

A COMPANION TO HEMINGWAY'S DEATH IN THE AFTERNOON

Miriam B. Mandel (ed.)

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(by Micaela Muñoz Calvo. Universidad de Zaragoza)

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Hemingway's fiction has been the subject of several collections of scholarly essays, but the study of his nonfiction has been neglected by most Hemingway scholars. A major contribution to filling that gap is now offered in this book published by Camden House. One of the factors that makes this *Companion* especially valuable and rare is that it is the first specialist book to examine in very close detail the narrative complexities of Hemingway's nonfiction as exemplified in his 1932 long narrative text *Death in the Afternoon (DIA)*. *Death in the Afternoon* is Hemingway's longest nonfiction narrative and the one that took him longest to produce, about ten years. It is a complex and intriguing 518 page long book in which Hemingway mixes genres and offers a complicated array of themes and techniques. It is set up in seven sections, the first section –278 pages long– is divided into twenty chapters which have been considered the main body of the *DIA* text and a treatise on Spanish bullfighting. For some of his most assiduous readers it is also the best non-Spanish contemporary writing on the bullfight. For instance, Carlos Baker said about *Death in the Afternoon* (1973:143): "It was primarily a Baedeker of the bullfight, and it sought to do in graphic prose something like what Goya's "Tauromaquia" had achieved on canvas".

The remaining sections are devoted to a glossary of bullfight terms and several appendices including a profile of the American matador Sidney Franklin, a section of illustrations, an appendix that describes diverse viewers' reactions to the bullfight,

a calendar of bullfights throughout the world, and a Bibliographical note. It is these latter sections that have been mostly overlooked by all critics, who have tended to view them as secondary irrelevant elements within a marginal kind of text, non-fiction, within the Hemingway mainstream fiction production. *Death in the Afternoon* is a great deal more than that. It is certainly a book on the Spanish bullfight and about bullfighting, but it is also Hemingway's first authorial public expression of his views on a host of canonical writers and their work as well as on the craft of writing. It may also be considered to be a guidebook to the traditional culture of Spain, a text in which Ernest Hemingway gives expression to what he had learned about Spain and in which he shows and declares his love for Spain and its culture, especially as expressed in the art of bullfighting. The universality of Hemingway's interpretation of the worlds of fact and fiction through the bullfight text gives *Death in the Afternoon* the standing of a great manifesto.

It is very significant that, in 1925, Hemingway wrote to his friend Fitzgerald about Spain telling him that "his idea of heaven would be a big bullring in which he owned two barrera seats, with a troutstream outside that no one else was allowed to fish" (Carlos Baker, 1973: 143). When John Dos Passos read some of the typescript, before the book was published, he said (1973: 402-403): "the volume is hellishly good [...] and the language is so magnificently used".

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The twelve original essays collected here by Miriam B. Mandel, the editor—who also writes an illuminating Introduction to the volume, provide a thorough, well-balanced study of a complex, groundbreaking, and hitherto overlooked text. The authors approach this work of nonfiction from a wide and complementary array of theoretical perspectives, by engaging the earlier work, applying a variety of theoretical models and providing new and fresh insights into all sections of this complex Hemingway text. The essays in this *Companion* prove that Hemingway communicated to his readers through every detail, textual and paratextual, through semantic presences and absences. The different contributions help present-day readers to uncover the submerged seven-eighths of the iceberg-text that Hemingway omitted from the linguistic surface, to get the full depth of Hemingway's work. They demonstrate what Hemingway said in 1958, three years before his death, in an interview with George Plimpton published in *Paris Review*:

I always try to write on the principle of the iceberg. There is seven eighths of it under water for every part that shows. Anything you know you can eliminate and it only strengthens your iceberg. It is the part that doesn't show. If a writer omits something because he does not know it then there is a hole in the story. (Plimpton, 1974: 35)

Death in the Afternoon is precisely the book where Hemingway explicitly defines his "iceberg" theory of writing, which involves leaving out of the surface text much of what you know, and stripping away inessentials. The *Companion* begins its

critical and textual analysis by examining *Death in the Afternoon*'s composition, backgrounds and sources. Robert W. Trodgon analyses meticulously the long and various processes of the composition and publication of *Death in the Afternoon*, taking as a basis the Hemingway-Perkins and Hemingway-Dos Passos correspondence and the Scribner's Archive. Trodgon focuses on Hemingway's writing and revisions of the book, schedules for completion and delays in its delivery to his editor, Maxwell Perkins. He traces the editing of the book: format problems (the page size of the book, the number of illustrations, and the way in which they would be reproduced); the great number of emendations made in galley proofs after his extensive revisions (some modifications were substantive, some changes made the prose more accurate and graceful, others were just emendations of punctuation and spelling in the text; the issue of obscene words printed in full whose use was literally illegal). He offers a close description of the extensive advertising campaign for the promotion of the book and he also studies the critical reception (nearly all the reviewers liked the style, the reviews on the whole can be described as good, though not overwhelmingly positive) and the fall in book sales that greatly disappointed Hemingway and Perkins.

The next three articles discuss the influences and sources (both acknowledged and unacknowledged) that can be identified in *Death in the Afternoon*. Lisa Tyler, Linda Wagner-Smith and Miriam B. Mandel take us through the literature on the topic, through the Hemingway critics who pointed out that Hemingway liked to work intertextually, even if he tried to disguise or deny the parent texts, distancing himself or attacking any artist to whom he was or might be compared, minimising and concealing the influence of his vast reading in *DIA*. Lisa Tyler demonstrates with examples taken from *Don Juan* how heavily indebted to Lord Byron *Death in the Afternoon* is. Though unacknowledged by Hemingway, the presence of the nineteenth-century English poet is everywhere in the book. As Tyler says: "It does seem that the more Hemingway was indebted to a writer, the more likely he was to obscure his sources" (2004:43). She builds on the previous work of scholars (Nancy R. Comley and Robert Scholes, Richard K. Peterson, Mark Spilka, Steven M. Lane, Robert Paul Lamb, Manning, Edward John Trelawny, Carlos Baker, Warren, Grosskurth), critics like Clifton Fadiman who branded Hemingway "An American Byron" and biographers like Jeffrey Meyers, Michael Reynolds—who suggested that Byron was a personal role model for Hemingway, Peter Griffin—who said that Hemingway was fascinated by Byron, all of whom have detected the byronic influence in Hemingway's career. Through her erudite study Lisa Tyler leads us to see the importance of Hemingway's reading to his writing and his use of literary sources. She highlights the parallels and resemblances between the works of these two writers: in terms of tone, of the so-called Hemingway code, of the list of similarities and critical comments regarding Byron's work that apply equally well

to Hemingway's –both authors indulge in metatextual commentary and attack contemporary writers, of the resemblance between the structures of their work and character, both men sharing excessive moodiness and volatility “which now probably [would] be diagnosed as bipolar affective disorder (manic depression)” (2004: 54).

Linda Wagner-Martin centres on Gertrude Stein, the female twentieth-century American prose stylist and Hemingway mentor in his Paris years, who makes her appearance on the first page of *Death in the Afternoon* but whose name never appears again, even though we know of her presence in the later sections of *DIA*, which attack and scorn her. Wagner-Martin analyses the various layers to Hemingway's treatment of the Stein figure in this book. She takes us through the different chapters of *DIA* pointing out where the presence of Gertrude Stein is, giving insights of Hemingway's work and detecting Stein's influence on his art, showing us how critics continually linked Hemingway with Gertrude Stein and how the discourse of this book is the discourse of pupil to mentor. Hemingway always repudiated any suggestion of literary indebtedness to Gertrude Stein, but he was considered one of her “chief pupils” (Harold Acton, 1948) when he dropped in to talk literature at Stein's apartment in the rue de Fleurus. They had met in 1922 in Paris and they were friends at that time, when he considered her a warm and affectionate friend. Wagner-Martin reveals that the role Hemingway created for Gertrude Stein, while insulting her by relegating her to the category of the unidentified Old Lady, is an angry answer to Stein's criticisms of Hemingway as a writer and of his writing, which he had taken as insults. The *Companion* author shows how the craft of writing is the subtext of the writer's antagonism toward the Old lady, who in *DIA* has been made into a docile pupil, ready to learn attentively from anything author-Hemingway cared to say. Wagner-Martin considers that it is not surprising that “once Stein had read Hemingway's *Death in the Afternoon*, there would be no turning back into even a tentative friendship” (2004:62).

Miriam B. Mandel offers a detailed bibliographical essay which will serve as a useful reference source to scholars and students interested in the bullfight from their various areas of interest like, for instance, folklore studies, transcultural studies, translation studies and travel writing. The author explains how *Death in the Afternoon* constitutes a major advance in the English-language literature of bullfighting and how it still dominates the subsequent literature on the subject, and she attributes the success of the book, which has been translated into eight languages, to the readers' interest in learning about the Spanish bullfight, Hemingway, his art, his crafted style, his literary tenets, his way of approaching the composition process, his strained relationship with other authors, or other matters pertaining to his position as a man of letters. This essay presents two parallel bibliographies that, taking the date of the publication of *Death in the Afternoon* as their cut-off point, offer a wealth of reference materials within the extensive

literature on bullfighting in Spain. The first bibliography lists the many literary and non-literary English-language contributions on Spain and the bullfight that preceded the publication of *Death in the Afternoon* in 1932, and identifies those publications that Hemingway owned by marking them with an asterisk. This list will help researchers interested in related issues to perceive the state of affairs regarding the relevant literary and cultural backgrounds over the last four centuries. The second bibliographical list catalogues Hemingway's ample and updated pre-1932 reading on those topics and it contains journal, newspaper and book entries in Spanish, French and English. Miriam B. Mandel talks of Hemingway's habit of researching his topics carefully. She takes us through the literature Hemingway owned or is known to have read on Spain and the bullfight, a wide selection of old and contemporary books. Mandel highlights that Hemingway's pre-1932 Spanish-language taurine library was "orthodox, scholarly, and remarkably complete" and that he also owned several books of and about taurine drawings and illustrations. She states how scholarly discussion of the influence of all this reading on the writing of *Death in the Afternoon* has barely begun and how a critical study of the particular readings that produced this book remains to be done.

The next five essays address cultural translation, cultural criticism, textual semiotics, and paratextual matters. They focus on the unusual content and form of *Death in the Afternoon*. Peter Messent deals with intercultural transfer matters and with the peculiarity of the process of cultural translation. He focuses on Hemingway's role of "translator" who gives us his version of bullfighting, of the way in which the bullfight stands as a ritual at the very heart of Spanish culture. Messent explains how Hemingway's knowledge of Spain and his cultural identification with Spain let him give a less than idealised version of Spain, the foreign culture he describes from an insider perspective, and let Hemingway straddle cultural boundaries and barriers in *Death in the Afternoon*, and understand the *essence* of the "art" and its culture. Hemingway thus acts as a mediator, a translator of cultures, because he is both an outsider, an American English-speaking tourist, judging between cultures, and at the same time very much of an insider, native-like, who understands Spanish life, language and rituals. I think that what Messent says about Hemingway's role as a translator of cultures –explicitly confirmed by Hemingway's inclusion of the "Explanatory Glossary" as an appendix to *DIA*– is reflected in what Komissarov has also recently said about translation:

Translation from culture to culture means, first and foremost, to bring to the receptors new facts and ideas inherent in the source language culture, to broaden their cultural horizons, to make them aware that other people may have different customs, symbols and beliefs, that other cultures should be known and respected. This cultural and educational role of translation cannot be too much emphasized. (Komissarov 1991: 46)

Messent confirms what Komissarov said, when he states that Hemingway “operates as much as an anthropologist as anything else, explaining a pre-modern society and its rituals to his American audience” (2004:124), and that his book serves “to translate the rituals of one culture for another” (2004:126). He analyses the way in which Hemingway measures Spain against America and its modernised culture throughout *DIA*, the process of cultural comparison and contrast which lies at the heart of his writing project and helps to explain the particular version of Spain that he gives through his particular vision.

Beatriz Penas, a semiotician and a scholar whose doctoral dissertation already explored the semiotics of the bullfight and the taurine aspects of Ernest Hemingway’s literature, takes us through the various readings, cultural and allegorical, of *Death in the Afternoon*. She provides very carefully crafted insights into the symbolic value of the different elements of the bullfight within Spanish culture. She then explains Hemingway’s allegorical reading of the bullfight in relation to the art of writing, depicting and highlighting the net of abstractions and essential matters which have always permeated Hemingway’s vision of life and art and which are present in the book as central concerns: the meaning of life and death, the desire for permanence, the role of art, and hence literature, in this respect. Beatriz Penas works through Hemingway’s use of Spanish history and culture, which she finds embedded in the multilayered meanings of the bullfight, as a source of metaphors that are there for Hemingway to use when he reflects on modern imagist writing or when he seeks to enlighten his modern American-English readership by criticising modern America and enhancing their understanding of American history through taurine lenses. Penas highlights the performance aspects of *DIA*, the fact that in writing *DIA* Hemingway is striving to bring literature closer to the bullfight, a visual-image text and a wordless art. She also criticises Hemingway’s use of the Spanish bullfight as a metaphor for the ideology and workings of power, as a representation of, for instance, the war between the sexes. Beatriz Penas takes us through the various meanings of Hemingway’s literary iceberg metaphor and applies this powerful image to her analysis of *Death in the Afternoon*, which she describes as a “super iceberg-text” (2004:157): “the visible tip, the bullfight, occupies the central textual space; it is exhaustively spoken about in the first nineteen chapters. That tip is supported by Spain, which just manages to appear briefly above the water-line in Chapter 20. Spain’s history and institutions [...] are kept just below water-level [...] And totally submerged below Spain and the historical, social, and philosophical complexities of the bullfight, we can find America and the American literary scene, unvoiced, and invisible but bearing most of the iceberg’s weight”.

Anthony Brand puts forward two approaches to the about four hundred photographs Hemingway collected for inclusion in *Death in the Afternoon*.

Hemingway originally intended to intersperse the visual materials taken from the archives of leading taurine photojournalists throughout the text and glossary, but finally they were grouped in a section. This important section of the book called “Illustrations” has been so far neglected by most critics. Brand’s first original essay focuses on the content, complex organization and reading of the eighty-one illustrations that Hemingway finally chose for publication, after being forced by his editor to cut back on the photographs to make the book affordable. Brand meticulously explains how their content and complex organization reveal the methods and principles Hemingway employed in producing this very personal photographic section that constitutes a guide on how to look at the bull and at the bullfighter as well as the interaction between them, thus linking his writing about bullfighting with the juxtaposed pictures to make the image-text book more vivid and comprehensive. In a very interesting and detailed way he tells us how Hemingway chose the photographs carefully and organised them purposefully, not following traditional organization and not in chronological order, and how their captions expressed his opinions, his criticism on the bullfight and the bullfighters. The captions also reveal or comment on material not directly related to bullfighting and taurine life and culture but highly relevant to the comprehensive portrait of Spain that the text paints. Brand shows us how this photo-essay and the photo captions form an interesting personal subtext with a didactic purpose. Brand’s second essay exhibits and analyses thirteen of the unpublished photographs of *Death in the Afternoon* to give the *Companion’s* readers “a flavour of the decisions Hemingway made and of the visual “flashes” he had hoped to provide” (2004:190).

Nancy Bredendick offers an original essay in which she examines the paratexts of *Death in the Afternoon*: the title, the dust jacket, the frontispiece, the dedication, the table of contents and the “Bibliographical Note” –which she also considers *outside the text*. She analyses the way in which the paratexts relate to the text and how they mediate between book and reader while assuming great significance as they work hard to bring us close to a deeper understanding of the work. Bredendick leads us through the sophisticated and oblique use of paratexts that Hemingway adopts in order to give his reader clues as to how to interpret *DIA* –its being a bullfight manual should not prevent the reader from perceiving other aspects in *DIA* that characterise it as a text of literary art: the poetic and linguistically indirect choice of title (which accurately defines the central concerns of the text and appeals both to feeling and sensation) is accompanied by visual imagery that alerts us to the poetic quality of the subject matter and becomes a kind of subtitle in the visual mode. In Bredendick’s view, the jacket copy links the subject of the book, the author and the craft. The frontispiece presents bullfighting as a fine art, not as a mythic or folkloristic rite, the portrait offers guidance to the

meaning of the work. The table of contents invites us to read the book for pleasure and for instruction. The “Explanatory Glossary” becomes a sort of mini-Spanish phrasebook or cultural guide that is a pleasure to read. The most arresting feature of the dustjacket is the oil painting by Roberto Domingo: *Toros*. The jacket illustration highlights images of aesthetic pleasure that will be picked up in the main body of the text. The outstanding quality of *DIA*’s paratextual material (the jacket illustration by Roberto Domingo, the photographs by leading photojournalists, the taurine bibliography and so on) sends us a signal of high taurine culture that indexically refers to high literature. Throughout her analysis of *DIA*’s paratexts, Nancy Bredendick shows great erudition and knowledge of the seven sections. Her critique of *Death in the Afternoon* likewise evidences that Hemingway’s sound knowledge of existing bullfight literature very much helped him to shape his text. The two following essays work through the issues of art, authorship, and audience. Hilary Justice discusses the issues of authorship (creative and professional writing) and publication (art production and reception), which she considers to be as central to the core interpretation of *DIA* as bullfighting is, and as applicable to bullfighting as it is to writing. She deals with *DIA*’s complex root analogy between the art and business of bullfighting and the art and business of writing. The business dimension of both literature and bullfighting can endanger both kinds of art and artist, making them susceptible to “decadence” in the sense of “decay”. She also analyses in detail how Hemingway structures *DIA*’s chapters so as to underscore the similarities he perceived between the two art forms. Justice works through Hemingway’s terminology: *artist* (generic term for a special group of elite bullfighters and writers); *art* (what both kinds of artist do); professional titles: *picador*, *banderillero*, *matador*, *author*, referring to the roles these artists play in bringing their art to the public. She leads us through the ambiguity in *DIA* of the term *author*: its susceptibility to multiple interpretations accounts for much of the difficulty of *Death in the Afternoon*. The term *author* may refer to Hemingway (the private man), Hemingway (the creative writer), also to the public roles the man/writer plays in relation to his work, or to the abstract character in *DIA* that is known only by the generic name “Author”. Consequently, criticism of “Hemingway” (his writing) may transform into criticism of “Hemingway” (the person). Hemingway himself warned his readers not to mistake the author for the man, and, most emphatically, not to trust the judgement of any critic who cannot tell the difference. She discusses Hemingway’s role as a professional writer (involved with the mechanism of art production and reception) that forms the subtext of the Author/Old lady dialogues and the relative values of the two roles (writer and author) within the process of art production.

Amy Vondrak focuses on Hemingway’s treatment of two modernist artistic techniques, *collage* –taken from painting– and *montage* –from film-making.

Though more often employed by visual artists, Hemingway used these techniques in *Death in the Afternoon* to build a literary, emotional and coherent whole that would be more than the sum of its parts. Vondrak leads us through Hemingway's specific use of montage and collage and suggests that Hemingway had internalised the consequences of Einsteinian physics: the modern understanding of time and space makes time flexible and allows temporal-spatial sequence to be altered. Hemingway's use of montage breaks up the grid of time and place, allows textual playing with time and brings his work into a fourth dimension. She analyses the juxtaposed distribution of the visual elements in the dust jacket, the painting of the frontispiece, the captioned photographs and the main body of written text as characteristic of collage. Vondrak discloses as well the workings of montage, particularly of filmic montage, in *Death in the Afternoon*. Hemingway's fragmentation of form, his jumbling of times and mixing of genres is a literary version of montage-techniques which juxtaposes diverse styles and registers. The book carefully assembles journalism, short story, dramatic sketch, travel writing, parody, humour, biography, scientific description, and folklore study. She focuses on montage description throughout her analysis of *DIA*, but especially of Chapter 20, which she calls "the most clearly filmic section" in the book. This is *DIA*'s last chapter, where Hemingway describes Spain in a blending of time into space, in a chain of disconnected images without sequence or chronology that remain open to the reader's imaginary association.

The book's last essay deals with the literary legacy of *Death in the Afternoon*. Keneth Kinnamon reflects on the influence of *DIA* on modern American taurine writing and emphasises how quantitatively impressive the English bibliography on bullfighting has become since the publication of *Death in the Afternoon* in 1932. Kinnamon focuses on Norman Mailer and Barnaby Conrad, two American writers fascinated with Hemingway's life and personality who wrote "under the clearly discernible shadow of Ernest Hemingway in general and of *Death in the Afternoon* in particular" (2004: 283). Norman Mailer, a major figure in American literature for the last half century, was very much interested in the *corrida* at least for a brief period. On the other hand, Barnaby Conrad, a freelance writer who makes no pretence of literary depth, has made of the *corrida* a lifelong passion. Kinnamon discusses those literary works of Mailer's in which Hemingway's literary influence is evident either for his adoption of Hemingway's style and subject matter or for his truculence towards critics and fellow writers: *The Deer Park* (1955), a novel which deals with bullfighting; and *The Bullfight: A Photographic Narrative* (1967), a publication in which Mailer includes ninety-one photographs –he had planned to write *the* novel about bullfighting that would go with the photographs, but then he abandoned this part of the project. Kinnamon leads us through the productive and unusually varied writing career of Barnaby Conrad, a less well known author

who has written more on bullfighting than any other American or British writer, only Hemingway did it better: his production includes *The Innocent Villa* (1948), another novel, *Matador* (1952), and six nonfiction books: *La Fiesta Brava. The art of the Bull Ring* (1953) –profusely illustrated, *Gates of Fear* (1957), *The Death of Manolete* (1961), *Encyclopedia on Bullfighting* (1961), *How to Fight a Bull* (1968), and *Hemingway's Spain* (1989). According to Kinnamon, Conrad writes knowledgeably and well about both the action in the ring and the larger culture of *toreo* and has the experiential authority of one who has studied, fought, and been injured by bulls, although his style, though fluent and readable, is quite superficial. Throughout his essay, Kinnamon shows not only that he knows that Barnaby Conrad's work and love for Spain derive from Hemingway's writings, but he also shows his own love for Spain, for Hemingway's literature and for bullfighting. His final recommendation is that no aficionado should be without Cossío's *Los toros*, Hemingway's *Death in the Afternoon*, and Conrad's *Encyclopedia of Bullfighting*.

The Works Cited by the different contributors to the present *Companion to Death in the Afternoon* are given in the closing section of the volume, and will be of great help to any one interested in continuing research. The biographical data and the nationalities of the contributors to the volume (Spanish, British, American, and Israeli) indicate that even though *Death in the Afternoon* seems to focus on a local form of art (bullfighting), this art form appeals to a wide variety of intellectual interests perhaps because it deals with matters of universal and timeless concern.

The *Companion* may not have been intended as a homage to Hemingway, but it has turned out to be so, even though its title, *A Companion to Hemingway's Death in the Afternoon*, is suggestive of 'a reference book'. The quality of the publication, the careful display of its paratexts, the hard-cover presentation of this publication encourage the reader to perceive the book as due homage to a neglected part of Ernest Hemingway's work, *Death in the Afternoon*, and as an acknowledgement of his love for Spain and the bullfight, which stems from his love for art and literature. The jacket design is an additional invitation to read the book. Juan Gris's painting *The Bullfighter* is used on the front dust jacket as an illustration of warm concern with biographical detail: *The Bullfighter* is a work of analytical cubism that Hemingway personally chose for his frontispiece at the time of original publication. It is significant that the editor, Miriam Mandel, has also chosen the same painting for this *Companion*. The eye-catching black-and-white back jacket design is in the tradition of taurine literature: it is a photograph of a bullfighter and bull facing each other in the bullring. Hence, this nicely printed, well-designed and meticulously referenced book constitutes a major and valuable contribution to Hemingway scholarship and will be an important and indispensable tool and reference for future research on Hemingway's *Death in the Afternoon*. From now on, *Death in the Afternoon* will no longer be considered a neglected part of the Hemingway canon.

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