

Twentieth-Century Fiction I

October 21. Hemingway, *In Our Time* (2).

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review

Sayers's historicity

a postwar: the shell-shocked detective
after Holmes: not “deduction” but intuition
multiple explanations: postwar, *but also*
within-genre distinction
political ambivalence

review

Hemingway

moving from restricted field to market success

EH and avant-garde Paris: Stein, “the sentence”

parataxis

suppression of grammatical connectors

explanation buried (or not recoverable)

explicit narratorial judgment is absent

“just the facts”? not exactly...

“show don’t tell”

For his mastery of the art of narrative, most recently demonstrated in *The Old Man and the Sea*, and for the influence that he has exerted on contemporary style.

Swedish Academy, 1954

It would be hard to overestimate the influence of Hemingway on postwar writers.

Mark McGurl, *The Program Era* (2009)

“show don’t tell”

But just as importantly, as a poet of brooding masculinity, Hemingway came to represent the noble pathos of understatement.

Mark McGurl, *The Program Era* (2009)

“Be a man, my son,” said one priest.

In Our Time, chap. XV

“show don’t tell”

Krebs acquired the nausea in regard to experience that is the result of untruth or exaggeration, and when he occasionally met another man who had really been a soldier and they talked a few minutes in the dressing room at a dance he fell into the easy pose of the old soldier among other soldiers: that he had been badly, sickeningly frightened all the time. In this way he lost everything. (70)

It wasn't any good. He couldn't tell her, he couldn't make her see it. It was silly to have said it. He had only hurt her. (76)

“show don’t tell”

But just as importantly, as a poet of brooding masculinity, Hemingway came to represent the noble pathos of understatement.

The combination, in [later] Hemingway, of first person narration with a more or less rigorous application of the rule of “show don’t tell” makes it clear that what is being restrained in the craft of his fiction is, precisely, self-expression, enough of which must remain to produce the aesthetic pleasure of its active restraint.

Mark McGurl, *The Program Era* (2009)

“show don’t tell”

His tongue was very sensitive. (140)

It had been a very fine experience. (140)

He did not want to rush his sensations any. (151)

He had been solidly hooked. Solid as a rock. He felt like a rock, too, before he started off. By God, he was a big one. By God, he was the biggest one I ever heard of. (151)

show don't tell?



Ernest Hemingway, American Red Cross volunteer, recuperates from wounds at ARC Hospital, Milan, Italy, September 1918.

nobelprize.org

show don't tell?

Nick sat against the wall of the church where they had dragged him to be clear of machine-gun fire in the street. Both legs stuck out awkwardly. He had been hit in the spine. His face was sweaty and dirty. The sun shone on his face. The day was very hot. (63)

show don't tell?

He felt he had left everything behind, the need for thinking, the need to write, other needs. It was all back of him. (134)

show don't tell?

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How does the text handle Nick's wound?

show don't tell?

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As he smoked, his legs stretched out in front of him... (135)

Stein and Hemingway

“That’s what you are. That’s what you all are,” Miss Stein said. “All of you young people who served in the war. You are a lost generation.... You have no respect for anything. You drink yourselves to death....”

I thought of Miss Stein and Sherwood Anderson and egotism and mental laziness versus discipline and I thought who is calling who a lost generation?

A Movable Feast (written 1957–60, published 1964)

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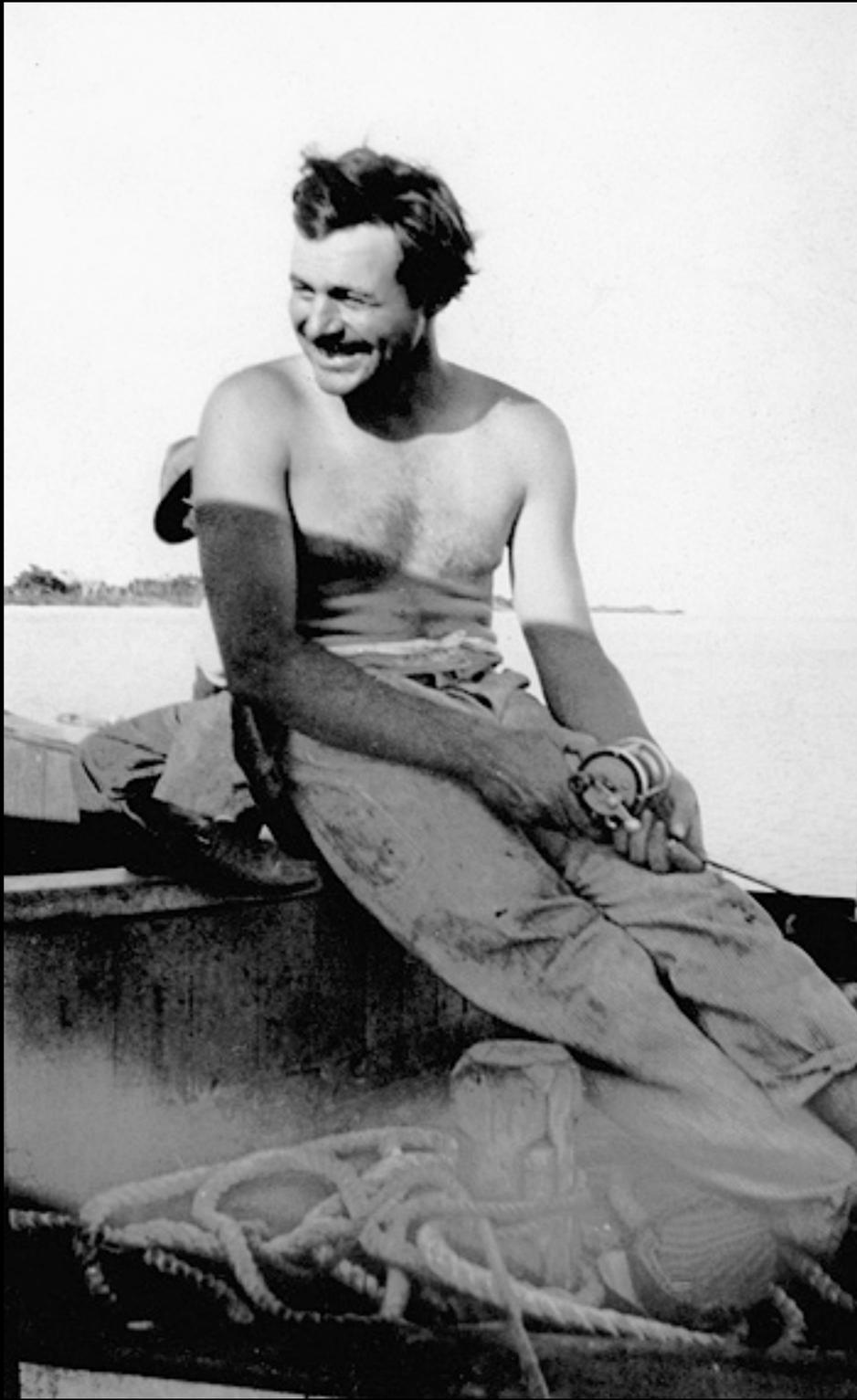
A Movable Feast (written 1957–60, published 1964)

discipline

It had been a hard trip. He was very tired. That was done. He had made his camp. He was settled. Nothing could touch him. It was a good place to camp. (139)

He put on the reel and threaded the line through the guides. He had to hold it from hand to hand, as he threaded it, or it would slip back through its own weight. It was a heavy, double tapered fly line...

He tested the knot and the spring of the rod by pulling the line taut. It was a good feeling. (147)



How does Nick killing the trout (155) compare with other killings in the text? Does it heal wounds—and if so, how? What details matter?

👉 too obvious

Ernest Hemingway fishing, Key West, 1928. nobelprize.org

inside out

All the insides and the gills and tongue came out in one piece. ... All the insides clean and compact, coming out all together. (155)

next time

Mrs. Dalloway: at least through 94 (Big Ben tolls noon)