

## ANALYSIS

“African Betrayal” (1986)

Ernest Hemingway

(1899-1961)

“Hemingway’s novel melts into the short story David writes—a superb piece about a father and son hunting elephant on an African safari. The story is broken up throughout the book, starting with quick sentences and ending with long gripping passages, so the reader feels the writer’s dislocation—drawn into Africa, thrown back into France, with two women waiting.”

Eric Pooley

“Papa’s New Baby”

*New York* (28 April 1986) 55

“An uncharacteristic ambivalence is also expressed about hunting. Drawing upon the African safaris whose carnage is so matter-of-factly extolled in *The Green Hills of Africa* (1935), Hemingway shows David Bourne writing about an elephant hunt he experienced as a child with his father. The fictional episodes, which come to occupy a place at the outset of each hagridden day and chapter, develop a momentum and interest of their own. The boy and his dog Kibo spot the old elephant, with his fabulously big tusks, by moonlight, and this starts his father, a hunter, and his African sidekick Juma on the trail. As the days of tracking go by, the tired child comes to love the doomed elephant and to dislike his father and Juma: ‘They would kill me and they would kill Kibo, too, if we had ivory.’

The description of the shooting of the elephant is horrendous and moving and also a fall, in its way, from innocence. ‘Fuck elephant hunting,’ the boy tells his father, and thinks, ‘He will never trust me again. That’s good. I don’t want him to because I’ll never ever tell him or anybody anything again never anything again. Never ever never.’ The splicing and counterpoint of the African story-within-a-story are managed quite brilliantly, and one doesn’t know how much to credit Mr. Jenks; at any rate, some of the pages in *The Garden of Eden*, as the elephant lumbers toward death and Catherine dips in and out of madness and David speaks his good-byes in his heart, are among Hemingway’s best, and the whole rounded fragment leaves us with a better feeling about the author’s humanity and essential sanity—complicated, as sanity must be—than anything else published since his death.”

John Updike

Review of *The Garden of Eden*

*New Yorker* (30 June 1986)

“The African story of the elephant hunt was especially singled out for praise. Critics agreed that ‘The splicing and counterpoint of the African story-within-a-story are managed quite brilliantly.’ This was one of the few elements of the novel which Jenks did not change. Critics thought that the metafictional aspect of the story was a daring experiment on Hemingway’s part that was clearly successful.”

Susan M. Seitz

“The Posthumous Editing of Ernest Hemingway’s Fiction”

Ph.D. dissertation, U Massachusetts (1993) 170

“As Michael Reynolds sums up, the novel ‘bears so little resemblance to the book Hemingway wrote that scholars can speak only to the manuscript versions.’ Ironically, it will be those very scholars and critics whom the author distrusted who will ultimately take on the responsibility of recovering and preserving the authentic Hemingway from the editorial distortions of these posthumous publications.”

Kelli A. Larson

“Bibliographical Essay: Lies, Damned Lies, and Hemingway Criticism”

*A Historical Guide to Ernest Hemingway*, ed. Linda Wagner-Martin

(Oxford 2000) 218, 220

### *The Garden of Eden* (unfinished)

This complex psychological novel is about two sexual triangles involving two married couples—the Bournes and the Sheldons—and one unattached man and one unattached woman. It probably derives from Hemingway's experience of a triangle in 1925 when his wife Hadley's friend Pauline joined his household and broke up his marriage. Hemingway and Hadley most resemble the Sheldons, the unattached male resembles John Dos Passos and the story plays off of *Tender Is the Night* (1934) by Scott Fitzgerald. The novel is set on the French Riviera and the characters, including three artistic men, are comparable to the hedonists in *The Sun Also Rises*, but without the excuse of having been wounded in a war. Though living in the 1920s they are essentially Postmodern wastelanders like the idle rich in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," "The Waste Land" and *The Great Gatsby*.

Hemingway experimented with androgyny in his marriage to Mary Welch, developing the feminine side of himself as he had been doing in his fiction all his life. "She loves me to be her girls, which I love to be," he wrote. He even dyed his hair and called himself Catherine, after Catherine Barkley in *A Farewell to Arms*. Mary said later in *The Way It Was* (1976), "In our mutual sensory delights we were smoothly interlocking parts of a single entity, the big cogwheel and the smaller cogwheel.... Maybe we were androgynous." Developing both sides of oneself is involved when lovers become "One" like Catherine and Frederick. In *The Garden of Eden*, however, androgyny is selfish and promiscuous, leading to betrayal, guilt, loss of identity, near madness and suicide—tragedies all around. The hedonists turn their Edenic lives into a living Hell. The character named Catherine represents the degeneration of modern woman from the traditional ideals embodied in Catherine Barkley to the loss of any ability to love truly at all, to selfish narcissism and near insanity.

#### "African Betrayal"

By far the best part of the unfinished manuscript is the story written by David Bourne about his boyhood experience with his father on an elephant hunt in Africa, published separately as "African Betrayal." Hemingway believed elephants were intelligent equals of humans and opposed hunting them. In the story the boy cannot prevent his white father and a black hunter from tracking down and killing a magnificent elephant that is a numinous manifestation of the divine. Hemingway said the theme of the novel is "the happiness of the Garden that a man must lose"--as in Hawthorne, Melville, Twain, Faulkner, and the Bible. The theme applies to both the individual and the human race, making the novel an allegory in the Christian tradition, represented in the narrative by the famous allegorical painting *Garden of Earthly Delights* by Hieronymus Bosch. To Hemingway, Africa was a Garden of Eden. The original sin of Man was overkill in dominating Nature: selfishness and greed. The sin of modern Woman is selfish narcissism as personified in Catherine the fashion addict, who is unnatural and shallow, wants David to be just like her and to write only about her and destroys his writing that is not about her.

The story-within-a-story cannot be fully appreciated until a scholarly edition of *The Garden of Eden* is published with the African story at the heart of it and spreading out into the narrative as a whole as Hemingway intended. The mythic elephant hunt centers the novel like the bullfight metaphor in *The Sun Also Rises*, juxtaposes the past with the decadent present in the tradition of Modernism, and expresses a transcendental mode of consciousness like *The Old Man and the Sea*. Hemingway's elephant is comparable to Melville's white whale, Jewett's white heron, and Faulkner's bear.

Michael Hollister (2015)