

conditions of the country" [15].) A great tourist, the greatest it is claimed, should know about these things, unsecret as they are. One would have wanted from Hemingway some of the penetration and range that Lawrence, like *all* great travellers, brought to the places where he chose to live.

Now you have seen the Hemingway Museum. You have peered at the dioramas and muttered through the documentation at each display. Now it is time to buy a tee shirt or two. You can buy a plastic coffee mug with Hem's face on it. There are pot-metal models of the steel bridge and the cave in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. You can buy them too. But don't buy those bumper stickers that read, "It will be a long time, if ever, before there is born / An American so strong, so rich in adventure" (212). Those lines are crudely lifted, warped, and diminished from the final stanza of García Lorca's elegy for a great bullfighter. His wonderful "Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías" deserves a better fate. In *Death in the Afternoon* Hemingway makes it clear that he despises Sánchez Mejías. Even in the multiplicitous space of American hyperreality the rawness of the irony jolts one's mind. Don't you dare buy that bumper sticker.

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Lennart Hagerfors. *The Whales in Lake Tanganyika* (1985). Trans. by Anselm Hollo. New York: Grove, 1989. pp. 172. \$24.00.

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Two novels about great nineteenth-century travellers to what Europeans considered to be the ends of the earth: *Whales* concerning an English hireling of Henry Stanley while in quest of David Livingstone in equatorial Africa; *Slowness* concerning John Franklin at the extremes of the globe, both Australia and the Arctic. Both books are translated, the former from Swedish and the latter from German; both are intensely personal views of men seduced to journey into their unknown by forces they think they understand but which prove totally inadequate to explain what becomes their continued, tortured quest.

For me *Whales* is the better novel because the creation of its alcoholic protagonist, the ex-sailor John Shaw, is more imaginatively perceptive and more precisely rooted in the manifold dry, ugly detail of the belly of Africa in the 1870s. I write this, having never lived either in Africa or the 1870s, because I experience the uniqueness of that world more sensibly than I do either the Tasmania or the Arctic of *Slowness*. Without visiting Africa, I have been in enough (for me) strange landscapes on several continents to apprehend the gradual distention of the gut, the rising fever, the growing black hole in the brain which a truly foreign, overwhelming world can create in the previously uninformed and (finally) resistant mind. Stanley's ludicrous words to Shaw — "Don't forget that you are a white man! Don't forget your dignity!" — burn like a banner over the entire nineteenth century, both English and American: the anserine ignorance that presumed technology meant civilization; that carrying unnumberable, graspable *things* obviously meant superiority; that being seen by white eyes meant discovery; that anyone who could not speak at least four words of broken English ("Yes," "Please," "Sir," and "Yes" again) was irredeemably stupid. Shaw grows to understand white stupidity, but Livingstone understands white brilliance as well, and therefore he truly understands. As Livingstone explains,

... I told them [the Africans] about a desert god from the Near East and about his kindly son. I gave words to a love that is wordless. Into the Negroes' inexhaustible storehouse of gods and spirits my god disappeared, accepted and tolerated to the point of anonymity and muteness among all others. They listened to me and offered me food and wives. They asked my god for help against the slave traders, believing that there was a geographical connection between them. (169)

In the end Shaw, the ordinary, perceptive and stupid white man, the ex-sailor who is once given the possibility of black vision in Lake Tanganyika, understands one small matter: "The sea has always frightened me." That is perhaps enough human understanding; certainly, it is larger than most, in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries.

Nadolny's John (Franklin) understands both more than Hagerfors' Shaw and, eventually, less. The novel realizes his character most brilliantly in his youth: his gradual discovery of his unique burden, and gift, of *slowness* which takes place as he tries to learn to play cricket (children's game) and war (men's game). As he matures into greater and greater responsibility, John develops this discovery into "the system" as he calls it; "the system" helps him become, between 1819 and 1847, one of England's greatest and certainly her most disastrous explorer. As he explains to fellow officer and explorer Dr. Richardson after his first arctic expedition, which killed over half his men (a mere eleven): "The system was right, only we should have learned more things better in time. I'm the one who made the

mistakes . . . [but] the system works” (239). Convinced by himself of his system, “Franklin took heart again. In any case, he had remained sure of himself, even during the worst moments” (239).

Twenty-five years later, death spares him the even worse moments of seeing his 129 men, the hand-picked prime of English sailors and soldiers, degenerate into sick and deranged and cannibalized corpses on the ice of King William Island. His system is so implacable that not even 250 years of English experience with arctic ice can convince him that it will not open for the convenience of English determination, no matter how slow. He dies before that worst happens; presumably, like Sisyphus, happy.

Trying to shape all of Franklin’s long, complex life around one character concept gives Nadolny a strong structure for his novel, but, in places, even he is forced into a narratively uninteresting summary. When a novelist tries to satisfy the tyrannical plethora of history, what else can result? Nadolny is richest in character and its interactions; he is not so good at presenting the greatest possibilities of the explorer, which I imagine must be his/her relationship to space, since it is space that he/she is inevitably moving into, no matter where on earth its place may be. The external land space serves, then, as mirror and corrective of the often distorted internal land-space; the more accurately the external is realized, the more incisive the internal. It is concerning arctic land-space where Nadolny is weakest: he deals with it in one of three ways: either he uses the exact words of Franklin’s writing (which are most often Georgianly unseeing); or in large, oblivious generalities (they simply “paddle up a river” or “walk through a forest”); or he avoids landscape altogether by setting his scenes in tents and ships’ cabins. The overwhelming nature of arctic land and icescapes, which powerfully affected the English eye — the fact that even sailors, after a lifetime at sea, seem to have had no written language to deal with them could not have made them any less affecting — is not captured in the novel. I believe writers who dare write about explorers should, like them, travel; and that not only in the mind.

At the end of his first, and therefore purest, expedition, John Franklin wrote: “I have been prompted to venture upon the task [of writing] solely by the imperious sense of duty, when called upon to undertake it” (Franklin xv-xvi). How necessary, both for explorers and for writers.

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