whistle” of the bomb-dropping mechanism, the plane’s “long upward bounce,” and the beams of the German spotlights that seem to freeze the frenzied action.\textsuperscript{23} After the plane lands on a beach, Hope is impressed by Bogard and McGinnis’s heroics, especially a critical error that he mistakes for daring: they realize that one of the bombs had not dropped and dangled precariously from the right wing, tracing a “delicate line in the sand” parallel to the wheels’ tracks. This aerial combat echoes Faulkner’s military persona, in particular the danger and courage with which he associated bombing missions in both his published and personal war fictions. Although this combat is not rooted in personal experience, as were those of Tolstoy, for example, Faulkner approaches war’s “absolute truth” that Hemingway sought. He describes the plane and its maneuvers clearly, captures Hope’s British vernacular, avoids glorifying war, and accurately depicts a bombing mission and of a near-fatal error that Hope interprets as combat bravery.

Having been involved in a mission that he “shan’t forget,” Hope invites Bogard on one of the missions that he, his eccentric captain Ronnie, and

\textsuperscript{21} Bruccoli, \textit{The Only Thing That Counts}, 318–19.
\textsuperscript{22} Minter, 138, 141.
\textsuperscript{23} Faulkner, “Turn About,” 489.
their two-man crew undertake. Their vehicle is a steel torpedo boat that, though fast and maneuverable, is quite vulnerable. The boat is “about thirty feet long and about three feet wide” and has “no seats save a long cylindrical ridge which ran along the driver’s seat to the stern.” This cylinder houses the torpedo, which sits dangerously close to the engines but only concerns Bogard. Dueling with an enemy freighter, Bogard is stunned by Hope’s courage. They are in a small boat that hunts and torpedoes better-armed ships, and their primary weapon launches uncomfortably close to their own boat. Bogard sees that this type of naval warfare requires great courage. Hope’s crew engages with and cripples a ship that dwarfs theirs, another act matching the masculine courage in war that Bogard embodied and that, in the late 1910s and 1920s, Faulkner invented for himself.

Though nauseated and worried during the torpedo boat’s battle with the freighter, Bogard was inspired by the crew’s boldness, as he embarked on a similarly daring (and successful) mission about a month later. Soon after a newspaper account listing Hope’s boat among recent casualties has found its way to the American aerodrome, a bulletin from headquarters commends Bogard and his crew “[f]or extraordinary valor over and beyond the routine of duty” in which they, “on a daylight raid and without scout protection, destroyed with bombs an ammunition depot several miles behind the enemy’s lines.” On a solo raid—just as Hope’s boat was on a solo mission—Bogard and his crew “partially demolished” a château housing German generals and got so close that “he could discern separately the slate tiles of the roof”—just as Ronnie piloted the boat precariously close to the freighter that they eventually torpedoed. Bogard’s disregard for military rules on such a mission suggests a strategic “turn about”: he followed Hope and Ronnie’s lead by attacking German headquarters on his own, an offense that, had it failed, could have gotten him a court-martial instead of a commendation. Faulkner links the death of Hope with Bogard’s courageous bombing raid through juxtaposed texts: the bulletin noting Bogard’s heroics directly follows the news of the loss of the torpedo boat.

Considering Hemingway’s high aesthetic standards for *Men at War*, “Turn About” fits well in a collection that tried to historicize war and make it understandable artistically. Its inclusion tacitly acknowledges Faulkner’s stature, insofar as Hemingway associated, perhaps even equated, him with premier war writers. While he did not praise him as highly as he praised Tolstoy and Crane—he was always loath to praise Faulkner directly—Hemingway gestured toward good will by associating “Turn About” with major world

24. Ibid., 492.
25. Ibid., 493, 496.
26. Ibid., 509.
literature, even with his own work. As in *The Wild Palms*, Hemingway linked himself with and one-upped Faulkner by associating their work and names. Seemingly worthy of *Men at War*’s standards, “Turn About” does not make any strong pro- or antiwar claims, nor does it unduly exalt war. It matches Hemingway’s aesthetic by offering two realistic, exciting, and heroic episodes of aerial and naval combat.

However, Hemingway’s agonistic drive trumped any show of respect. While his inclusion of “Turn About” admits Faulkner’s prominence, the choice of this particular story also reveals his competitiveness, an act reminiscent of Faulkner’s use of *matador* and *aficionados* in “Old Man.” “Turn About” is a relatively minor story lacking the impact of Faulkner’s other war writings—*Soldiers’ Pay*, *Sartoris*, or *The Unvanquished*, sections of any of which likely could have been included in *Men at War* instead. The anthologized story is more representative of Hemingway than of Faulkner: it is a realistic depiction of air and sea battle; it does not deal with the Civil War; and it does not adopt Faulkner’s more avant-garde style and narrative patterning. Although “Turn About” is not a weak story, it does not match the emotion and lucidity of *A Farewell to Arms* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, thus making Hemingway look markedly better by comparison. That Hemingway downplays Faulkner’s talents with a subpar story, distinguishes himself with better material, and sets up his own work as an antithetical completion underscores his competitive animus. To Hemingway’s mind, “Turn About” does not explore war as thoroughly as two of his bestselling novels, while it also lacks the presumed firsthand personal experience Hemingway had woven in to “The Chauffeurs of Madrid” and the novels.

Hemingway’s competitive drive and influence-anxiety were at work here: his selections outshine Faulkner’s, and he eagerly wanted to make himself look better and regain professional leverage. As he would later do in numerous letters, Hemingway curbs his praise of Faulkner, revealing some concern over their canonical places. Choosing—or at least not cutting—“Turn About” enabled Hemingway to accept Faulkner’s canonical importance and assert his own greater importance with stronger work. His including a Faulkner story suggestive of his own work embodies his mixed attitudes: begrudging praise (including the story); one-upmanship (including his own superior material); insecurity (feeling the need to outdo him). Hemingway thus tried to make himself look better threefold: in *Men at War*, their ongoing rivalry, and the broader literary scene. Hemingway may have sensed that they shared ideas about war and writing, but Faulkner’s canonical value felt threatening to his own, hence the inclusion of a story whose events look mediocre compared to El Sordo’s last stand and the Caporetto Retreat. Advantage Hemingway, at least for the time being.
FROM “LOSER” TO HERO

Two years after *Men at War*, Faulkner was involved in a screenwriting project that juxtaposed Hemingway and himself, a project with an audience comparable to, possibly bigger than, that for *Men at War*. In July 1942, around the time that Hemingway was in editor-veteran mode, Faulkner had returned to Warner Brothers, striking up some of his old relationships: his professional work with Howard Hawks, friendships with Hawks and Clark Gable, and affair with Meta Carpenter. Pessimistic, depressed, often hampered by drink, and concerned with his financial struggles, he worked on several screenplays—among them, the never-made *The De Gaulle Story* and an adaptation of *The Big Sleep*. The screenplay for the former, co-written by Faulkner and Robert Buckner, has a passing reference to *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and anticipates that in *Requiem for a Nun*. A character, Emilie, remembers her father’s friend: “one night he brought a book, an American book written by a Mr. Hemingway. He would read it to us at night and translate it. It told about a young girl to whom that [i.e., rape by enemy soldiers] had happened also, and about an older woman who was very wise about people anyway, who said how, if you refused to accept something, it could not happen to you. And I was comforted.” Since this film was never made, Hemingway was unaware of this reference, but it again indicates how Faulkner’s attentiveness to Hemingway could inform his writing projects.

Faulkner had “three principal concerns” that made screenwriting work seem necessary, all of them with a common economic denominator: “selling enough stories to meet the current crisis, trying for a screenwriting job, or seeking a commission.” At the time, his artistic reputation was unstable, and many of his books were unavailable in hardcover or selling poorly. After two intermittent years in Hollywood, Faulkner was still struggling artistically, financially, and emotionally; his need for money drew him to collaborative script work in Hollywood and away from what he saw as his real creative work in Oxford. Although Faulkner worked somewhat hard to revise screenplays, he was pessimistic about his own writing. He professed as much to his agent, Harold Ober, on April 22, 1944. “War is bad for writing” because

Something must give way; let it be the writing, art, it has happened before, will happen again. It’s too bad I lived now though. […] I have a considerable talent, perhaps as good as any coeval. But I am 46 now. So what I will mean soon by ‘have’ is ‘had.’

27. Qtd. in Faulkner and Furthman, 17–18.
When and if I get at it again, I will write to you. After being present for a while at the frantic strivings of motion pictures to justify their existence in a time of strife and terror, I have about come to the conclusion which they dare not admit: that the printed word and all its ramifications and photographications is nihil nisi fui [. . . . ]

That “[w]ar is bad for writing” indicates his misgivings about his own work; Faulkner, only forty-six, felt himself in his career’s twilight. He sensed that books and films amounted to “nothing”—the Latin nihil—but a quest to make money during an international crisis. At the time of this revealing letter, he had just finished the final shooting script of To Have and Have Not in a dark, almost exhausted, mental state, due to his work in Hollywood and to his lack of work on his own material. Despite his doubts, Faulkner had, in February 1944, met with an intriguing opportunity—adapting a Hemingway novel—that could reinvigorate his creativity and professional standing, since he was “as good as any coeval.”

Thus he began, at Hawks’s behest, revising the To Have and Have Not screenplay on which Hawks and Jules Furthman had been working; it would star Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall and be released in theaters that October. Figuratively, screenplay of To Have and Have Not was a joint effort between Hemingway, Hawks, Furthman, and Faulkner. Hemingway published the novel that introduced Harry Morgan as his tough, independent-minded, and mortal hero, and he sold the film rights to Howard Hughes for $10,000 in 1939. Hawks bought the rights from Hughes for $92,500 in 1943 and sold the rights to Warner Brothers for the same amount, plus a one-quarter interest.

An indirect alliance between Faulkner and Hemingway, To Have and Have Not’s screenplay underscores some key differences in their rivaling aesthetic visions and ways of making money. As another Faulknerian rewriting of Hemingway’s work, this screenplay extends the one-upmanship seen in The Wild Palms. An “unusual artistic mix” bearing the imprint of both men’s art and names, the screenplay adopts the established point-counterpoint structure of their dynamic. Faulkner again veered from Hemingway’s work when helping revise the script and reconfiguring Hemingway’s characters, narrative, and style.

As producer/director, Hawks began working with Furthman on the original screenplay early in 1943 and had both Bogart (Harry) and Bacall (Marie) cast by the middle of the year. Initially, Hawks and Furthman maintained

30. Ibid., 180.
31. Faulkner and Furthman, 16.
fidelity; they finished the initial screenplay on October 14, although there was much revision to come, including changes to the film’s setting, main characters, and ending.\textsuperscript{33} Set in Cuba, this first version perhaps described Cuba’s political tensions too well. Having gotten wind of Hawks’s intent to “film a novel that might embarrass the Batista regime,” the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs did not want the film to “reflect badly on Cuba,” then an ally in the war.\textsuperscript{34} Hawks and Warner Brothers shifted the setting from Cuba to French Martinique, thus quelling any potential political tensions between the United States and Cuba. Needing heavy revisions, Hawks dispatched Faulkner to revise the script a short time after Furthman had completed his work; Faulkner and Hawks then completed the screenplay that Furthman and Hawks had begun. At the outset, “Faulkner suggested that \textit{To Have and Have Not} be rewritten so that the political interest would be the conflict between the Free French and the Vichy government.” He was hired on February 22; he and Hawks would deviate significantly from Hemingway’s storyline, dialogue, and characterization.\textsuperscript{35} As dramatic as it could be to envision Faulkner rewriting Hemingway’s novel solely by choice, he made so many changes because he essentially had to for Warner Brothers to release the film with commercial success and for Hawks to give Faulkner much-needed future screenwriting work. The Faulkner–Hawks \textit{To Have and Have Not} is substantially different from Hemingway’s, some obvious differences being the setting (Martinique vs. Cuba), time period (prologue vs. time present), and Harry’s ultimate fate (he lives in the film). Nevertheless, it has value as an adaptation of Hemingway’s work.

\textit{To Have and Have Not}, like many film adaptations, has spawned different opinions, reactions, and readings. There is so much explicit narrative dissonance, Frank Laurence observes, that “Nothing after the opening minutes [seems] much like Hemingway’s material.”\textsuperscript{36} For Kawin, Harry changed markedly with each writer’s treatment: Hemingway’s Harry was, among other things, “an unsentimental killer, an individualist ground to death by giant forces, a loser”; Furthman’s a “tough adventurer”; Faulkner’s a “sometime misogynist”; and Hawk’s a “witty and self-confident professional.”\textsuperscript{37} Bogart’s Harry melds these personalities. He embodies the typical Hemingway hero in his tough, cynical personality and has some contempt for women, as when he fears that both Marie and Helene will interfere in his clandestine political activities for the De Gaullists. For Mimi Reisel Gladstein, though, “Bogart’s

\textsuperscript{33} Faulkner and Furthman, 18–19.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 31.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 32.
\textsuperscript{36} Laurence, 84.
\textsuperscript{37} Faulkner and Furthman, 12.
Harry seems to have walked straight from Hemingway’s pages,” given how “[b]oth Harrys value courage, competence, and loyalty to comrades” and how “Bogart [. . .] fits nicely into the Hemingway code-hero mold.” The film’s Harry exudes masculine toughness when he shoots Captain Renard’s bodyguard and then single-handedly fights and subdues both Renard and Lieutenant Coyo. His wittiness and self-confidence imbue his interactions with Marie (asking her “Why did you do that?” after she kisses him) and Renard (asking “Did you ever whip anybody with a pistol?” before pistol-whipping him). There are other differences between the versions of Harry. Hemingway’s is seriously wounded in a gunfight with rum-running Cubans; the loss of his arm symbolically suggests the emotional vulnerability, loss, and anxiety that he represses as a Code Hero. In the film, his role as wounded patient reverses that of doctor when he removes a bullet from Paul’s right shoulder. Because Harry does not lose his arm in the film, he maintains a tough physical demeanor, qualities that Hawks and Faulkner wanted Bogart to portray. Most importantly, Harry’s fate at the end is radically different. In the novel, he dies slowly aboard his ship after being shot by another Cuban radical. Although Harry knows that the Cubans are going to try to kill him, he takes the job out of financial necessity. In the film, he escapes to Devil’s Island with Marie and Eddy after killing Renard’s bodyguard, an optimism countering the book’s pessimism, such as when Marie laments the loss of her husband and must learn to live as a widow.

Clearly, the shift in locale did not necessitate changing Harry’s fate; French revolutionaries could just as easily have killed him aboard his own boat. It seems that Hawks, not Faulkner, chose not to kill Harry. As early as October 1943, the Temporary Screenplay (by Hawks and Furthman) had altered Harry’s fate, when the film was still set in Cuba: “Hawks had a temperamental objection to stories about, as he put it, losers.” When Faulkner began his work on the project in early 1944, Hawks had established this primary element of the script. Though Hemingway’s Harry would say, “‘No matter how a man alone ain’t got no bloody fucking chance,’” Bogart’s Harry cooperates with Marie, Eddy, and Gerard to escape Martinique. The latter Harry not only lives but also realizes that can succeed because he is not alone. That the film is both adaptation and prologue—what we can term an *adaptation-


40. Ibid., 26.

41. Hemingway, *To Have and Have Not*, 225.
as-prologue—would necessitate keeping Harry alive. An episode in Harry and Marie’s early life, the film’s narrative ultimately “does maintain fidelity to Hemingway in terms of characterization, style, and theme” as Gladstein posits more in terms of fidelity of spirit, character, and theme than of plot.42

Because the script—exemplifying Richard Dyer’s notion of star discourse—devotes more screen time to Bogart and Bacall together, it shifts the focus away from Harry as a rugged individualist and toward Harry as a member of a collective that includes Marie, Eddy, and Gerard. The Faulkner–Hawks Second Revised Final screenplay significantly expands Marie’s role. The viewer sees much more interaction, particularly Hollywoodized romance, between Harry and Marie than does the reader. At this pre-novel stage of their lives, Harry and Marie are not yet married.43 Although the film’s Harry still stands out because of Bogart’s star power and Hemingway-esque demeanor, Faulkner and Hawks made Harry less of a loner, straying significantly from his place in a long line of Hemingway’s strong individualists: Nick Adams, Jake Barnes, and Frederic Henry, among others. The novel’s Harry was convinced that “a man alone ain’t got no bloody fucking chance” and acted accordingly; the film’s Harry diverges from this mantra and, consequently, from Hemingway’s original treatment of him. Many of Faulkner’s characters, by contrast, are ensconced in the history and community of Yoknapatawpha County, hence his primary focus on families in his fiction—the McCaslins, Snopses, and others—rather than individuals. Although Faulkner did isolate family members or outsiders for individual treatment (such as Quentin Compson or Joe Christmas), his loners are most often seen as part of a larger collective, be it a family or the community itself. In contrast, Hemingway’s Harry may be part of a family and of the Key West and Cuban communities, but he is ultimately his own man. Hawks and Faulkner had their own character model that they thought more commercially viable than Hemingway’s. Director and co-screenwriter turned away from the source text’s Harry and offered what they saw as a superior version, mobilizing Bogart’s image and celebrity to draw a more compelling, marketable character.

Consistent with such key changes to Harry’s character, much of the film’s dialogue is different, due in part to the shift to Martinique and to the new characters. When he began his revisions, Faulkner wrote more to his own

43. For a more in-depth discussion of this construct and its cultural significance, see such works as Dyer’s Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society (2nd ed., 2004) and Thomas Leitch’s Film Adaptation and Its Discontents: From Gone with the Wind to The Passion of the Christ (2007).
44. Faulkner and Furthman, 34–35.
model of dialogue, thus imposing his different—and better, he may have thought—standards on Hemingway’s work. Hawks trimmed such verbose passages so the actors could memorize their lines more easily and deliver them in ways more in keeping with viewers’ expectations. Faulkner’s more filmically appropriate dialogue was also more attuned to Hemingway’s style. Despite the similarities in the style of dialogue, we see some key differences in its content throughout the film, such as when the revolutionaries are trying to charter Harry’s boat at the beginning. In the novel,

“Don’t make me feel bad,” I told him. “I tell you true I can’t do it.”
“Afterwards, when things are changed, it would mean a good deal to you.”
“I know it. I’m all for you. But I can’t do it.”

[ . . . . ]
“Listen,” I said. “I don’t care who is President here. But I don’t carry anything to the States that can talk.”
“You mean we would talk?” one of them who hadn’t spoke said. He was angry.

[ . . . . ]
“Listen,” I told him. “Don’t be so tough so early in the morning. I’m sure you’ve cut plenty people’s throats. I haven’t even had my coffee yet.”

In typical Hemingway fashion, Harry is not intimidated by the three Cubans, twice implores one of them not to act so “tough,” and implies that their threats are largely unimportant. As a rumrunner and Code Hero, Harry upholds his personal rules to not bring human cargo aboard his ship and to not be threatened by the Cubans. The mood of this scene suggests that a fight could break out at any moment between Harry and the Cubans, though their sparring is only verbal. This tense exchange is followed by one of the Cubans saying that he “would like to kill” Harry before they leave; the Cubans are soon killed in a firefight outside. As this scene implies, Harry’s Havana is a volatile, violent place with a marked criminal element.

Faulkner and Hawks’s version of this scene resembles Hemingway’s, but the underlying tone and verbal exchanges vary. This scene is placed differently in each version as well: it is the opening scene of the novel, but it begins well into the screenplay, calling for Bogart to stray from Hemingway’s character in a more drawn-out scene:

GERARD: They only want to use your ship for one night. They will pay you

45. Hemingway, To Have and Have Not, 3–5.
46. Ibid., 5.
very well, too. Of course, nothing like you would get from Americans.

MORGAN (shaking head): I’d like to oblige you, Frenchy, but I can’t afford to get mixed up in local politics.

GERARD: It is a very urgent matter. Afterwards, when things are different, it would be very good for you, Harry.

This exchange picks up a few scenes later, after Gerard has introduced the three men to Morgan:

MORGAN: I’m sorry, boys—but I can’t do it.

BEAUCLERC: We will give you twenty-five hundred francs.

MORGAN: That’s fifty dollars in American money. I can’t do it.

DE GAULLIST NO. 1: A thousand francs a piece. (Morgan shakes his head.) It is only a little voyage to a place about forty kilometers from here.

BEAUCLERC: We would give you more money—but we haven’t got it.

MORGAN: Don’t make me feel bad. I tell you true I can’t do it.

DE GAULLIST NO. 2: Afterwards, when things are changed, it would mean a good deal to you.

[ . . . ]

MORGAN: Listen, I don’t care who runs France or Martinique. Or who wants to. Please get somebody else.47

In the film, Marie is present though marginalized in this scene; in the book, she had not been introduced when Harry meets with the Cubans. Bogart’s Harry has a light-hearted, humorous side (calling them “Frenchy”), whereas Hemingway’s is serious and resilient. Some of Bogart’s dialogue resembles the book’s (“Don’t make me feel bad”; “I tell you true I can’t do it”; “I don’t care who”), but his and the De Gaullists’ demeanors differ from their novelistic counterparts. There is a sense of urgency in both versions, but there is neither the threat of violence nor the “tough” undertones of Morgan’s and the Cubans’ words. Rather, the De Gaullists are almost desperately polite when seeking Morgan’s services, and there is no threat of a fight.

This is not the only veering from the source novel. The shift to Martinique and to different political conflicts necessitated changing what its characters say about their revolution. Hemingway’s Harry thinks about his contempt for Cuba’s political turmoil:

What the hell do I care about his revolution. F—— his revolution. [. . . ] It’s the Cubans run Cuba. They all double cross each other. They sell each other

47. Faulkner and Furthman, 85, 93–96.
out. They get what they deserve. The hell with their revolutions. All I got to do is make a living for my family and I can't do that. Then he tells me about his revolution. The hell with his revolution.48

This passage is replete with Hemingway’s stylistic repetition—“revolution(s),” “hell”—and shows a bitter, angry Harry. He is disillusioned by the Cubans’ political conflicts and cares only about his family’s needs. Bogart’s Harry is still somewhat critical of the De Gaullists’ efforts, but he is less angry. While on his ship with Eddy, Paul, and Helene, we see Morgan’s sarcastic, even misogynistic side, as Paul introduces Helene:

MORGAN: I don’t care what she is. What did you want to bring your wife here for? What kind of a war are you guys fighting, lugging your wives around with you?

HELENE (bristling): What business is it of yours?

MORGAN: An American, huh? Well, nothing like a little cheesecake for a touch of color. How come you didn’t bring along a photographer?

[ . . . . ]

[They are then approached by a patrol boat.] PAUL: We surrender.

Don’t—

[ . . . . ]

MORGAN: So that’s how you’re saving France—by surrendering to the first Vichy cop that yells “Stop” at you.

PAUL (weakly [because he has been shot]): Please do as I say. It is for the best.

MORGAN (to Helene): You see what happens when you lug women around?

(Pointing to Paul.) Get him off the seat. He’s bleeding all over my cushion.

HELENE: What kind of a man are you—talking about your silly cushion?

Why don’t you do something for him?

MORGAN (as he goes forward): I haven’t got time right now.49

This is as close as Harry gets in the film to being overtly critical of radical activities. His words may be acidic, but he does not become angry enough to curse, due largely to industry rules against cursing but consistent with his toned-down character. Another key difference is how Morgan criticizes each revolution. His thoughts in the book are unspoken and reveal an inner conflict between his ideals, sense of self, and financial needs. In the film, his thoughts become acerbic dialogue expressing his misogynistic tendencies

48. Hemingway, To Have and Have Not, 168.

(that women get in the way and must be “lugged” around), his protective impulse toward Paul and Helene, and his displeasure at Paul.\textsuperscript{50}

As he did in \textit{The Wild Palms}, Faulkner played a role in adapting Hemingway’s material. That much of Hemingway’s source text was recast in the screenplay reveals their personal disparities. Financially, the authors made their money from the film differently: Hemingway, as always, sold the rights to the film and did no adaptive work; Faulkner, always Hemingway’s economic inferior, needed whatever money Warner Brothers could pay him. Faulkner often had an intense “anxiety about money”; he had to support an ever-growing family, write fiction that did not sell especially well, publish stories in popular magazines, and collaborate on screenplays.\textsuperscript{51} This originated in the “quite extraordinary level of social and material obligation he had imposed upon himself” since the early 1930s, namely, Estelle, Jill, and Victoria and Malcolm (his stepchildren); his domestic servants, widowed sister-in-law and niece, and other dependents; and Rowan Oak, Greenfield Farm, and Bailey’s Woods.\textsuperscript{52} Such domestic responsibility enabled Faulkner’s paterfamilias role but led to debt, which Faulkner listed in “a small book with alphabetized pages bearing the names of all his creditors and the amounts he owed them.”\textsuperscript{53} Arguably at the height of his powers in the mid-1930s and early 1940s, Faulkner was “disenchanted with writing for hire, yet incapable of supporting himself and his family by writing only serious fiction,” anxieties woven into \textit{The Wild Palms} as I have discussed in Chapter 2.\textsuperscript{54} His “need for the privacy to write and his growing public reputation” in the mid-1930s pulled him away from his creative work and “slowed” his writing’s “explosive pace” in the 1940s. He was “caught between his reputation as a writer of great power and the base need to earn money by capitalizing on that,” perhaps more so than Hemingway felt himself to be.\textsuperscript{55}

These economic differences speak to Faulkner’s and Hemingway’s broader writerly roles. Both were established artists. Hemingway was always more successful financially while Faulkner often felt himself more successful artistically, thus making the more famous Hemingway somewhat insecure about his artistic prominence and the more literary-minded Faulkner some-

\begin{itemize}
\item [50.] Marie’s sardonic “You know how to whistle, don’t you, Steve? You just put your lips together and blow” (20)—possibly the film’s most famous line—was not in the novel; this and others give Marie an added edginess. We can attribute this line to Hawks, who oversaw Bacall’s screen test; she spoke this line in her screen test, which was shot in January 1944 (18–19). Faulkner did not begin working on the screenplay until that February.
\item [51.] Zender, 50.
\item [52.] Ibid., 67.
\item [53.] Blotner, \textit{Faulkner}, 440.
\item [54.] Zender, 61.
\item [55.] Watson, 139–40.
\end{itemize}
what insecure about his financial placement. His economic woes persisted until the late 1940s, when the sales and film rights for *Intruder in the Dust* and $30,000 Nobel Prize award provided long-sought financial security. Yet, Faulkner was on economic tenterhooks while working on *To Have and Have Not*, hence his taking on several screenwriting projects at the time. "If he had had money enough like Hemingway," Blotner observes, "he would never have touched a Hollywood film script."56

That Faulkner helped rewrite Hemingway’s novel for a different medium illustrates how two different aesthetic visions came into contact, with that of the former taking precedence. The dramatically different portrayal of Harry best demonstrates which vision won out in the film. To an extent, the new Harry enabled Hawks and Faulkner to apply different standards of characterization to Hemingway, just as Hemingway himself applied his own aesthetic model to Faulkner by choosing “Turn About” for *Men at War*. Faulkner and Hawks followed Hollywood ideals of characterization that necessitated changing the personality and fate of Hemingway’s protagonist. Of course, Hawks was not the one in competition with Hemingway. Faulkner must have taken special interest in reinterpreting the novel, because a film with the star power of Bogart and Bacall featuring his own name in the writing credits could boost his professional self-confidence. Perhaps Faulkner thought that his work in writing a potentially famous film starring a famous Hollywood couple would make his and Hawks’s film more memorable than Hemingway’s novel, thus calling attention to his role in improving the work of his principal rival. However, Gladstein notes that the Hemingway name was the primary selling point for the film; its opening credits and voiceover proclaim the story as a tale of danger and violence invoking “the image of the adventuresome writer.” Faulkner and Furthman are acknowledged as screenwriters in the opening credits, but the former’s name recognition was not nearly as impactful as the author of the source novel.57

The Faulkner–Hawks adaptation of *To Have and Have Not* echoes Faulkner’s borrowing and revision of Hemingway’s work into *The Wild Palms*. He reshaped Hemingway’s words, images, locales, and ideas—aggressive Cuban insurgents in Cuba became anxious French De Gaullists in Martinique, Harry’s arm wound was transferred to Paul, Harry does not die, and Marie is more prominent, along with related additions and reimaginings. In a modernist sense, the screenplay “works by stylistic montage,” as *The Waste Land*, *Toomer’s Cane* (1923), some of Dos Passos’s work, and other texts incorporated multiple sources and intratexts.58 Although Faulkner’s screen-

play is radically different from Eliot’s poem or Dos Passos’s hybridity, these texts operated on a similar principle: conscious exchange with other works of art can lead to “the creation of a new poem” that is figuratively coauthored.\(^\text{59}\) The two versions of *To Have and Have Not* are thus interdependent—we cannot fully appreciate the changes that Faulkner, Hawks, and Furthman made without revisiting Hemingway’s novel, as with *The Wild Palms* and the Hemingway texts it recasts. Despite its sharp contrast with the novel, the adaptation unites the authors textually and, more so, circumstantially. As co-screenwriter, Faulkner helped reimagine Hemingway’s novel; in the making of the film, they were able “to meet, although not in person,” creating “an amalgam” of mutually influential rivals with modernistic roots.\(^\text{60}\)

“One of the small paradoxes here,” Gladstein aptly notes, “is how Faulkner, noted for a reticulated style almost diametrically opposite to Hemingway’s spare prose, should so effectively assume the Hemingway voice.”\(^\text{61}\) Having enacted a similar assumption of a distinctive voice in *The Wild Palms* half a decade earlier, Faulkner again followed the aesthetic of reiving that pervades much of his work, as Joseph Urgo has persuasively described. Faulkner’s contribution to the adaptation of *To Have and Have Not* thus suggests but does not imitate *The Wild Palms*. He wrote the former independently but the latter collaboratively with Furthman’s screenplay and Hawks’s regular input, and for a different medium with a larger audience. While Faulkner himself decided to riff sharply on Hemingway in his novel, he did not choose to shift the setting of the film from Cuba to Martinique, nor did he let Harry survive—Hawks had made these and other key decisions when Faulkner began the project. Faulkner only had a say in the film’s plot, structure, and characterization (dialogue, development, and interaction), whereas he himself plotted, structured, and characterized his earlier novel. His work with Hawks and Furthman notwithstanding, Faulkner was an important player in adapting Hemingway’s work. He rewrote much of the dialogue for Bogart, Bacall, and their supporting cast, and he helped change the setting and socio-political atmosphere, perhaps making the story more noteworthy and socio-politically accurate. Hawks’s motivations were manifold: the film industry’s standards (providing a definitive, positive Hollywood ending), the government’s insistence (switching from Cuba to French Martinique), and his own visions of characterization (a less isolated, more heroic Harry; an expanded view of Marie and her early relationship with Harry). Closely involved with this project, Faulkner must have been piqued by the prospect of rearranging and rewriting a novel that had “sold better than any other Hemingway book

\(^{59}\) Ibid., 102.

\(^{60}\) Faulkner and Furthman, 53; Gladstein, “Hemingway, Faulkner, and Hawks,” 173.

published” in the 1930s, some 39,038 copies.62 By helping Hawks finish a screenplay that Furthman and Hawks had begun, he indirectly collaborated with Hemingway, though rewriting—and potentially improving—his words, characters, and plot. While the parts that Bogart and Bacall played diverged from Hemingway’s treatment, the film embodies a figurative connection between competing authors, one, like The Wild Palms, articulated more in Faulkner’s terms.

**SPARRING “IN THE SAME RUNNING FIELD”**

After the anthology and film—relatively tame by the authors’ competitive grammar—there would be a more biting intertextuality in the authors’ letters, which also began revealing a joint psychological and professional awareness. As their rivalry escalated in the late 1940s, letters became a clear, if largely indirect, line of debate between Faulkner and Hemingway, embodying various tones—admiration, mutual respect, harsh judgment, one-upmanship, and personal-professional anxiety. Both authors indirectly traded commentary through other writers and critics, primarily Malcolm Cowley and Harvey Breit, while revealing some psychocompetitive sway. In letters from the 1940s and 1950s specifically, as Faulkner won numerous awards and published more books, Hemingway recognized his significance, felt a level of anxiety, and made numerous (some quite humorous) criticisms to downplay his impact. They often lauded and belittled one another in their correspondence, sometimes in the same letter, consistent with their tendency to praise one another guardedly.

In *The Faulkner–Cowley File*, Cowley describes “the argument at a distance between Faulkner and Hemingway,” noting that it “sometimes became embittered on Hemingway’s part.”63 Cowley’s regular correspondence with them and close reading of their work showed him several intersections: their “sharp eyes for landscape,” being “hunters by devoted avocation,” and examining “the primitive mind, the mystical union of hunter and hunted, the obsessions of wounded men, and the praise of alcohol” in their fiction.64 Cowley was aware that Faulkner and Hemingway, as they rivaled each other, were also attuned; he suggested to both men more than once that they exchange letters. Although they ignored his advice, Cowley was an important presence, due to his admiration for both men as artists and to his role as a kind of conduit between them. Because both men framed each other as

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62. Trogdon, 185.
64. Ibid., 159–60.
competitors, their rivalry seemingly trumped their respect for Cowley, and the authors seemed content to have no social relationship, only a tense intertextual one that increasingly played out in correspondence with others.

Between 1945 and 1949, Hemingway mentioned Faulkner in at least three letters to Cowley, who had edited *The Portable Hemingway* in 1944. Writing from the Finca on September 3, 1945, he discussed the state of writing, which

is a very lonely trade and with Scott dead and John Bishop dead and having quarreled with Dos (as necessary *then* as was the civil war; but an awful bore to have quarreled with some one it was always fun to talk with after war) [. . . .].

Malcolm I hope you are happy and having a good life. I appreciated very much you taking the time to reconsider what we have tried to do and are still trying to do; only better. Trouble is most of the guys dead and I know there will be wonderful new ones but we do not know them yet. Faulkner has the most talent of anybody but hard to depend on because he goes on writing after he is tired and seems as though he never threw away the worthless. I would have been happy just to have managed him.65

On October 17, Hemingway again wrote to Cowley and elaborated on his views on Faulkner’s professional struggles and, as he saw it, uncontrolled abilities:

I’d no idea Faulkner was in that bad shape and very happy you are putting together the Portable of him. He has the most talent of anybody and he just needs a sort of conscience that isn’t there. Certainly if no nation can exist half free and half slave no man can write half whore and half straight. But he will write absolutely perfectly straight and then go on and on and not be able to end it. I wish the christ I owned him like you’d own a horse and train him like a horse and race him like a horse—only in writing. How beautifully he can write and as simple and as complicated as autumn or as spring.66

Despite his reservations about Faulkner’s lack of artistic discipline, an uneasy mix of jealousy, admiration, and intimidation is clear. Faulkner may have “the most talent” and write “beautifully,” but Hemingway feels that

he could “train” him to write even better than he already does. Playing the part of literary critic as he did in *Men at War* and numerous other venues, Hemingway acknowledges Faulkner’s talent but then suggests that he could guide him to improve his writing—there was always a “but” in their positive comments about each other. This treatment of Faulkner can recall Hemingway’s patronizing criticism of Fitzgerald in *A Moveable Feast*. Although he respected Fitzgerald as an author and friend, Hemingway criticized him for wasting his talent by his lack of discipline, by “whoring” in Hollywood and publishing in popular magazines, and by being too committed to Zelda. Hemingway leaves Estelle out of his critical-complimentary portrait of Faulkner, but his mixed, even hesitant praise squares with his treatment of Fitzgerald and other authors *qua* competitors.

In a *New York Post Week-End Magazine* article, “They Call Him Papa” (December 28, 1946), interviewer Mary Harrington talked to Hemingway about his fellow writers: “And he disagrees with the critics who call him the greatest living American writer. History will probably prove him wrong, but he’ll take Faulkner any day, he says. ‘William Faulkner is the best living,’ he says. ‘And Nelson Algren.’”67 A year before Faulkner would offer a different order of “the greatest living” writers, Hemingway elevates him above their milieu, but more than a little disingenuously given the harsh statements he had made and would make in other forums. And, in an October 1949 letter to Cowley, Hemingway again linked Faulkner to Algren: “He has everything that the fading Faulkner ever had except the talent for magic.”68 His past criticisms aside, Hemingway seemed to appreciate Faulkner’s “magic,” just as he ostensibly admired Fitzgerald while criticizing him.

However, most of Hemingway’s positive comments about Faulkner were given with some proviso. He is magical yet “fading,” he has much “talent” but no “conscience” and is “hard to depend on” and, as such, presumably needs Hemingway’s help. This conditional praise is rooted in Hemingway’s strong competitive ego, one increasingly concerned with Faulkner since the early 1930s. In the above letters and comments, Hemingway does not specify Faulkner texts that seem to him endless and undisciplined, but he has clearly read his work. In writing to one of the era’s preeminent critics, Hemingway tried to establish himself as an authority on American fiction, just as his inclusion of a comparatively pedestrian Faulkner story in *Men at War* made his own work look better. During the 1940s, Cowley became a sounding board for Hemingway’s ideas about old and new writers and what he saw as a “lonely trade.” Hemingway knew that Cowley respected Faulkner. Yet, he

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67. Qtd. in Bruccoli, *Conversations with Ernest Hemingway*, 44.
worried that Faulkner was a more creative artist, despite his own stronger publicity. Hemingway’s comments imply that Faulkner’s writing would be better if it were more controlled, concise, and Hemingway-esque, an act ostensibly distancing himself from yet bringing him nearer to his psychologically influential rival.

Faulkner also corresponded with Cowley, who first wrote him in 1944 to ask for information about an essay he was planning to write. This essay eventually turned into his introduction to *The Portable Faulkner,* which Cowley edited and which helped recapture Faulkner’s broader critical acclaim. Their correspondence lasted sporadically into the 1950s; Hemingway’s name surfaced in their letters, often in conjunction with the same reserved praise that Faulkner’s name evoked in Hemingway’s letters to Cowley. On September 17, 1945, Cowley noted how Hemingway had praised him, referencing the September 3 letter above:

Did I tell you the story I heard from Sartre, about Hemingway drunk in Paris insisting that Faulkner was better than he was? Hemingway wrote me a long, rambling, lonely letter complaining that writing was a lonely trade and there was no one to talk to about it. He said about you, “Faulkner has the most talent of anybody but hard to depend on because he goes on writing after he is tired and seems as though he never threw away the worthless. I would have been happy just to have managed him.” Hemingway would be a good manager, too—he knows how to say exactly what he feels and set a high price on it. But just now he seems to be very lonely and unhappy [. . . ] and if you’re not corresponding with him already, it would be nice if you sat down some time and wrote him.69

Faulkner replied on September 20:

I’ll write to Hemingway. Poor bloke, to have to marry three times to find out that marriage is a failure, and the only way to get any peace out of it is (if you are fool enough to marry at all) keep the first one and stay as far away from her as much as you can, with the hope of some day outliving her. At least you will be safe then from any other one marrying you—which is bound to happen if you ever divorce her. Apparently man can be cured of drugs, drink, gambling, biting his nails and picking his nose, but not of marrying.70

Having marital problems of his own—namely, his alcoholism and affair with Meta—Faulkner ostensibly empathized with the “lonely” Hemingway’s

domestic problems. Apparently, he did not think that Hemingway would be a good “manager,” because he never acknowledges the statement, nor mentions Hemingway’s writing. Such an omission manifests his competitiveness and points toward some of Hemingway’s psychological influence. This episode is one of several showing how “Faulkner swung wildly between the poles of overconfidence and a feeling of failure” and wariness, as Hemingway had, too. Faulkner seems confident enough artistically that he saw no need to be managed by Hemingway, yet his desire to eclipse him indicates a related desire to avoid social contact with such a worthy, equally canonized writer whose fame and wealth were markedly brighter than his own.

The Portable Faulkner created a potential connection between the authors, because it had been suggested at Random House that Hemingway write its introduction. Both Cowley and Faulkner objected to Robert Linscott, then Senior Editor. Cowley wrote Linscott on February 12, 1946, to suggest Conrad Aiken, Kay Boyle, and Jean-Paul Sartre as better candidates: “an introduction by [Hemingway] might be in dubious taste—but he has a lot to say about Faulkner, mostly on the credit side.”72 Faulkner wrote to Linscott on March 22:

I am opposed to asking Hemingway to write the preface. It seems to me in bad taste to ask him to write a preface to my stuff. It’s like asking one race horse in the middle of a race to broadcast a blurb on another horse in the same running field. A preface should be done by a preface writer, not a fictioneer; certainly not by one man on another in his own limited field. This sort of mutual back-scratching reduces novelists and poets to the status of a kind of eunuch-capon pampered creatures in some spiritual Vanderbilt stables, mindless, possessing nothing save the ability and willingness to run their hearts out at the drop of Vanderbilt’s hat.

The woods are full of people who like to make a nickel expressing opinions on the work of novelists. Cant you get one of them?73

Faulkner respected Hemingway but seemed to like the social distance keeping them at arm’s—or text’s—length. As Hemingway would do more astringently in the 1950s, Faulkner links writing and gender, noting that the positive public commentary associated with an introduction would be analogous to making a (male) writer into an ineffectual, eunuch-like figure, one slavishly faithful to someone else. He also continues the use of equine metaphors but makes no mention of Hemingway’s letter to Cowley from

71. Parini, 296.
the previous October. Their racehorse metaphors connote that Faulkner and Hemingway saw themselves to be in an artistic match race—one on one, winner take all, but without “expressing [positive] opinions.”

In the earlier letter to Cowley, Hemingway temporarily displaced his competitiveness and saw Faulkner as a horse in need of management and training, whereas, in his letter to Linscott, Faulkner saw Hemingway as a horse against which he was racing. Although Hemingway generally took their mano a mano contest more seriously than Faulkner did, their roles are more equivalent with this common horseracing metaphor. Random House soon dropped the idea of Hemingway’s writing the introduction; Cowley eventually wrote it, creating a key document in early Faulkner criticism. The collection, as we know, helped revive Faulkner’s reputation, brought many of his books back into print in hardcover, and strengthened his creative drive. Faulkner doubtless did not want to share the recaptured spotlight with Hemingway. Both before and after the *Portable*, he had significant financial and personal problems, and bringing Hemingway into the equation would possibly have split the critics’ focus.

After *The Portable Faulkner*, Cowley kept up his correspondence with both authors. In the spring of 1948, *Life* commissioned him to write a short biographical essay on Hemingway. He and his family flew to Havana on March 7; Cowley talked with Hemingway about his past, his work, and his family. Eagerly embracing his role as an intermediary between such major figures, Cowley provided Faulkner with a brief report on July 20, 1948:

> Hemingway loves being a great man, it's something he needs and demands, and nobody begrudges it to him because he keeps paying for it at every moment in terms of kindness and attention and thoughtfulness to anyone around him. […] It's a curious life for a writer […] and Hemingway is a curious and very likeable person and drinks enough to put almost anyone else in the alcoholic ward—then spends much of the night reading because he can't sleep and goes to work in the morning on the big novel he's had around for seven or eight years and doesn't know when he'll finish; […] You would stifle and go crazy in the mob that surrounds him.

This letter borders on literary gossip about Hemingway’s drinking and writing troubles but shows Cowley trying to give Faulkner a window into his life and shape the images of the authors as his own critical work did. Though he does not tell Faulkner to write to Hemingway, he still attempts to put them in communication. According to Cowley, Faulkner never responded to

this letter, so we may not know for sure what he thought about Hemingway’s alcoholism, writer’s block, and finances—perhaps a modicum of empathy, given his similar creative troubles; perhaps gratitude, given that he had no such regular “mob” in Oxford.

After Cowley’s *Life* profile of Hemingway was published in January 1949, he wanted to write a similar one of Faulkner—who felt differently, as a February 11 letter indicates:

> I saw the *Life* with your Hemingway piece. I didn’t read it but I know it’s all right or you wouldn’t have put your name on it; for which reason I know Hemingway thinks it’s all right and I hope it will profit him—if there is any profit or increase or increment that a brave man and an artist can lack or need or want.

> But I am more convinced and determined than ever that this is not for me. I will protest to the last: no photographs, no recorded documents. It is my ambition to be, as a private individual, abolished and voided from history, leaving it markless, no refuse save the printed books; I wish I had had enough sense to see ahead thirty years ago and, like some of the Elizabethans, not signed them. It is my aim, and every effort bent, that the sum and history of my life, which in the same sentence is my obit and epitaph too, shall be them both: He made the books and he died.75

Unwilling to sacrifice his privacy to *Life*—or any periodical—Faulkner preferred directing his artistic energy toward his fiction, advocating an almost anti-author image here. He, of course, “made” a few more books and won a few more major awards before “he died,” but with some public exposure. He is hopeful, even happy, for his “brave” coeval, whose presence was ubiquitous in the public sphere, often due to Hemingway’s own efforts. Still, Faulkner demarcates them, as he claims not to have read the *Life* piece. Whether he had, these authors typically read anything they could by or about each other. By not (admitting to?) reading the *Life* profile, Faulkner may have been trying to veil some unease concerning Hemingway’s greater fame, wealth, and cultural attention. This implicit financial self-doubt counterbalanced his own vast artistic accomplishments, which can be said to have eclipsed Hemingway’s. Always a more private figure, he tried separating himself from Hemingway’s psychological impact: he implies here that he focused almost solely on his own writing, while Hemingway focused on writing and publicity. At this point, Faulkner seems to have thought it better for himself as an author to be known for his work, not for publicity, photographs, and pro-

files in popular magazines. This was “an admirable wish, and one unfamiliar in most literary circles, where self-promotion has tended (in the modern era) to run rampant—in part because of Hemingway’s egregious example.” “Faulkner may also have rejected the idea of another profile,” Parini continues, “because he hated the inevitable comparison to Hemingway.” He may have “hated” being linked to a writer whose style so differed from his own, but he was often eager to compare himself to Hemingway favorably and rank himself above his peers, at least privately. Or so he thought.

**BROTHERS SHOOTING IT OUT**

Two years before his comments about a *Life* profile, Faulkner’s perception of his own stronger writing informed the ranking he offered at the University of Mississippi in April 1947 about Hemingway (4th) being inferior to Wolfe (1st), himself (2nd), and Dos Passos (3rd). After Faulkner’s remarks were publicized, the fourth-best writer reacted to the perceived skepticism about his masculine courage. In a marked role reversal, Faulkner was the aggressor, Hemingway the target. His ostensibly impromptu comments about Hemingway, their guarded responses, Faulkner’s later comments, and his subtly disparaging Hemingway are the summa of their dialectic. Never before had they communicated directly, nor would they ever do so, judging by the known correspondence. Faulkner’s ranking reverberated: he and Hemingway wrote each other afterwards; he tried to clarify his standards while insisting on his placement’s accuracy and implying his own superiority; and, his ranking resounded loudly in Hemingway’s mind.

Between April 14 and 17, Faulkner conducted six question-and-answer sessions with upper-level students at the University of Mississippi, an early version of the writer-as-academic role he would embody more fully at the University of Virginia a decade later. As Oxford’s most famous native son, Faulkner returned to the university—where he was briefly a student after the First World War—to share his knowledge and experiences. In debt and, consequently, in Hollywood for much of the decade, Faulkner agreed to these class conferences partly for economic reasons. Ole Miss paid him $250 for the six sessions, and his involvement with the university was likely a way of promoting Ole Miss. He was assured that students would not be allowed to take notes and that professors would not be present; he used these meetings to discuss writing, past and present authors (e.g., Joyce and Anderson), his own work, and his personal war fictions (still thought to be true). It all

77. Blotner, *Faulkner*, 481.
seemed innocent enough; he just wanted to make some money and help out the English Department of the adopted alma mater he attended sporadically in the 1920s. Despite the agreement, students took notes, faculty were present, and Faulkner’s comments eventually reached an audience much larger than a handful of English majors and professors. Marvin Black, then Ole Miss’s public relations director, wrote a press release summarizing Faulkner’s various comments, including his list and his claim that Hemingway “has no courage, has never crawled out on a limb.” Black’s release ran in the May 11 New York Herald Tribune, which Hemingway eventually received in Cuba.78 This occurrence—perhaps an oversight, or Black’s inability to resist such promising gossip between literary heavyweights—bore the direct, tense communication between Faulkner and Hemingway.

While the ranking was not the kind of ad hominem attack Hemingway would eagerly direct his way in the 1950s, it demonstrated Faulkner’s competitiveness and felt influence. Having dueled with Hemingway since the 1930s, Faulkner must have known that Hemingway would answer his remarks harshly and combatively, no matter how private or unintentionally provocative they seemed to him. Whereas Faulkner was never as stridently competitive as Hemingway, he was rather strong-willed and confident. His persona did not have the cultural reach or appearance of masculine bravado of Hemingway’s; Faulkner’s was of a more provincial, genteel tenor, revealing him as more of a creative than an active writer. Nevertheless, he wanted exemplary professional acclaim and masculinity, which surely contributed to the “curious episode” that

illuminated [ . . . ] his egoism, his need for personal aggrandizement, his depreciation of the man competing with him for the Nobel Prize. If we read between the lines—and Faulkner did not explain why he had made the rankings nor did he pull back from their “veracity”—we see a writer desperate for attention and fame, even while fighting against the release of publicity materials.79

In some respects, this was “a basically unfair assessment of Hemingway” downplaying his “equally adventurous foray into literature.”80 Moreover, “[h]aving struck a nerve, Faulkner never took anything back. Even his public praise for some of Hemingway’s work [ . . . ] did not address, let alone erase, the charge first leveled in 1947 and voiced numerous times thereafter.”81 Karl and Monteiro rightly note that Faulkner never withdrew his suggestion of

78. Ibid., 483.
79. Karl, 759.
80. Ibid., 758.
his superiority, or of Hemingway’s inadequate risk-taking. He would only apologize for his comments being publicized and misunderstood. Perhaps he thought them true, his more toned-down persona to the contrary. Such feelings of eminence bespoke his renewed professional confidence, as had his return to Flem Snopes in the late 1930s in what became *The Hamlet*. The novel revealed “his own aggressive self. This side of him had always been there, as in the young man who was determined to recover for himself the glory lost over generations in the Falkner clan.” In concert with his competitiveness, drive to be America’s top writer, and completion of the Snopes saga in *The Town* (1957) and *The Mansion* (1959), Faulkner’s “aggressive self” had engaged with Hemingway, had “always been there” implicitly yet sharply.

Hemingway was incensed when he discovered that Faulkner had placed him fourth in a field of five writers. Initially, he took great umbrage at the ranking, because he predictably misconstrued Faulkner’s meaning of “courage.” Whereas Faulkner was referring to his artistic courage, he read the comments as questioning his masculine courage. This distinction between artistic and physical courage speaks to how they saw their professional identities. Faulkner distinguished Hemingway as *man* and *author*, while Hemingway nearly always coupled Faulkner the *man* and *author*. One also sees this in “old corn-drinking mellifluous,” the sobriquet that he shared with Harvey Breit in a February 1955 letter. “[C]orn-drinking” refers to Faulkner’s troubled personal life, while “mellifluous” refers to his writing, whose verbosity and floridity Hemingway thought caused by alcohol. Hemingway—arguably the most competitive American writer of their era, or any other—equated *man* and *author*, seen in his frequent attacks against other writers. Faulkner’s comments had given Hemingway the impression that he saw himself as both a better author and as a better man. This, of course, did not sit well with Hemingway, who retaliated against what he perceived as a two-front attack on his literary and masculine worth.

Hemingway was so heated that he asked General Buck Lanham to attest to his battlefield (read masculine) courage. News of his fourth-place ranking had come at a bad time for Hemingway, who was in a particularly troubled mood—Patrick was recovering from a concussion, Mary had a bad case of the flu, and his longtime editor Max Perkins had died on June 17.

82. Parini, 232.
vented to his wife and Lanham. His “black ass,” as he called it, momentarily in check, he told Mary on June 26 of the situation. After relating domestic matters—Patrick’s health, his own sleeping—he recounted the Faulkner episode and Lanham’s four-page letter defending his heroism:

I could never be 10% as good or as [Lanham] claimed but he went into particulars about the break through—Normandy—Rambouillet, the rat race Siegfried, Schnee Eifel, Hurtgen and the Bulge fight and while I dont want to make Mr. Faulkner feel bad and like him and think he is a good writer Bucks letter will make him realize that there are or have been other wars since the Civil War—and Buck didnt say so but it will occur to him, I guess, that he wasnt there. I wish I could buy him a drink and tell him it doesnt mean a damn thing and I’m glad he wasnt there and wish he’d just write so I can read it.

[...]

But it may have been good for Mr. Faulkner and might even shock him into writing, which would be good. Because we’re all our own ancestors now [...]

Regardless of Hemingway’s assertion that he admires and wants to avoid lashing out at Faulkner, he misconstrues Faulkner’s comments somewhat condescendingly, implying much more than he says. Responding to the charge of his artistic limitations, Hemingway counters with his own, effectively downplaying Faulkner’s professional worth, distinguishing the authors, and advocating his own literary and experiential superiority. He notes apparent limits in Faulkner’s life and art, namely, his connection to war and implication that he too narrowly focuses on one war, effectively ignoring the artistic and cultural importance Hemingway grafted onto both World Wars. Because Faulkner was not in Europe, Hemingway’s logic goes, he lacks the real-world experience necessary for the modern writer and was somewhat sheltered in Civil War-obsessed Oxford. As well, that the ranking seems meaningless is disingenuous; Faulkner’s comments rankled Hemingway, hence his dispatching Lanham to defend him and sharply criticizing Faulkner. Hemingway’s tendency toward gendered misprision is also apparent. Faulkner made no overt claim about his physical courage, but he interpreted the “courage” remark as suggesting such, while perhaps implying his own greater manhood because he was “there” in Europe.

This letter embodies Hemingway’s mixed feelings about Faulkner: worthy

of respect but thematically limited. Hemingway rebutted Faulkner’s apparent accusation of his cowardice by referencing his own action in World War II. Conversely, Hemingway’s idea that Faulkner’s absence from the Second World War implies that his artistic presence was still strong, and that he would welcome a jumpstart to Faulkner’s writing. His remarks about Faulkner often followed suit: he recognized Faulkner’s talent, was unsettled by it, and then lashed out. Although he experienced similar “black ass” throughout his life and became increasingly skeptical of Faulkner, Hemingway’s emotional state had righted itself by the time he wrote to his wife, later enabling him to think about and respond to Faulkner somewhat rationally and civilly.

Before such civility, though, came bitterness, anxiety, and belligerence. These remarks about Hemingway’s suspect artistic courage had stung particularly hard because they had come from his Ur-adversary. Although Faulkner did not attack Hemingway’s manhood, he painted Hemingway’s art as limited, sometimes formulaic, and inferior, effectively setting the stage for his later quasi-apologies. Hemingway felt that Lanham could best defend and attest to his courage. Lanham, who was with Hemingway during the fighting in the Hürtgen Forest and vouched for his battlefield composure, wrote Faulkner on June 24, noting that Hemingway was “without exception the most courageous man I have ever known, both in war and in peace. He has physical courage, and he has that far rarer commodity, moral courage.”

Lanham also seems to have sent Faulkner a copy of Hemingway’s Bronze Medal Citation, which Hemingway had received in mid-June and presumably forwarded to Lanham; the award reads, in part, “[Hemingway] displayed a broad familiarity with modern military science, interpreting and evaluating the campaigns and operations of friendly and enemy forces, circulating freely under fire in combat areas in order to obtain an accurate picture of conditions.” Hand in hand with the Bronze Medal Citation, Lanham’s recounting of these various battles doubtless struck Faulkner as proof of his coeval’s courage. Although both men exaggerated their war experiences, Hemingway was wounded in the First World War and very much in harm’s way during the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War. Faulkner may have thought himself a better artist, but he knew that, of the two, only Hemingway had proven himself in battle.

Sounding a bit humbled and conciliatory, Faulkner responded on June 28. He admitted knowing of Hemingway’s military résumé, stressed that his ranking was not a personal attack, and then apologized. If he had intended his ranking to only be insulting, any such vitriol is absent in this letter: “it had no reference whatever to Hemingway as a man: only to his craftsman-

86. Qtd. in Baker, 461.
87. Citation for Bronze Star Medal, June 1947.
ship as a writer. I know of his record in two wars and in Spain, too.” Further,

In one of [the class sessions] I was asked to rate the greatest American writers. I answered, I wouldn’t attempt it since I believed no man could, but (after further insistence) I would give my own personal rating of my own coevals: the men whose names were most often connected with mine since we began to write.

“I think we all failed (in that none of us had yet the stature of Dickens, Dostoyevsky, Balzac, Thackeray, etc.). That Hemingway was next since he did not have the courage to get out on a limb as the others did, to risk bad taste, over-writing, dullness, etc.”

This was elaborated of course. I spoke extemporaneously, without notes, as I believed at the time, informally, not for publication. Your letter was my first intimation that it had been released, and from what you re-quoted, garbled and incomplete.

I’m sorry of it. A copy of this goes to Hemingway, with a covering note. Whatever other chances I have to correct it, I shall certainly take.88

On the same day, Faulkner dashed off a contrite note; “Dear Hemingway,” he began,

I’m sorry of this damn stupid thing. I was just making $250.00, I thought informally, not for publication, or I would have insisted on looking at the stuff before it was released. I have believed for years that the human voice has caused all human ills and I thought I had broken myself of talking. Maybe this will be my valedictory lesson.

I hope it wont matter a damn to you. But if or when or whever it does, please accept another squirm from yours truly.89

By Faulkner’s explanation, Lanham and Hemingway should think that his remarks were unplanned, unknowingly printed, and, more importantly, not meant to be in the hands of the antagonistic man whom he thought was the fourth-best contemporary writer. He emphasizes that he was appraising Hemingway as an artist, upholding the man–author distinction and admiring him for his firsthand combat experience. Faulkner likely wanted to avoid exacerbating an already tense situation, or else this letter may have been confrontational, or never even written. In part, he also probably feared angering the ever-sensitive and pugnacious Hemingway, lest they engage in a protracted public war of words that would adversely affect his private

89. Ibid., 251–52.
lifestyle and regenerating creativity. Relatedly, their respective performances of gender are at odds here: Faulkner’s reserved masculine demeanor often sought mitigation or gentility, while Hemingway’s hyper-macho attitude typically sought conflict, be it real or imagined. “[A]n enacted fantasy or incorporation” of their era’s socialized masculinities, Faulkner’s and Hemingway’s acting out their masculine constructs “constitute[s] the identity they are said to reveal,” namely, a more self-confident pose and more aggressive affect, respectively.\footnote{Butler, 136, 141.} Despite some differences in tone and degree, both men’s codes of manhood were culturally rooted and performed with some eagerness, seen here in their association of war, authorial competition, and the male writer’s life and work.

Their differing modes of masculine performance notwithstanding, Faulkner’s friendly tone affected Hemingway, who responded amicably on July 16. “Dear Bill,” he opened:

\begin{quote}
The hell with the whole thing. I’m sorry that you were misquoted and that Gen. Buck Lanham went to the trouble of writing the letter on the misquote and that you should have to write to me and to Buck. Thank you very much for doing so.

Buck was my best friend on the rat race and in the real fighting afterwards in the Schnee Eifel, Hurtgen woods, and Luxemburg and so don’t take it too seriously any good things he might say about me. He is a great soldier and the best regimental commander I ever knew and I wish you could meet sometime. Maybe we can all three get together.

Please know that none of it means a damn to me now we know what it was about. Would fight anytime for your right to call me any sort of son of a bitch as a writer even though might disagree. Same way would be glad to shoot it out over any personal points of honor. Only I hope I’d shoot to miss you on account of wanting to keep you as a writer. Actually I know I would.

You are so much better writer than Wolfe [that I] cannot understand how you can be fooled by the bulk of his stuff. [. . .]

I hope you’re well and that your family are and that you’re working good. I’d like to get together with you [. . .] and drink a little and talk. There are very few of us left.

Very best to you always, [Hemingway’s signature]\footnote{Hemingway, Letter to William Faulkner, July 16, 1947. ©2012 Printed with the permission of The Ernest Hemingway Foundation.} \end{quote}
ness to Faulkner’s criticisms yet implies his own competing artistic vision. His imagined duel thinly veils his hostility and shows Hemingway’s willingness to fight such a duel—an imagined (and desired) gunfight was seemingly a code of his manhood. In such a symbolic duel, Hemingway would only “hope” to miss his aim. Because he did not write something to the effect of “I would shoot to miss you,” he reveals the figurative violence of his persona. He could have retyped or otherwise clarified the wording here, but the letter shows no emendations, crossings-out, or marginal corrections. To a mostly symbolic degree, Hemingway may have wanted his words to have connotations of violence. In his mind, if Faulkner thought that he could imagine shooting at him, then that would dissuade him from questioning Hemingway’s unassailable courage and masculinity.

As in many other Hemingway letters, there is a volatile fusion of admiration and agon (or, conflict) here. Faulkner ranked Wolfe first; Hemingway rethinks this ranking, implying that Faulkner should have ranked himself first instead of second, or perhaps that Faulkner is not good at ranking their contemporaries. Wolfe, Hemingway notes, was greatly helped by Max Perkins, who pared down Wolfe’s verbose prose and enhanced his worth. Feeling a certain affinity with Faulkner as a fellow modernist (“us”), he ostensibly continued Faulkner’s attempts at mollification by twice suggesting that they meet and drink together, though it seems that they never did meet judging by biographical evidence. As he also did in his June 26 letter to Mary, Hemingway understates his military résumé by admitting that Lanham may have exaggerated and that Faulkner should not believe everything Lanham said about him. This letter’s amicable comments, salutation, and valediction seem aberrational, given that Hemingway had spoken—and would speak—ill of Faulkner elsewhere and that he was antagonistic toward other authors. His past reservations about Faulkner aside—for one, that he did not know how to end a sentence—Hemingway seems to value him as an important American writer, which is also why he suggests their imagined duel over literary prominence. Hemingway seems to have sent Lanham a copy of his letter, likely to vent his ire while remaining relatively civil when writing to Faulkner. Hemingway may no longer have been overtly angry, but Lanham was, thinking that Faulkner “must be a bastard underneath” for admiring a war he had not seen firsthand.92

On July 19, Faulkner responded to the amicable tenor of Hemingway’s letter and their mutual attempt to allay the new tension between them. “Dear Brother H,”

Thank you for your letter. I feel much better, not completely all right; I owed Lanham an apology and I hope he accepted it but the bloke I’m still eating shit to is Faulkner. I cringe a little at my own name in printed gossip; I hate like hell to have flung any other man’s into it. Damn stupid business, one of those trivial things you throw off just talking, a nebulous idea of no value anyway, that you test by saying it.

[. . .] Take a thing like Madame Bovary (not the woman: the book) or your Alpine Idyll or that one of Joyce’s about the woman playing the piano [“The Dead”]. [. . .] It’s finished, complete, all the trash hacked off and thrown away, 3 dimensions and solid like a block of ice or marble; nothing more than even God could do to it; it’s hard, durable, the same anywhere in fluid time; you can write another as hard and as durable if you are good enough but you can’t beat it. That’s on the one hand.

On the other is this: say you capture the light rays that contained London in 1830–1840; if you keep on turning corners long enough you will meet face to face Mrs Gamp carrying the same umbrella and the cloth bag with the same bottle of gin in it, or a hundred years further back and you will see Tom Jones come charging out of the bushes scrabbling at his fly with one hand and snatching Thwackum’s cudgel away from him with the other. That’s what I meant about Wolfe and (second to him) Dos Passos—some truth now and then out of the junk, and Dos P. second (since there are no degrees of truth) because with him the gross bulk and mass is smaller.

I wish I’d said it that way. But even then it would have been misquoted probably, as most things not worth saying in the [first] place usually are. But what [I] wish most is I’d never said it at all, or that I could forget having done so, which perhaps I could and would if it had not been about a first rate man.

Having signed the letter “Bill F.,” Faulkner again praises Hemingway’s talents, calls him a “first rate man” (though apparently still fourth-place writer), downgrades his own statement to “a nebulous idea of no value anyway,” and suggests his respect. He may not have taken such pains to clarify his statements if he had minimal respect for—or had not been wary of—Hemingway. That Faulkner equates him with Flaubert, Joyce, and others suggests that “An Alpine Idyll” is as sound as Madame Bovary, “The Dead,” Martin Chuzzlewit, and Tom Jones. This separates Hemingway from Wolfe and Dos Passos who only express “some truth” in their work. The salutation of each letter is also suggestive: Faulkner wrote to “Hemingway” on June 28 but to “Brother H” on July 19. The two men could speak directly with some mutual admira-

tion, despite Hemingway’s imagined duel. Faulkner’s competitiveness and masculinity did not entail (symbolic) violence as Hemingway’s did, and he may have been wary of more “printed gossip.” Still, he likely wanted to keep the upper hand: moral courage defined “the exact terms by which his rivalry with Hemingway might serve him in the shaping of his own lasting reputation,” emblematic of how each defined himself with and against the other, and of how Faulkner never retracted his statement and often reiterated his own superiority.94

Hemingway reciprocated Faulkner’s praise in his July 23 response, a very encouraging letter of several pages, the longest that either had written to the other. Here, “Brother H” called himself Faulkner’s “brother” twice, likely to alleviate the ill will that the ranking and his reaction to it effected. “Dear Bill,” this lengthy letter begins:

Awfully glad to hear from you and glad to have made contact. Your letter came tonight and please throw all the other stuff away, the misunderstanding. [. . .] There isn’t any at all. I was sore and Buck was sore and we were instantly unsore the minute we knew the score.

I know what you mean about T. Wolfe and Dos and still can’t agree. I never felt the link-up in Wolfe except with the N.C. stuff. Dos I always liked and respected and thought was a 2nd rate writer on acct. no ear. 2nd rate boxer has no left hand, same as ear to writer, and so gets his brains knocked out and this happened to Dos with every book. Also terrible snob (on acct. of being a bastard) [. . .]

You picked a very cold one of mine ["An Alpine Idyll"] to make the comparison on about the great thing we would all like to do. To make it really how it was any really good morning—but I tried to get way past that [in For Whom the Bell Tolls]. [. . .] Probably bore the shit out of you to re-read but as brother would like to know what you think. Anyway is as good as I can write and was taking all chances (for a pitcher who, when has control, can throw fairly close) could take. (Probably failed.)

Difference with us guys is I always lived out of country (as mercenary or patriot) since kid. My own country gone. Trees cut down. Nothing left but gas stations, sub-divisions where we hunted snipe on the prairie, etc. [. . .] Been chickenshit displaced person since I can remember but fought each time before we lost (and this last time we fought with most stuff and it was the easiest and we lost the worst). Things never been worse than now.

You are a better writer than Fielding or any of those guys and you should know it and keep on writing. You have things written that come back to me

better than any of them and I am not dopy, really. You shouldn't read the shit about liveing writers. You should always write your best against dead writers that we know what stature (not stature: evocative power) that they have and beat them one by one. Why do you want to fight Dosto[y]evsky in your first fight? Beat Turgenieff—which we both did soundly. [. . . ] Then nail yourself DeMaupassant (tough boy until he got the old rale. Still dangerous for three rounds.) Then try to take Stendhal. (Take him and we're all happy.) But don't fight with the poor pathological characters of our time (we won't name). You and I can both beat Flaubert who is our most respected, honored master. [. . . ] Anyway I am your Bro. if you want one that writes and I'd like us to keep in touch. My middle kid (Pat) very sick now 4 months. Had to feed rectally 45 days. [. . . ] Please excuse if write stupidly. This most talented boy. Oldest very . . . nice. Capt Paratroops 3 times wounded etc. Prisoner 6 months. We mounted attack to get him out of hock when first taken P.O.W. and accessible (drop) but was cancelled. This boy [Gregory] (sick) good painter, head smashed in auto accident his kid bro. driveing. Excuse chickenshit letter. Have much regard for you. Would like to keep on writing.

As usual, Hemingway sees writing competitively, as if he were boxing with Flaubert or Turgenev. However, he suggests that he and Faulkner symbolically join forces against the canon of Western literature, implying that Faulkner’s artistic talents are comparable to his own. Continuing the rhetorical strategy of Faulkner’s July 19 letter, Hemingway employs brotherly language to suggest a modernist siblinghood, insofar as they both felt a professional connection and artistic sibling rivalry. In a symbolic sense, Hemingway inadvertently recognizes Sherwood Anderson’s role as his and Faulkner’s literary progenitor who begat psychological influence-anxiety in both of his mentees, a dynamic that they would repeat in their own vexed relationship. Envisioning them as fraternal though competitive, Hemingway praises Faulkner’s writing and mildly belittles his own by suggesting *For Whom the Bell Tolls* was a creative disappointment. Faulkner may have considered this “failure” a good thing, considering that his ranking was based on how much Wolfe and others failed in their attempts at experimentation. Hemingway, though, seems concerned that “An Alpine Idyll” is dated and that Faulkner does not judge him on the basis of his less “cold,” more progressive works. Hemingway’s admission of his chance-taking in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* indicates a shared psychocompetitive influence. He invokes Faulkner’s criticism of his “never crawl[ing] out on a limb” and taking artistic risks, essentially arguing for his ability to innovate and be as progressive as Faulkner was.

Hemingway could easily have omitted the emotional commentary on how
he has been geographically uprooted (in sharp contrast to the more rooted Faulkner) or on his sons, but he may have wanted to communicate more personally. Surprisingly, he expressed friendly, apologetic remarks, even though he was becoming increasingly prone to fits of paranoia and anger against Mary, his sons, and friends during and after the late 1940s. Hemingway's writing a long, cordial letter rather than a short, indifferent one implies a feeling of intellectual camaraderie with Faulkner. This “friendly response,” though, “was on a good day. Time and again, when the paranoia, lurking beneath the surface of his reason, became full blown, he would come back to Faulkner’s inadvertent insult, reopening the old wound.”

His friendliness shows that, at least in this letter, he saw more in Faulkner than the verbose, alcohol-inspired writing and seemingly endless sentences he often maligned. He would abandon such friendliness in later letters and revisit his ideas about Faulkner’s apparent “failures,” often harshly.

Faulkner’s ranking initially came across as disparaging of Dos Passos, Hemingway, and Steinbeck, but his clarification and apologies suggest that he did not only mean to insult Hemingway. Had he meant to affront Hemingway, he could have let Lanham’s response go unanswered, or he could have come back with further criticisms. His ranking became public, and thus harder to rein in, when an account of it ran in the New York Herald Tribune. Faulkner learned of the release of this apparent gossip, and he seemed anxious to clarify what he had said, meant to say, or wanted to appear to have said about Hemingway. Faulkner’s different attitudes, however, indicate a split in his persona: his reserved side wanted to avoid open confrontation with another writer, particularly one so truculent as Hemingway; his private, daemonic side may have wanted to disparage Hemingway’s literary reputation and elevate his own. His public guise was measurably different—he probably would not have responded to Wallace Stevens’s criticisms with fisticuffs as Hemingway did in 1936—yet he wanted to have the edge in their increasingly heated competition. Suggesting that he was the best living writer and pointing out Hemingway’s artistic limitations enabled Faulkner to gain professional advantage while not appearing as overtly aggressive as Hemingway.

While they had felt, and would continue to feel, competitive, there is no clear-cut acrimony in the letters they exchanged. Yet, their shared psychological influence is implicit. Faulkner and Hemingway suggest an awareness of each other’s talents, abilities, and worth through their positive, respectful remarks—Hemingway’s imagined, perhaps hoped-for, duel excepted. While they eschewed outright personal attacks and antipathy in their direct correspondence, recognizing each other’s merit may have made them even more

96. Reynolds, Hemingway: The Final Years, 158.
anxious to look better. Such added motivation effected more psychocompetitive influence and more intertextual commentary and allusion. They followed this pattern from 1947 until the mid-1950s, and their intertextual sparring peaked in the wake of Faulkner’s ranking, his Nobel Prize (1950), Hemingway’s Nobel Prize (1954), and numerous comments until 1955. Faulkner’s ranking had primed them for this last, most tense period of their rivalry.

In the summer of 1947, these modernist “brothers” got as close as they ever would to a social relationship. While they did not continue corresponding, Faulkner and Hemingway produced a short-lived connection that embodied the complex attitudes of their dynamic: influence-anxiety, admiration, disdain, and competitiveness. They may have traded compliments, but they would continue to criticize, rival, and begrudgingly respect each other. Faulkner’s pivotal ranking and the aftermath effected his and Hemingway’s only direct communication in which they saw each other as dueling artistic siblings, painted each other as worthy competitors, and revitalized their rivalry and guarded mutual esteem.

ALL APOLOGIES?: NEW YORK, NAGANO, CHARLOTTESVILLE

The ramifications of Faulkner’s ranking went well beyond July 1947; he had to revisit this episode: in a profile by Harvey Breit, “A Walk with Faulkner” (Times Book Review, January 30, 1955); in Nagano, Japan (August 1955); and as Writer-in-Residence at the University of Virginia (1957–1958). That Faulkner’s critical remarks reverberated for so long—both in Hemingway’s mind and in Faulkner’s audiences in Japan and Virginia—seems to be part of their inherent agon and cultural standing. The ranking echoed in Hemingway’s mind in the 1950s; this suggests its potential accuracy and, by extension, his growing anxiety over Faulkner’s late achievements and competitive influence. The appeal of two confident, accomplished authors publicly sparring could have attuned some readers and critics to their subsequent interactions to see when and how Hemingway would respond, or if Faulkner’s remarks were accurate.

Just as Faulkner had to clarify his comments after his ranking was publicized, he was anxious to avoid any further interruptions or misinterpretations. He still respected Hemingway to a degree, but he privileged his own creative responsibilities. While Faulkner did not fear that Hemingway would fight him as he fought with Wallace Stevens and Max Eastman, he was certainly wary of further public squabbling interfering with his self-imposed
privacy and more understated way of dealing with Hemingway in his own writing, not the press. He preferred his private, if provincial, creativity as a forum for rivaling Hemingway and articulating his own aesthetics. Regardless of his criticisms, Faulkner was largely positive when revisiting his comments in New York, Japan, and Virginia; yet, he tempered his praise, noting Hemingway’s achievements and limitations. When he spoke publicly in the 1950s, he seemed to choose his words carefully, granting Hemingway the Alpha Male role yet self-confidently feeling himself the better artist. This is one of the ways that their personalities and masculinities differed—Faulkner would either brush off Hemingway’s criticisms or respond indirectly, whereas Hemingway would threaten violence and respond directly and aggressively. Their dynamic was tense enough without regular social encounters—one can only wonder what would have happened had Hemingway and Faulkner seen each other with any regularity.

In “A Walk with Faulkner,” he explained to Breit: “The work never matches the dream of perfection the artist had to start with. [. . . ] I had in mind this dream of perfection and how the best contemporary writers failed to match it.”

“I was asked [. . . ] who were the five best contemporary writers and how did I rate them. And I said Wolfe, Hemingway, Dos Passos, Caldwell and myself. I rated Wolfe first, myself second. I put Hemingway last. I said we were all failures. All of us had failed to match the dream of perfection and I rated the authors on the basis of their splendid failure to do the impossible. I believed Wolfe tried to do the greatest of the impossible, that he tried to reduce all human experience to literature. And I thought after Wolfe I had tried the most. I rated Hemingway last because he stayed within what he knew. He did it fine, but he didn’t try for the impossible.

[. . . ] “I rated those authors by the way in which they failed to match the dream of perfection,” he said. “This had nothing to do with the value of the work, the impact or perfection of its own kind that it had. I was talking only about the magnificence of the failure, the attempt to do the impossible within human experience.”

First contrasting himself with Hemingway, Faulkner implies that his artistic endeavors are regnant. Faulkner always took more artistic chances; their varying degrees of experimentation, in his mind, differentiated them and justified his own higher ranking. Although he may have some of the facts wrong—about ranking Hemingway last, not fourth; about including

97. Qtd. in Meriwether and Millgate, 81–82.
Caldwell, not Steinbeck—he seemingly evaluated Hemingway on the basis of his artistic courage, not physical courage. Including himself in this list of “failures,” Faulkner reiterates that his critique referred only to Hemingway’s writing—which “did it fine” but was not pushed far enough. Though, by Faulkner’s logic, Hemingway had failed the least as an artist, he was still below Wolfe, Dos Passos, and himself; he would have been a more successful “failure” had he lived up to his potential and experimented more. If Faulkner had meant to denounce Hemingway’s work patently, he may not have been so thorough in his clarification—perhaps he would have simply indicated that the comment was misconstrued or brushed off the question. Of course, he said much more to Breit and, indirectly, to Hemingway himself, since Hemingway was always anxious to hear anything that Faulkner said about him.

Presumably, Faulkner cared something about what Hemingway thought of him, but more so about protecting his public image, as he showed in Japan. In August 1955, Faulkner visited Nagano to participate in a meeting of about fifty Japanese professors of American literature. At a press conference soon after his arrival, Faulkner was asked about Hemingway’s artistic limits, a question that would be repeated in various forms and forums. He responded,

I thought that he found out early what he could do and he stayed inside of that. He never did try to get outside the boundary of what he really could do and risk failure. He did what he really could do marvelously well, first rate, but to me that is not success but failure [. . .] failure to me is the best. To try something you can’t do, because it’s too much [to hope for], but still to try it and fail, then try it again. That to me is a success.

Q.: Would you consider that narrowness of the world [is a bad thing]?
F.: That is a difficult question, because I would have to be Hemingway to answer that. As Faulkner, I say that it is bad, but if I were Hemingway, who stayed within what he knew and had done a first-rate job like The Old Man and the Sea, maybe. [. . .] But to me that is not enough, to fail is better. To try to do more than you can do.98

Asked about the connection between the writer’s environment and the writer’s style at another seminar, Faulkner brought up Hemingway as an example:

Occasionally there would be one like Hemingway, who through instinct or through good preceptors learned that he could do better by holding to a

98. Qtd. in Jelfiffee, 3–4.
supple, undeviable style, and he trained himself not to be a stylist but to tell
what moved him in that method which his preceptors said, “This is a good
method.” He has stuck to that. He was right to do it, probably, because what
he’s done is very fine. But the others, Wolfe, for instance, and myself, for
instance, we didn’t have the instinct, or the preceptors, or whatever it was,
anyway. We tried to crowd and cram everything, all experience, into each
paragraph, to get the whole complete nuance of the moment’s experience, of
all the recaptured light rays, into each paragraph.99

At another colloquy, Faulkner was asked bluntly about his opinion of
Hemingway:

E.: A very fine talent, a man who knows exactly how to do what he wants
to do.
Q.: And how do you think about his style?
E.: His style is a perfect style in the sense that it suits exactly what he
wants to do with it. He can control it, it never falters. So, if a style can be
perfect it seems to me it must be the style that the man can use exactly and
never fail nor falter with, which I think Hemingway does.100

In what had become a common refrain from his audiences, Faulkner was later
asked to explain his stance on Hemingway, who “had found out early in life
what he could do and he stayed within that pattern; [ . . . ] this judgment had
nothing to do with the value of the work, it was only in what I would call the
magnificence, the splendor, of the failure. [ . . . ] I think that the writer must
want primarily perfection, that that is his one chance while he has breath, to
attain perfection.”101 Faulkner’s repeated praise of Hemingway’s craft seems
genuine because of its recurrence and his public composure while offering
it. His numerous statements in Japan echo his conversation with Breit in the
Times Book Review—he wanted to set the record straight, reservedly praise
Hemingway, and avoid further public backbiting, all the while suggesting his
own prominence. Faulkner’s artistic fraternity with Hemingway notwithstanding, he foregrounds his own artistic principles, always preferring what
he saw as his and Wolfe’s risky “failure” to Hemingway’s technical, though
limited, perfection. Perhaps his ranking, despite its apparently “nebulous”
and extemporaneous nature, was truthful after all.

The impact of his much-discussed ranking reached Faulkner later in the
decade. Two years after his trip to Japan, he was Writer-in-Residence at the

100. Ibid., 88–89.
101. Ibid., 161.
University of Virginia, where he participated in class sessions similar to those at the University of Mississippi in 1947—but without attendant controversy. As he did in Oxford, Faulkner answered a variety of students’ questions about his work, politics, and literary opinions. As Parini notes: “He was an aristocrat now, having adopted another persona,” among them “wounded war veteran, the scruffy artist who hung around the bohemian quarters of New Orleans and Greenwich Village, [. . .] the Nobel Prize-winning man-of-letters,” and others from his past and present. Ten years after his class sessions at Ole Miss, the “professorial writer in residence” was for Faulkner a guise and a job, both befitting of his upper-echelon status in American letters. On March 13, 1957, a student wondered which American writers would leave the most indelible mark:

I don’t want to answer that question because I’m too unfamiliar with contemporary writers. I haven’t read any contemporaries since the three or four of my time, and so often a remark like that in simple talk, it gets out, and someone’s feelings have been hurt that the man that spoke it had no intention of hurting because he didn’t even know he existed, and so for that reason I wouldn’t answer that question at all. I would say that I think that Sherwood Anderson has not received the recognition that he deserves [. . .].

Q. What about Hemingway?
A. Hemingway, now he’s alive, and that’s where I’d better stay out of trouble by saying nothing, you see.

Enacting a persona of the elder literary sage, Faulkner seems reluctant to comment, perhaps fearing a similar misinterpretation of his statement and more “trouble.” He seems to have—and had, for that matter—“no intention of hurting” Hemingway, due to his respect, reluctance to have literary gossip intrude on his private life, preference to avoid rousing Hemingway’s anger, and greater self-confidence. While these comments may not have riled up Hemingway—who likely did not read them—Faulkner foregrounded himself as the better, more experimental craftsman. As such, one again sees the tincture of their shared psychocompetitive motivation: Faulkner engaged with Hemingway more directly and protractedly than any other coeval. He may have felt superior to the “three or four” contemporaries whose work he claimed to know, but he jockeyed Hemingway for prominence so intensely that he often (re)asserted his feelings of superiority whenever Hemingway’s name arose vis-à-vis his.

102. Parini, 413.
103. Qtd. in Gwynn and Blotner, 69–70.
On June 5, 1957, the pattern recurred at another class conference. Having been asked about his admiration for Wolfe, Faulkner’s reply had become practically automatic:

Now that was an unfortunate remark I made. [ . . . ] This was twenty or thirty [ten] years ago. [ . . . ] And I said, Well, I think we all failed, so I will have to rate us on what I consider the splendor of our failure and so this is the way I would rate us, and ever since that I’ve been trying to explain that or live it down. [ . . . ] I rated Hemingway last not on the value of the product at all but simply because of Hemingway having taught himself a pattern, a method which he could use and he stuck to that without splashing around to try to experiment. It had nothing to do with the value of the work at all. It was simply on the degree of the attempt to reach the unattainable dream, to accomplish more than any flesh and blood man could accomplish, could touch.104

Faulkner echoes much of his language from Japan two years earlier—“splendor,” “failure,” “pattern,” and “method,” although he again misremembers the substance and date of his own remarks. He reiterates the mixed sentiment behind these words: that Hemingway was very good, that Faulkner saw even more potential in him, and that Faulkner felt Hemingway had reached his fullest potential and was satisfied to not push himself as far as he pushed himself.105 He implied that his own “failure” was more splendorous, that he advocated “splashing around to try to experiment,” and that his own “degree of the attempt to reach the unattainable” was superior. Because their styles and methods of writing were so thoroughly contradistinctive, self-complimenting often entailed such criticism. Faulkner felt that his greater artistic courage drove him to experiment with narration, structure, and stream of consciousness in Absalom, Absalom!, Intruder in the Dust, and other avant-garde works. Faulkner appreciated Hemingway’s “method” and respected him; he nevertheless tried to outdo him (and himself, in a sense), to “experiment” even more, even if it meant a kind of positive failure.

Reading Faulkner’s 1947 letters to Hemingway concurrently with his later statements about his ranking demonstrates that Faulkner did not want his ranking to be seen solely as derisive commentary on Hemingway himself,

104. Ibid., 206–7.

105. After Faulkner’s death, Nancy Hale, the wife of one of the University of Virginia’s English professors, wrote an article for Vogue entitled “Col. Sartoris and Mr. Snopes,” in which she discussed, among other memories of Faulkner’s time in Charlottesville, his numerous class sessions, including Faulkner’s comments about Hemingway. See Inge’s Conversations with William Faulkner (138).
only on what, to his mind, were Hemingway’s limited artistic abilities. This points toward a certain esteem for Hemingway, his desire to “stay out of trouble,” as he said on March 13 in Charlottesville, and his often indirect ways of proclaiming his superiority. Always more socially detached than Hemingway, Faulkner probably wanted to imply his opinions on Hemingway’s shortcomings, rather than assert them directly as he did in 1947. Again enacting his more understated masculinity and authorial persona, Faulkner did not want to undermine his reputation as the more generous and emotionally reserved artist, lest his writerly image be tarnished if he were seen as an argumentative, highly public figure. While he was almost as competitive as Hemingway was, he presented himself as the more controlled, courteous, and private writer who appeared to respect his fellow authors while passing judgment on them, sometimes harshly. Although he suggested that he was the best “failure” of living writers, Faulkner often asserted that Hemingway was admirable and had sufficient talent—but insufficient artistic courage—to fail as splendidly as he and Wolfe had. Such tempered statements about Hemingway’s artistic “method” and abilities show Faulkner misrepresenting his literary and stylistic influence. His qualifications reveal some level of psychocompetitive influence concerning Hemingway, insofar as he tried to downplay what he saw as his rival’s threatening (though slighter) artistic prominence.

ARGUMENT AT A LESSER DISTANCE

They had become two of the nation’s best living writers; their contemporary readers and critics would have given their publicized statements much weight, especially when such statements referred to each other with mixed, complex, potentially hostile attitudes. Faulkner was, in Hemingway’s estimation, “hard to depend on,” a horse who needed training to achieve the concision, implicitness, and fourth dimension of, for instance, “The Sea Change” or “A Simple Enquiry.” Hemingway, in Faulkner’s estimation, “didn’t try for the impossible,” did not experiment and “risk failure” as much as he himself had in the lengthy, challenging sentences and interiority of Intruder in the Dust or The Bear. Likewise, whereas Faulkner would “go on and on and not be able to end it,” Hemingway was not a “stylist” and limited himself to a set “pattern”—a promising but not enduring pattern. Such cross-judgment illustrates that their aesthetic visions are best understood contradistinctively, as the authors themselves realized. Faulkner’s imagination and prose, unlike Hemingway’s, defied a “pattern,” embodied a rich, convoluted style, and tried “for the impossible,” regardless of any potential
failure. In contrast, Hemingway was controlled, not “hard to depend on,” did not require training, and did not write “on and on” without end—or editing, to recall Hemingway’s criticism in *Death in the Afternoon*. The authors saw themselves as worthy judges of the other’s literary merit, each using his own aesthetic lens and criteria to judge the other. Faulkner’s ranking and later explanations led to his direct communication with Hemingway and reenergized their dialectic. While the tone of 1950s letters revealed Hemingway’s acrimony after Faulkner won the Nobel Prize, and while Faulkner would implicitly question Hemingway’s aesthetic assumptions in his Nobel Prize address, the aftereffects of Faulkner’s ranking created a brief symbolic fraternity. One need only look at their letters, as well as at Faulkner’s later efforts to set the record somewhat straight, to sense the mercurial artistic affinity they felt in their quest to eclipse the “evocative power” of Dostoyevsky, Turgenev, Maupassant, Stendhal, Flaubert—and each other.

By the end of the 1940s, both Faulkner and Hemingway had created their respective artistic worlds, imaginative realms in which they had established patterns of style, theme, characterization, subject, and place. Throughout their careers, both modernists drew sharp contrasts with one another, with each implying the primacy of his own aesthetic vision. Their personal and artistic differences aside, Faulkner and Hemingway were foils for each other’s aesthetic vision, thus helping create a diverse, nuanced, and paradigmatic American modernism that echoed the intertextuality and occasional animus seen in European modernism. Their continually competing worlds induced anxiety, as well as artistic, emotional, and (especially for Faulkner) financial struggle in the 1940s. Early in the decade, Faulkner’s creativity and literary reputation were uncertain before his critical resurgence in the wake of *The Portable Faulkner*. He had a concomitant financial upswing after the adaptation of *Intruder in the Dust* (October 1949) brought him $40,000 for the film rights and Oxford much media attention while it was being shot there. Hemingway encountered similar struggles while unsuccessfully trying to augment his oeuvre and critical reputation; that he published no major fiction during the decade weighed heavily upon him as a literary craftsman and competitor. His emotional and psychological unrest compounded his writing problems, as well as his anxiety over Faulkner’s higher standing in their increasingly discordant contest. The parameters of what Cowley called this “argument at a distance” expanded throughout the 1940s, while drawing the men closer together. Faulkner’s and Hemingway’s respective artistic worlds often clashed through a variety of texts, including letters in which

107. Parini, 298.
they painted one another as, by turns, literary competitors, metaphorical racehorses, and artistic brothers. Although they did not write any more letters to each other after 1947, based on located correspondence, each would still be acutely aware of, eager to read, and more eager to disparage his adversary, particularly during their rivalry’s zenith, 1947–1955.

This period of sharpest mutual awareness and competitive contempt continued three years after their exchange of letters, stemming from an exponential increase in Faulkner’s fame. On the morning of November 10, 1950, Faulkner was at Rowan Oak and received extraordinarily good news: he had won the 1949 Nobel Prize, and he would soon travel to Stockholm to receive the award and deliver his acceptance speech. That Faulkner became a Nobel laureate before Hemingway would define the tone, substance, and direction of their dynamic over the next four years, until Hemingway won his own Nobel Prize. In the psychological dueling between these rival artists, Faulkner had scored a major victory that enabled him to surpass his more famous, photographed, and wealthy rival. Advantage Faulkner, maybe once and for all.