Jamie Fenton

‘a certain amount of windowpane trouble’: Injury, Censorship and Style in Hemingway’s London Writing

> *I’m getting sort of mixed up on a lot of things again. But much clearer on others.*
>
> ‘Second Poem to Mary’ (Hemingway 1992: 113)

These are among the very few words of Ernest Hemingway’s writing which we can hear played back to us in the author’s own voice. ‘Second Poem to Mary’ is included on a vinyl record, *Ernest Hemingway Reading* (Hemingway 1965), assembled posthumously by Mary Welsh Hemingway and A. E. Hotchner, and published by Caedmon Records in 1965. Compared to many of the titles in the Caedmon catalogue, *Ernest Hemingway Reading* is extremely rough and ready. Hemingway bore what Hotchner called in the liner notes an ‘antipathy’ to recording, and the readings on the album were captured sporadically between 1948 and 1961, when he could be induced to talk into ‘something that feels as dead in my hand as this microphone does’. ‘Second Poem to Mary’ comes on the A side, sandwiched between his short acceptance speech for the 1954 Nobel Prize in Literature, and a bizarre impromptu burlesque of his own novel, *Across the River and Into the Trees*. Its status is thus ambivalent. Are we to listen to it with the same sincerity as his Nobel speech presumes, or as an after-dinner literary joke? The fact that Hemingway faced the microphone for it, without the fighting spirit of his attempt to pull the rug from a recent parody piece, ‘Across the Street and into the Grill’ (White 1950), suggests he held the poem in some esteem. Welsh reported that while she found the poem ‘pleasing but a little embarrassing’, Hemingway ‘liked it’, and would ‘read it in the bar to people he

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liked' (Gilroy 1965).

Few of its readers, unfortunately, give it any quarter. In her recent biography, Mary Dearborn defers to past judgement, describing the two poems to Mary as pieces 'that one biographer fairly convincingly argues are "the worst things he ever wrote"' (Dearborn 2017: 449, quoting Meyers 1985). It is a received opinion which needs some vetting. To dismiss something outside of an author's usual style as an example of failed or bad writing on their part is a common misstep. In the history of acclaimed American prose writers with panned poetic outputs, Hemingway follows on from Herman Melville and Stephen Crane, who were both advised by their critics to stick to what they were good at. Later readers of their poems have found plenty to recommend them. We might have a little leeway for suspicion with Hemingway, though, as the poems are doubtful of their own success. At several points in 'Second Poem to Mary', formed as a verse-letter from the front lines on the advance to Berlin, we get what seems like Hemingway's notes-to-self left in the text. After the line 'K.I.A. 6 off. 61 em. 13 Sept. 2400—14 Sept. 2400', which could certainly have stood, we get 'Translate / Killed in action 6 officers 61 enlisted men from midnight 13th September to midnight 14 September' (Hemingway 1992: 107). A few lines down we get the instruction to 'Continue', which could be a manuscript note from Hemingway persuading himself to stick with this piece, or a plea to the reader not to put it down. Later on things become even more self-critical:

> This comes only after one hundred days and is one of the final symptoms.
>
> There has been irritation, anger, fear, doubt, accusations, denials, misinterpretations, mistakes, cowardice, inability and lack of talent for this work.
>
> (Hemingway 1992: 108)

What work is 'this'? And what has it been one hundred days since? Most directly: D-Day. After the Allies invaded Normandy on 6 June, dates were figured in military circles as 'D plus n'; in 'Second Poem to Mary' we get 'D plus 108' and the sing-song 'D plus one O one O nine'. So it's been one hundred days since the invasion at this point in the poem. But also about that amount of time since Hemingway arrived

in Britain to report the war, and about that amount of time since he smashed his head against a windscreen in a late-night car accident. This 'work', then, for which there is 'inability and lack of talent' could be the work of dislodging German troops from their defensive positions in Hürtgen Forest, or it could be the work of writing a war poem, or simply the work of writing anything at all. Hemingway ends the poem, which was sent directly to Mary Welsh, by explaining to her that 'all I have to tell you that I can write is that I love you'. It's a classically-Hemingway run of monosyllables, but without his usual clarity of grammar. '[H]ave' looks in two directions, towards having as in needing and having as in holding. Something is mixed up.

The Second World War did Hemingway no favours. His decade-long involvement, James Meredith concludes, harmed him 'both professionally and personally' (Meredith 2013: 402). Finally persuaded in 1944 by Martha Gellhorn, esteemed war reporter and his then wife, to abandon his submarine-hunting in the seas around Cuba, he took up a posting as correspondent for *Collier's* magazine, where Gellhorn was already working, and headed for Europe. From this assignment came six pieces: two written in London, and four filed as he accompanied French guerrilla forces and American infantry towards Paris and then Berlin. In the years following allied victory more war work would appear. *Across the River and Into the Trees* gives us Richard Cantwell, a US colonel unable to come to terms with his role in the fighting in the closing days of march to Berlin. *Islands in the Stream* fictionalises swathes of Hemingway's sub-hunting missions. Meredith figures these texts as part of an attempted 'epic trilogy of how the conflict was fought on the land, in the sea, and in the air', which ultimately failed as 'the writing became a calculus of radical narrative form that could not be brought into a unified whole in his lifetime' (Meredith 2013: 403). This is one way of putting it; other readers simply thought the work wasn't any good. *Across the River* was panned on release (although still a best-seller), and has had little done to revitalise it. *Islands in the Stream* sits as something of a best-worst, but pales next to T*he Old Man and the Sea* as Hemingway's final return to form. But if Hemingway never managed to synthesise a great Second World War novel, did he at least manage to write well from its midst? Again, the consensus seems to be no. Terry Mort describes his journalism for *Collier's* as 'medi-

ocre', giving the impression of being 'dashed off just, as he said, to prevent his being sent home' (Mort 2016: 257). Carlos Baker offers an anecdote to make sense of this. When Hemingway showed his D-Day piece to Roald Dahl (a notable figure in Hemingway's War, as outlined below), Dahl floundered for something to praise. Why, he asked, had he left out 'that marvellous bit you told me about the expression on the man's face as he tried to get out of a burning tank?' (Baker 1969: 601). Hemingway's reply gets to the heart of it: 'My God, you don't think I'd give that to *Collier's*, do you?'. *The Columbia Journalism Review* reports his reply differently, but with the same thrust: 'You don't think I'd give them that, do you? I'm keeping it for a book' (Moreira 2019).

In either version, this anecdote raises the question of why we should bother with Hemingway's reporting for *Collier's*. His war journalism exists as something of a void: a way to fill print space so he could keep himself close to the action, basking in hero worship and riding on adrenaline. It is not what we think we're after when we decide to read some Hemingway. But this is the same aesthetic blinkering as I described in my second paragraph. Whether or not it's the Hemingway we want (and we should probably ask why it is we want that), it is what he wrote, and it rewards a sustained encounter. The first two of Hemingway's *Collier's* pieces in particular – 'Voyage to Victory' (on his D-Day experience) and 'London Fights the Robots' (on his time with RAF squadrons intercepting V-1s) – operate on a style and poesis unique to his corpus: characterised not by clarity, accuracy, or directness of observation, but by giddiness, circularity, and blurring. This essay aims to fix on this style's features, and use it to thicken our understanding of Hemingway's time in London, where he found himself from May to August, 1944. When Hemingway read the line from 'Second Poem to Mary' quoted above, a deep-seated frustration found its way onto the wire: '*I'm getting sort of mixed up on a lot of things **again***'. As a starter phrase for an investigation of Hemingway's London style, as I suggest we could call it, 'mixed up' does well. I will begin the essay by suggesting two reasons why Hemingway might have felt mixed up in London – and thus mixed up '*again*' in France later that year – and then plot a course through his London writings: 'Voyage to Victory', 'London Fights the Robots', and his first 'Poem to Mary'. I propose that far from being a sustained experiment, Hemingway's style

was highly contingent: as much a product of his environment as of his touted aesthetic aims.

Injury

Hemingway didn't want to go to Europe. After a 1941 trip to China with Gellhorn which resulted in only a few threadbare dispatches for the New York newspaper, *PM*, he found a contribution to the war effort which suited him much better: an officially-sanctioned but fundamentally amateur program of submarine-hunting off the coast of Cuba aboard his boat, the *Pilar*. To observers, including Gellhorn, it seemed like Hemingway's canny way of appearing to engage in the war while still managing to organise his days around seaborn larks with a motley crew of friends who ended most nights drinking at the Finca Vigía. As the prospect of allied invasion loomed in 1944, Gellhorn was well aware of where she should be, and where Hemingway should be if he knew what was good for his career. She used her position at *Collier's* to get him a European assignment, a kindness she would be later be entirely justified in regretting. American magazines were only allowed one accredited combat correspondent each, and *Collier's* gave their slot to Hemingway, the literary celebrity, even though Gellhorn had been writing for the magazine for more than five years. So come D-Day a few months later, while Hemingway was crashing across the channel towards France aboard the *Dorothea L. Dix*, Gellhorn was trapped in 'a great guarded room in the Ministry of Information', crammed together with 'most of the world's press' (Gellhorn 1944a: 16). This was not the only injustice. Swift and comfortable transport to from USA to London was not easy to come by in 1944, but Gellhorn happened to have met a British intelligence officer in Washington, who was able to pull strings to get Hemingway a plane ticket. This was Roald Dahl, who Hemingway would later meet in Britain. Somehow, there was no ticket for Gellhorn herself, who ended up sailing over alone on a cargo ship. Enduring these injustices, her coverage for *Collier's* ended up trumping Hemingway's in volume and, as I will later show, clarity.

Hemingway's trip to the European theatre was thus far from an inevitability, and might never have happened without Gellhorn's energies. But he did eventually depart, on 17 May, 'neither happy, excited, nor interested' (Dearborn 2017: 439). Within days of arriving,

and before Gellhorn's ship had even docked, the doomish event which Hemingway's reluctance to travel seems to have predicted would come to pass. He moved in to the Dorchester hotel, where much of the American press were based, and began setting himself up socially as a precursor to doing any actual reporting. On 22 May he caught the eye of a *Time-Life-Fortune* journalist named Mary Welsh at a restaurant, and immediately booked a lunch date with her for the next day. On 24 May, he headed out to a party at an apartment rented by Robert Capa, the American photographer whose pictures at Omaha Beach would become one of the lasting journalistic icons of the war. Capa, in the face of wartime scarcity, had managed to secure enough alcohol to keep the party going well past midnight. In the early hours of 25 May, having exhausted himself boxing in the kitchen, Hemingway accepted the offer of a lift back to the Dorchester from Peter Gorer, a doctor at Guy's hospital, and his wife, a German refugee. Sunrise was a way away, there was hardly any moon, and the city was under blackout. Small wonder, then, that within half a mile Gorer smashed the car headlong into a steel water tank. Gorer and his wife walked clear, but Hemingway's head rammed into the windscreen, and his knees collided heavily with the dashboard. He was dragged out of the wreck, and taken to St George's hospital, where the deep gash on his head was dressed, and he was treated for concussion.

Less than two weeks later, Hemingway would be aboard an American landing craft heading for Omaha Beach. Herein lies the question of his injury's severity. Was it a merely a skin wound and a temporary concussion, or something much more drastic, for which he should have received longer and more interventional treatment? Certainly, Hemingway was complaining of symptoms long after the accident. In 'London Fights the Robots', composed after his time with the RAF in June and July, he describes 'a certain amount of windowpane trouble' (Hemingway 1968: 368) which made it hard for him to concentrate.[1] In his first 'Poem to Mary', written at the same time, he refers to his 'true headache which is faithful and true and never leaves me'.[2] And then in his 30 September article, 'Battle for Paris', he recounts one of the French irregulars he had taken up with in August pointing out his 'obvious wounds' (ibid.: 377). In brackets, Hemingway notes that these wounds were 'caused by hitting a static water tank in Lon-

don'. Dearborn, based on this evidence and the conclusion of Carlos Baker, who examined the report of Hemingway's Cuban doctor, makes a compelling case that the injury had been grossly misdiagnosed, and that Hemingway had in fact suffered a 'subdural hematoma' (Dearborn 2017: 444) – a pooling of blood between the skull and the brain. Untreated, this would account for the ongoing headache, double-vision, and feelings of confusion that lingered long after the accident.

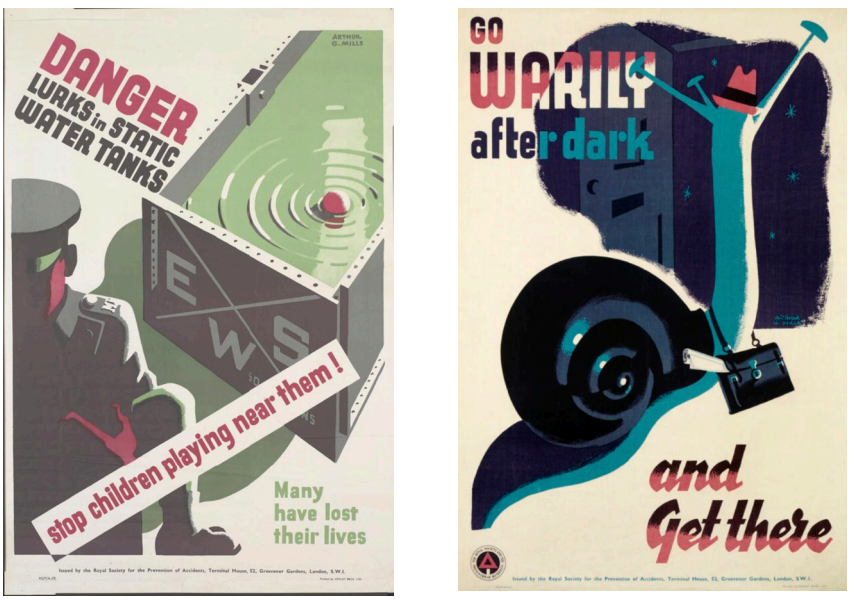

Figure 1: Arthur George Mills, for the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, 1941

Of course, this kind of third-hand diagnosis is a risky business, and it is impossible to know the specifics of Hemingway's condition. José Herrera, the Cuban doctor from whom Baker took the diagnosis of subdural hematoma, didn't examine Hemingway until 1945, and, as Dearborn explains, subdural hematomas could not be *directly* diagnosed until the appearance of MRI and CT scans in the 1970s. But what we do know is that the collision with a piece of wartime public works left Hemingway disorientated and wracked with pain for months afterwards, as he tried to write his pieces for *Collier's*. I hesitate from offering my readings below as a contribution to what Sarah Anderson Wood has aptly called a 'cottage industry' (Wood 2020: 132) of psychological and physiological diagnoses: practical criticism is not a medical science. Neither am I explicitly in engaged in something like

trauma studies – the work of exploring how Hemingway used fiction as a way of processing wounding having been admirably done elsewhere. My starting point is, instead, linguistic: if we know that Hemingway was suffering from serious discomfort and confusion after his accident, this must form part of our apparatus for analysing his style. He certainly wrote *about his symptoms*, it is my aim to discover whether he wrote through, or via them.

Censorship

In searching for the source of Hemingway's giddy wartime style, it might not even be necessary to make this hesitant step into the physiological. While he does complain briefly about his 'windowpane trouble' in 'London Fights the Robots', much more of the article is spent complaining about the restrictions of press censorship. While he admits that censorship is 'necessary and proper in time of war', this doesn't stop him lamenting that he had to omit most of the details he wanted to include in his piece, to the extent that 'there isn't much in this article now, except a guy loving an aeroplane' (Hemingway 1968: 366). A censored Hemingway is, on the face of it, a bizarre proposition. Hemingway's style, or at least the style we attribute to Hemingway, relies on unobstructed observation. Tony Tanner put it well in the 1982 'Special British Issue' of the *Hemingway Review*: 'Hemingway's practice of unravelling the instant, of hugging the details of a sequence with his whole attention […] is a reflection of his faith in the ultimate veracity of the attuned and operating senses' (Tanner 1982: 32). Truth for Hemingway resides in the senses, especially vision, and 'syntax is vision in action' (ibid.: 31); the route between seeing and style is, in Tanner's reading at least, direct. So what happens when sense comes up against censor? We risk ending up with the kind of blurring, the fudging of details, which Hemingway decries as the worst kind of writing (Hemingway 2004: 46).

The *Collier's* editors prefaced 'London Fights the Robots' with a small summary that buys into this narrative of censorship as anathema: '*Collier's* correspondent flies against the French rocket coast, and, after a struggle with the censor, still manages to give us a vivid picture of the new R.A.F. plane fighting Hitler's pilotless bombs'. The picture of a 'struggle with the censor' makes of Hemingway a journalistic hero,

bringing truth to the masses in the face of a harsh, anti-literary bureaucracy. But in the grand scheme of wartime journalism, the censorship imposed on correspondents in the Second World War was hardly draconian. The American military leadership understood two things from the outset: that comprehensive coverage of the war was vital for keeping the public on side, and that the correspondents were as a whole just as keen for allied successes as the soldiers and officers they were reporting on. As such, Roosevelt and Eisenhower set out with leniency in mind. An informed public would soon be persuaded of the war's purpose and validity, and a patriotic cadre of journalists would do most of the censoring themselves, before any explicit intervention was required (Casey 2017: 46). In 1942, the Office of Censorship published a *Code of Wartime Practices for the American Press*, which ran to a mere six pages. Responsibility was placed firmly on the reporters and editors: 'a maximum of accomplishment will be attained if editors will ask themselves with respect to any given detail, "Is this information I would like to have were I the enemy?" and then act accordingly' (Government Office of Censorship 1942: 1). The actual specifics of the *Code* which follow (on troops, ships, planes, fortifications, etc.) are given perfunctorily, as if they should be common sense. The Office did in addition, though, reserve the right to 'make special requests from time to time covering individual situations', i.e., to place an embargo on the reporting of practically any particular which they deemed sensitive. This power was used freely, and not always to the satisfaction of the press. Steven Casey recounts a tense 1943 incident after General Patton was witnessed slapping two troops suffering from shellshock. Eisenhower was determined to have Patton's reputation maintained, and ordered an embargo on press coverage of the scandal, which caused largescale rumblings (Casey 2017: 154). Even more insidious was the ongoing suppression of accounts of racial discrimination in the armed forces, for fear of an erosion of morale in African American troops already wary of fighting for a nation ambivalent towards their own liberties (Voss 1994: 176). The face that the commanders put on, though, was one of leniency-as-starting-point. The message: just be sensible.

When Hemingway sat down to write about his time with the RAF at Boscombe Down, Dunsfold, and Romney Marsh, he probably turned to page 4 of the *Code of Wartime Practices*, which proscribed

mention of '[i]nformation concerning new military aircraft and related items of equipment or detailed information on performance, construction, and armament of current military aircraft'. As we will see below, he did find routes around the embargo, but they show up his frustration, even petulance, in a manner not be found, for example, in Gellhorn's reporting of similar scenes. By this point in his career, Hemingway had more or less formalised his 'ice-berg' theory of writing. On the one hand, '[i]f a writer of prose knows enough about what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them' (Hemingway 2004: 165). But on the other hand, '[a] writer who omits things because he does not know them only makes hollow places in his writing'. This came in 1932, in *Death in the Afternoon*, before Hemingway had written under the overt control of a censor. Perhaps for Hemingway the risk of the self-censorship expected of journalists was that it would come across to the reader not as the deft, lean sketching of a confident author, but as the hollow, threadbare work of a rank amateur. *Death in the Afternoon* was an odd place for Hemingway to plant his flag on this distinction. Of all Hemingway's books, it is the one which omits the least. The 'Explanatory Glossary' of bullfighting terms runs to almost one hundred pages in the current edition. His 'ice-berg' theory does refer specifically to novels, though, so perhaps *Death in the Afternoon*, as a non-fiction piece, was a way of purging his desire to write as *aficionado*. The author should always be a know-it-all, but rarely should they be a tell-it-all. Against the realities of war reporting, though, it seems this rule of thumb fell short, and even the comparatively modest demands of American press censorship left Hemingway in unfamiliar territory, unsure of how to advance.

Style

For the moment, let's return to D plus 0, or 6 June. As the accredited combat correspondent for *Collier's*, Hemingway was able to ship aboard an American vessel, the *Dorothea L. Dix*, on invasion day. From there, he was lowered, his knees still swollen from the car accident, onto a LCV(P) (a landing craft for vehicles or personnel) bound for the Fox Green sector of Omaha Beach. His report on this journey, 'Voyage

to Victory', was not published until 22 July, and as if in deference to this gap he opens by reminding us of the date:

> No one remembers the date of the Battle of Shiloh. But the day we took Fox Green beach was the sixth of June, and the wind was blowing hard out of the northwest.
>
> (Hemingway 1968: 349)[3]

It's a blurry place to start. For one thing, some of Hemingway's readers probably did remember the date of Shiloh (6-7 April 1862, for anyone who would like to have this information ready at dinner parties), and would have resented being told they didn't. Indeed, only two years earlier Hemingway had edited an anthology of war writing which featured a chapter on Shiloh from Lloyd Lewis's *Sherman: Fighting Prophet* (1932). The first sentence: '[t]he dawn came up on Sunday, April 6, to shine red on the peach blossoms that were flowering in Tennessee' (Lewis [1942] 1955: 223). So the attempt to paint Shiloh as the mythic battle lost in the past and D-Day as the actual, present thing, falls short. Really, the sentences do the opposite of what they propose: worried that 6 June, like Shiloh, will slip from his memory, he judges it best to write the date down. Aside from this slight double-cross, the second sentence is some good writer's writing. We get a place, a date, and some weather: firm, military details presented without obfuscation. But it's the start of the end for this clarity, and the piece soon begins to spiral in on itself, gradually disintegrating the triumphant simplicity of its title, which I can only imagine was added by a slightly baffled editor.[4]

After a few short paragraphs describing the scene at large as the LCV(P) moves past 'low, silhouetted cruisers', 'big battlewagons', and 'the heat-bright flashes of their guns', we get the first passage of dialogue:

> 'What's your course, coxswain?' Lieutenant (jg) Robert Anderson of Roanoke, Virginia, shouted from the stern.
>
> 'Two-twenty, sir', the coxswain, Frank Currier of Saugus, Massachusetts, answered. He was a thin-faced, freckled boy with his eyes fixed on the compass.
>
> 'Then steer two-twenty, damn it!' Anderson said. 'Don't steer over the whole damn' ocean!'
>
> 'I'm steering two-twenty, sir,' the coxswain said patiently.

> 'Well steer it, then,' Andy said.
>
> (Hemingway 1968: 349–50)

Rhythms of repetition are what compels Hemingway's dialogue. He writes accretive rather than dramatic or interventional speech, which the reader can fall in with rather than merely follow along. This exchange, though, is repetition towards absurdity. The second iteration of the exchange ('I'm steering two-twenty, sir' / 'Well steer it, then') adds no new information or advance to the first.[5] The account of the landing, barely begun, is already floundering is misconstrued detail, but thankfully there's a way out. Andy, the commander of the boat's contingent of trained, fully-equipped infantry, turns to the novelist who has come aboard with him: '"Mr. Hemingway, will you please see if you can see what that flag is over there, with your glasses?"' (ibid.: 350) It's an almost comically predictable turn. Without Hemingway, the clownish exchange would have continued unchecked: it is only his intervention, quite literally his clear sight, that can push the boat, and thereby the narrative, forward.

But just as Hemingway prepares to fall into his natural role as author-hero, he finds himself frustrated:

> I got my old miniature Zeiss glasses out of an inside pocket, where they were wrapped in a woollen sock with some tissue to clean them, and focused them on the flag. I made the flag out just before a wave drenched the glasses. (ibid.)

He tries to dry them, 'but it was hopeless the way the spray was coming in'. Doubtless this was the case, but as well as being an accurate report of conditions this passage sets up the article as an account of Hemingway-the-author in dire straits. In *Death in the Afternoon*, he had made his case against a 'school of writers' who sought to make all objects mystic by writing with a 'distortion of vision' (Hemingway 2004: 47). It was the ultimate indignity: to blur one's eyes and trick a reader with murky writing. On the LCV(P), blurriness was a fact of the matter, or so he tries to persuade us. Hemingway makes no mention of his accident or injury in this piece. But it lurks in the background as a presiding stylistic impetus, the auspice of an article trapped in its own overlapping rhythms, fogged and repetitive. Having abandoned his glasses, and thus any special ocular privilege over his companions,

he returns to the wide angle, looking towards the French coast, 'which was showing clearer all the time on what was, or was not, a course of 220 degrees, depending on whether you believed Andy or Currier the coxswain'. There is a deliberate undoing of focus in this sentence: all Hemingway can do is report the confusion without the capacity to summarise or intervene.

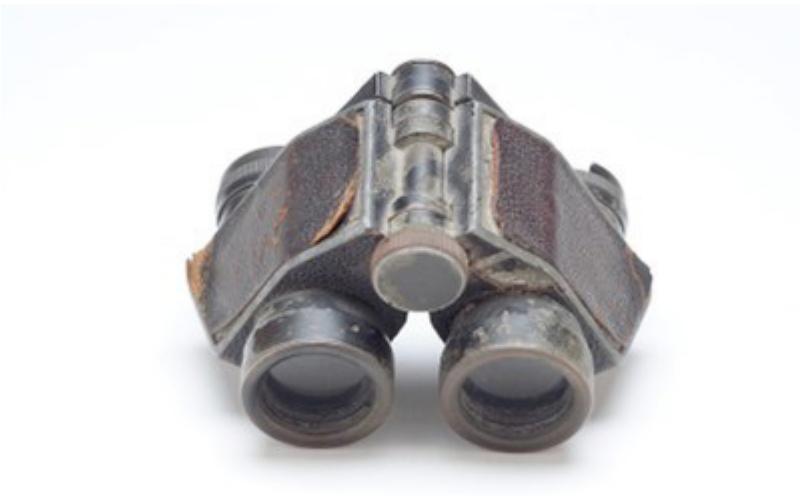

Figure 2: Hemingway's Zeiss Turita 8x24 Binoculars. Photograph by Frank Lagorio, used with permission.

The shape set by this opening action is maintained through the rest of the piece. Neither Andy nor Hemingway can fix on the location of Fox Green beach, their assigned landing place. Andy gets out a map, an absurd amalgam of stapled sheets 'which spread, open, twice as long as a man could reach with outstretched arms' (Hemingway 1968: 352). Inevitably, the wind catches it, and sends it flying overboard, leading to another section of repeated dialogue: '"Have you got a small chart, Andy?" / "Never had one" / "That the only chart?" / "Only one". Andy continues: '"[…] and it disintegrated on me. A wave hit it, and it disintegrated"'. This seems, again, a strange way of talking for a lieutenant, and it is almost certainly Hemingway who is interested in the word 'disintegrated'. A whole has turned into parts, a summing apparatus of representation made into nonsense. And so goes the operation for Fox Green beach. Hemingway's is just one of a flotilla of boats 'all acting

in the same confusing manner – heading in, coming out and circling'. Andy steers the LCV(P) towards a succession of other boats in the hope of getting more precise information, but never finds it. This parade of mis- or missing information ends as it began:

> An LCI was headed straight towards us, pulling away from the beach after having circled to go in. As it passed, a man shouted with a megaphone, 'There are wounded on that boat and she is sinking.'
>
> 'Can you get in to her?'
>
> The only words we heard clearly from the megaphone as the wind snatched the voice away were 'machine-gun nest'.
>
> 'Did they say there was or there wasn't a machine-gun nest?' Andy said.
>
> 'I couldn't hear.' (ibid.: 361)

It was or was not 220, there was or was not a machine-gun nest. This is not the style that Hemingway spent his career evangelising. A writer should see clearly enough to tell their reader what there *was*, in accurate terms. 'Voyage to Victory' shows an amalgam of stand-ins for the author's clarifying or summary craft – binoculars, maps, megaphones – all failing in their intended purpose.

Ultimately, intervention comes from outside Andy or Hemingway's control. The destroyers eventually get far enough towards shore to take aim at the machine-gun nests and pill boxes which had kept the smaller craft from landing. With these blown apart, Hemingway's boat is able pull in to the beach and unload its troops. They pick up some wounded, and return to the *Dorothea L. Dix* – Hemingway did not have permission to disembark onto the beach. I don't believe that 'Voyage to Victory' is what some of its readers have accused it of being: an egotistical self-centering at the expense of careful or empathetic observation. Certainly Hemingway looms larger in this piece than Gellhorn, for example, looms in hers. Unable to get official permission to board a vessel on D-Day, Gellhorn later stowed herself away on a hospital ship headed for the channel. Her report, published in *Collier's* two weeks after Hemingway's, does not feature doctors asking for her opinion on wounds, or nurses borrowing her suturing kit: just clear descriptions of them doing their jobs (Gellhorn 1944b). But 'Voyage to Victory' is

not a story of Hemingway the hero, as some of his later war-writing becomes. It is an account of an author suddenly bereft of their normal tools for composition. Whether as a response to concussion or censorship, Hemingway is developing in the article a new proxy style, invested in dead ends and scraps of faulty information. He had always been a writer of famously few words, but because those words were the rights ones. In London, as we will see exacerbated below, there just didn't seem to be enough words coming through the spray.

'London Fights the Robots' takes an even more spiralling path through its subject. Spending time with the RAF had been perhaps the one thing that Hemingway was excited about on his journey to London. As he freely admitted, he loved aeroplanes, and wanted desperately to write about them. But all the hopes he had for a terse, thrilling article on the exploits of RAF squadrons were dashed by what he paints as a blurred combination of censorship and a difficulty concentrating or keeping things clear in his head. On our end, it is hard to get a pristine picture of Hemingway's movements between D-Day and his transfer to France. Carlos Baker did an excellent job with limited materials in his 1969 biography, covering Hemingway's trips to air bases at Boscombe Down, Dunsfold, and Thorney Island, near Portsmouth. What's missing, though, and has not to my knowledge been added by any later biographers, is his time at RAF Newchurch in Romney Marsh, a temporary Advanced Landing Ground constructed to provide air cover for Operation Overlord and later assigned to the anti-V-1 flights which feature in Hemingway's article.

I discovered this posting via a circuitous route. In looking up the model of binoculars Hemingway meant by his 'miniature Zeiss glasses', I found a posting by Frank Lagorio on BirdForum, in which he claimed to have had the chance to photograph and repair the very glasses Hemingway used on D-Day (Logario 2012). Lagorio had had the glasses leant to him by a friend who had received them from the son of a George 'Lefty' Whitman, an American airman who had been stationed at RAF Newchurch from June to July 1944, and there met Hemingway, who traded his glasses for Whitman's woollen jumper. Or so the story goes. Whitman's account of his service, and time with Hemingway, was published in a 1997 Canadian volume, *Listen to Us: Aircrew Memories*. (Aircrew Association 1997). The memoir is a re-

markably rich source, but I have had some trouble corroborating its details. For example, Whitman recounts a reception held at the airbase shortly after the anti-V-1 flights came to public attention. The guest list he provides requires a deep breath: Whitman and Hemingway were apparently joined by Ernie Pyle, John Steinbeck, Edward G. Robinson, Winston Churchill, and the King and Queen Consort. In Whitman's report, Hemingway and Churchill trade jibes about their tolerance for whisky. Unfortunately, I have been unable to find any other evidence of the reception. None of Churchill's biographers mention it, and there is no indication of the event in his correspondence, although he did meet the King at General Montgomery's headquarters in Kent around the same time.[6] Otherwise, the best I have been able to locate is a letter from Hemingway to Churchill during his 1946 tour of the USA. Hemingway invited Churchill on a fishing trip aboard the *Pilar* in reasonably familiar terms, suggesting a possible prior acquaintance (Churchill Archive: CHUR 2/227). But then again, Hemingway would probably have written unabashed to a risen Christ if there was a chance of a fishing trip.

We are left, then, with a very peculiar document. Whitman was almost obsessively detailed when he assembled this account of his brief posting in Romney Marsh, but also, apparently, prone to wild fabrication. The binoculars, at least, hold up: Whitman's son had a pair of 8x24 Zeiss glasses which match those shown in photos of Hemingway on D-Day. Hemingway also mentions a Belgian squadron leader in his piece, who Whitman identifies as Remy Van Lierde, who did indeed serve at RAF Newchurch. So it is almost certain Hemingway spent time with Whitman, and thus that the general facts of the account are true, barring the fantasy tea-party. So why didn't Hemingway mention it anywhere else, and with any more specifics? Conveniently for Whitman, if he is the tall-tale-teller I suspect, he recalls asking Hemingway to keep quiet about his time at Newchurch. Not because the anti-V-1 missions were top secret, but because he illicitly took Hemingway up in his plane for a combat mission over Normandy:

> [Hemingway] would grind his teeth in that mannerism that was so often mistaken for a smile, and stomp up and down complaining that the goddamn invasion was three weeks old and he hadn't been there yet. I finally said to him one day,
>
> 'Look. You really want to see the action, don't you?' He

> pulled his beard and answered,
>
> 'I'd do anything to get over there.'
>
> 'Even not write about it?' I replied.
>
> 'What in the hell are you getting at?' was his retort.
>
> 'If you swear that you'll not write about this while I'm in the service, I'll take you over for a look.' [SOURCE?]

If this is made up, it's an excellent bit of character work. The planes Whitman flew were one-seaters, so he had to remove his parachute to make room for Hemingway, and then all but sit on the author's lap. Whitman recounts flying over Caen-Carpiquet aerodrome, strafing gun posts while Typhoons shot rockets at German tanks. 'My passenger', he writes, 'thought he had died and gone to heaven'.

This new evidence, if evidence it is, goes some way to explaining the oddness of 'London Fights the Robots'. Even compared to 'Voyage to Victory', the article is incredibly choppy. It starts with an attempted paean to a fighter plane, gives a brief portrait of RAF personnel, pauses to explain the problems of censorship, goes back to fighter planes for a paragraph, switches to talk about bombers, complains about British accents, then abruptly ends. Terry Mort calls the piece 'jocular', but balances this with Charles Whiting's more piquant words: 'garrulous, inaccurate, egocentric' (Mort 2016: 127). At best, then, it has been seen as odd. At worst, it has been seen as undisciplined and factually incorrect. Baker, for example, charges Hemingway with getting his aeroplanes wrong. He describes him on his trip to RAF Boscombe Down as 'immediately enthusiastic about the Typhoons, which he mistakenly called Tempests' (Baker 1969: 601). Mort tempers this as 'not much of an error since the Typhoons were essentially a Tempest, redesigned to provide better performance in terms of manoeuvrability and speed' (Mort 2016: 107). But it might not be any error at all. For starters, Mort has it the wrong way round. The Typhoon came first, and was replaced by the Tempest. After a few iterations, the Tempest V became the key craft in the mission to intercept V-1s, and they flew from RAF Newchurch. The history of pointing out a mistake on Hemingway's part comes down to the hitherto lack of evidence for Hemingway's presence at any base from which Tempests flew. If we take even the outline of Whitman's account as true, this mistake vanishes.

The whole thing has something of the grammar of the course Hemingway took on D-Day, which 'was, or was not' 220. Hemingway almost certainly *was* at RAF Newchurch, and quite possibly *did* go up in Whitman's Tempest, but at very same time he wasn't and didn't, because he had agreed not to write about it. This might account for one of the stylistic peculiarities of the piece: the constantly shifting proper nouns. The article begins with a portrait:

> The Tempest is a great, gaunt aeroplane. It is the fastest pursuit job in the world and is as tough as a mule. It has been reported with a speed of 400 and should dive way ahead of its own noise. (Hemingway 1968: 364)

We then get a description of an airbase, where the planes 'took off downwind, crosswind, any way the weather lay, and grabbed a piece of the sky and lurched up into it' (I think I can confidently identify this as RAF Newchurch, not Boscombe Down as has previously been assumed). But the opening passage then stalls by declaring that 'a P-51 can do something to a man's heart'. A P-51? What happened to the Tempest? The article goes on to divert via Mitchell bombers, then banks around to land on 'attempts at interception in that fine, 400-mile-an-hour aeroplane, the Mosquito'. Come again? The De Havilland Mosquito could indeed reach 400mph, and was used to intercept V-1s, but Hemingway couldn't be less clear in the way he features the aircraft: at the end of a sentence, without any follow-up, inches before the end of the article.

Is this confusion or composition? As discussed above, I'm reluctant to diagnose via style. That said, Hemingway is quite frank about the impact his injuries had on the writing of this article. After one of his digressions, he tries to pull it back onto track:

> Now if you are following this piece closely – which I am not, due to a certain amount of windowpane trouble – we should be somewhere in southern England where a group of Tempest pilots have in seven days shot down their share of pilotless aircraft. (ibid.: 368)

This is an almost direct confession that the lingering effects of the May concussion were still frustrating Hemingway come June and July. To start with, this is the original windowpane trouble: the trouble of hav-

ing collided with the car's glass. But it also another optic technology gone awry; what should offer a pilot clear views and protection from wind is fogged up and obfuscating. So we find Hemingway the airman at the controls of his own body, unable to see out properly. Sarah Anderson Wood has set the challenge quite directly for the role of trauma studies in Hemingway scholarship. If we agree that Hemingway was suffering from some form of chronic traumatic encephalopathy as a result of repeated head wounds, we should be prepared to ask 'how did this illness affect the work he produced' (Wood 2020: 141)? For those serious about such questions, 'London Fights the Robots' must be high in priority for analysis, where it has hitherto gone under the radar. It came before the African plane crashes which scholars have marked as the start of Hemingway's mental and physical decline, but nevertheless shows him wrestling with the problem of writing through fogged glass, confused over what he has said and what he still needs to say.

For the sake of focus in the remaining portion of this article, though, I want to pay close attention to the article as a deliberate composition, or at least an attempt at confusion as composition. We can return to the maxim offered by the *Code of Wartime Practises*: 'a maximum of accomplishment will be attained if editors will ask themselves with respect to any given detail, "Is this information I would like to have were I the enemy?" and then act accordingly'. Read with this in mind, 'London Fights the Robots' starts to make sense in its senselessness. Frustrated with censorship, Hemingway might have been trying to reduce the restrictions to their absurd essence. The *Code* was essentially a style guide recommending authors write with the minimum of technical clarity, and Hemingway was going to take it at its word. If a German spy had picked up a copy of *Collier's* in the hope of getting new intelligence on the RAF's arsenal and strategy, they would have been disappointed. Which plane is it that can go at 400mph, the Tempest or the Mosquito? And which plane does this correspondent report intercepting V-1s on the coast, the P-51 or the Tempest? It's not clear: 'London Fights the Robots' is dressed up as a form of counter-intelligence, a rambling attempt at misdirection.

Hemingway was also forbidden to share details of, in his own words, the 'speeds, dimensions, characteristics or armament' of any aircraft in service, and it would be hard to pin him down on that charge:

> Tempest is a sissy name out of Shakespeare, who is a great man anywhere, but they have put it on to an aeroplane that is sort of like a cross between Man o' War and Tallulah Bankhead in the best year either of them ever had. They were good years, too, and many a man has been taken by the bookies because he looked at a colt that had the swelling Big Red's neck had and not any of the rest of it. And there have been many husky voices since, but none that carried good across the Western ocean. (Hemingway 1968: 365)

This is a much better paragraph about how a racehorse might be like an actress than how either might be like an aeroplane. And not even 'like', but 'sort of like': we're a good way here from the Hemingway of direct

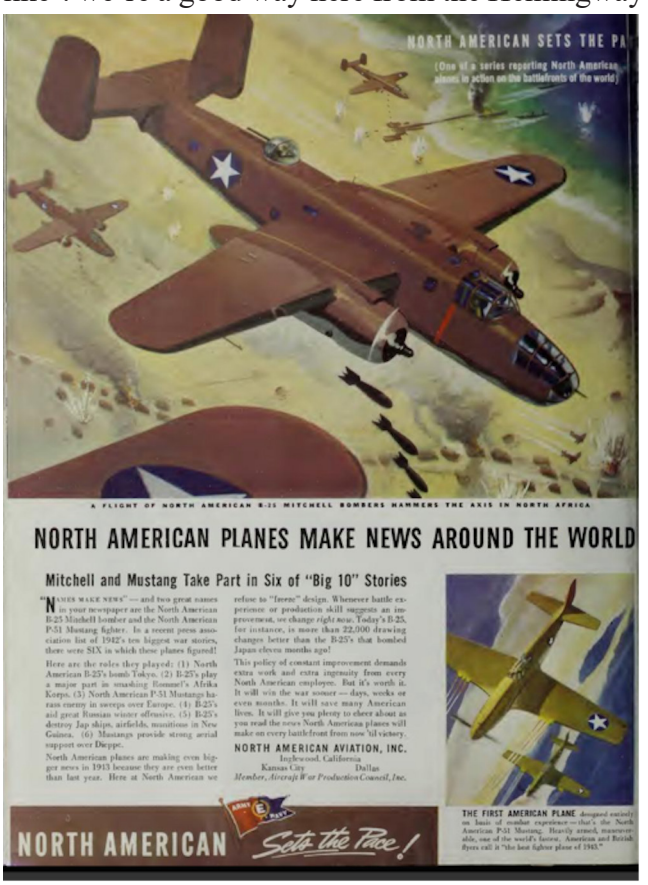

Figure 3: from Collier's Weekly, 20 March 1943

observation, and deep into an idiosyncratic chain of association that

might leave a clued-in American reader cold, let alone our posited enemy agent. Later, Hemingway practically gives up on description altogether. In his passage on riding along in a B-25 Mitchell for a bombing run, we learn that the 'other Mitchell on our right was going along in the air, looking just like a picture of a Mitchell in an advertisement by the manufacturers' (ibid.: 369). For the readers of *Collier's*, this must have seemed a bit flat. An article on the RAF by world-famous war writer Ernest Hemingway touted on the cover, and all the readers get is a comparison of a plane to a picture of that same plane? North American Aviation ran several magazine ads during the war in outlets including *Collier's*. Hemingway's readers would thus come away knowing hardly anything more about the plane than what they already knew. This, I believe, is another joke Hemingway is attempting to play on censorship. 'London Fights the Robots' shared an issue with 'Wizard With a Wrench' (Boesen 1944), an article about a skilled Mitchell mechanic, which gets far deeper under the hood than Hemingway's piece. Hemingway isn't giving his readers the most he can offer without provoking the censor, but the least. Try censoring *this*.

Reading 'London Fights the Robots' involves decoding a cipher of Hemingway's own invention. The article is styled with a set of rules not provided in advance: it's a place where planes are like horses crossed with Hollywood stars, where good war writing is like bad sports writing, and where Tempests are P-51s are Mosquitos. This doesn't make it a bad piece of writing: it just isn't what we might think we want from a Hemingway story on RAF exploits. It also isn't unreasonable for a novelist to spend time negotiating the necessary sacrifice of style to the war-effort. Hemingway refers to himself at several points as 'your pilotless-aircraft editor', reminding himself of the job he's been given. But it's not a job he thinks is fated to stick:

> The day before your pilotless-aircraft editor started studying the interception angle, he or I (I guess it is I, although sometimes it doesn't seem the right man in the right place and I have thought some of leaving the whole thing and going back to writing books in stiff covers) […] (Hemingway 1968: 368)

What happened the day before (the Mitchell bombing run) hardly matters: by the middle of the sentence Hemingway has admitted he

shouldn't be the one writing it. He didn't quit, though. There were four more *Collier's* articles after 'London Fights the Robots', about Hemingway's experiences in France and Germany as allied forces inched towards Berlin. And that journey was an *experience*, where perhaps what happened to him in 'Voyage to Victory' and 'London Fights the Robots' was something less than that in his eyes. To sketch the difference, I can simply point out that he narrowly dodged an indictment for carrying weapons as a civilian journalist in France (Baker 1969: 652). In the fluidity of an extended front, without a fixed address at the Dorchester, Hemingway the author-hero got back into gear, for better or worse.

We are left, then, with only a pair of articles in what I have suggested is a coherent and particular style. Perhaps this is too small a sample for that claim, but I believe it offers more to Hemingway's readers than side-lining the articles as somehow deficient or unfortunate. This recognition of a London style also offers a way into some of Hemingway's most-maligned productions: his first and second poems to Mary. Although space does not remain for a full investigation, I will give the opening lines of the 'First Poem to Mary in London', which I believe must have been written after his first flights with the RAF:

> I loving only the word
> Trying to make with a phrase and a sentence
> Something no bomber can reach
> Something to stand when all of us are gone
> And long after:
> (Given a little luck at the moment of wording)
> (Needing much luck then. Playing it out when I get it)
> Come now to a new city.
>
> (Hemingway 1992: 103)

Whatever Hemingway wrote had to be bomb-proof, giving no hint to the enemy and no goad to the censors. How could this writing be, at the same time, something 'to stand when all of us are gone'? Hemingway's Second World War journalism is no favourite of the anthologies, rarely joining the work of Ernie Pyle and Martha Gellhorn. Where other journalists accepted the restrictions of censorship and found ways to write in the gaps, Hemingway spent the first months of his war fighting this imposition on his style, frustrated that he was both in the action and out

of it, both flying over Normandy in a Tempest and never there at all.

University College London

Notes

1. All references to Hemingway's *Collier's* articles will be taken from this edition. 'London Fights the Robots' was first published in *Collier's Weekly* (19 August 1944), pp. 17, 80–81.
2. Gerogiannis dates this poem as May, and Dearborn concurs. But the poem mentions flying as a cure for the headache, so I side with Carlos Baker, who dates the poem as concurrent with his RAF placements in June and July.
3. First published in *Collier's Weekly* (22 July 1944), pp. 11–13, 56–57.
4. No manuscript or typescript for this piece is listed in the catalogue of the Ernest Hemingway Collection at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, so I've been unable to discover what title, if any, Hemingway gave it.
5. Terry Mort is fairly convinced this exchange is fabricated, arguing that the navy would never have said 'two twenty', and would have used the form 'Two Two Zero' (Mort 2016: 98).
6. As confirmed by a telegram from General Montgomery on 14 June 1944 (Churchill Archive: CHAR 20/166/103).

List of Figures

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2. Lagorio, Frank. 2012. Zeiss Turita 8X24 Owned by Ernest Hemingway (View 3) <https://www.flickr.com/photos/binocwpg/6881415018/in/photostream/> [Accessed 23 November 2022]
3. North American Aviation, 20 March 1943, 'North American Planes Make News Around the World', *Collier's Weekly*, p. 68. Reproduced with permission from Crowell-Collier, Macmillan

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