

Hemingway's Fishing Rod: A Study of the First African Plane Crash and Rescue



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Hemingway's Fishing Rod: A Study of the First African Plane Crash and Rescue

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Prologue

It all started one evening last summer, when I was invited to my neighbors' house for a curry. Our hosts, Merlyn and Gino, thought I might be interested in a story about Ernest Hemingway. "About Hemingway? Tell me the story."

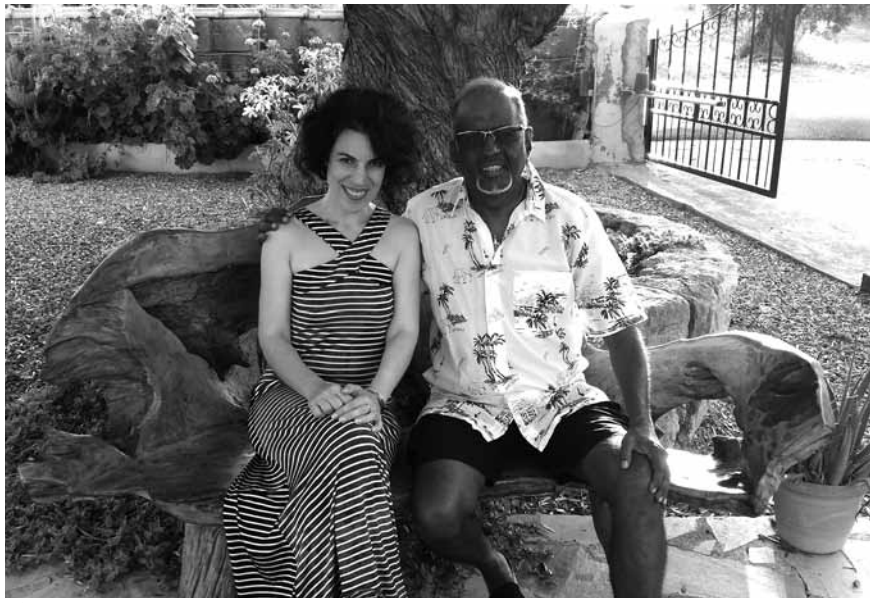
The story begins with a recollection, a photograph, and a fishing rod. Ernest and Mary Hemingway were stranded near the Murchison Falls in East Africa after their plane crash-landed in 1954. The next morning, they were rescued by a launch sailing down the river. The captain of the launch was Gino's father. Hemingway gave the skipper his fishing rod as a gesture of thanks, and Mary had her photograph taken with him as a memento.

"Oh really, how interesting!" Eventually the subject was exhausted that evening, but, for me, something had started: I decided to investigate the story of Hemingway's air crash and rescue further.

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On 23 January 1954, having just completed his second African safari, Ernest Hemingway, his wife, and their pilot Roy Marsh crashed in Marsh's Cessna 180 near the Murchison Falls during a tour of the Congo Basin. After spending the night in the open air, the party was picked up by a launch sailing nearby and traveled to Butiaba, where they agreed to fly back to Entebbe with Reginald Cartwright in his H-89 de Havilland Rapide. Unfortunately, Cartwright's plane caught fire during take-off and crashed; the party was lucky to survive. Sandwiched between the two plane disasters is the 24 January 1954 boat rescue. There is not much more to that story except Gino's sketchy account—for he was only ten years old at the time—and Hemingway's version of the incident in a two-part article for *Look* magazine, entitled "The Christmas Gift." I therefore decided to conduct my own research. The first air crash and the subsequent rescue is the stuff of high drama. However, critics regard it as relatively insignificant compared to the second crash, since the injuries sus-

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The author with Gino Abreo

tained by Hemingway in that one were very serious and are viewed by many as the beginning of his decline.

Hemingway's recollections of the crashes in "The Christmas Gift," written just days *after* the second crash but *before* the period when he began looking back to the past in his prose, reveal a man who is in denial concerning the physical and psychological effects of both plane crashes. In "The Christmas Gift," Hemingway portrays an exaggerated version of his well-known masculine persona, but when the article's version of events are compared to Gino Abreo's version, obtained in an interview, and to Mary Hemingway's version in her autobiography, *How It Was* (1977), a richer, more complicated Hemingway emerges. In these versions, Hemingway appears on the cusp of a significant change as he recognizes the hollowness of the persona and begins to register that the injuries he sustained would change his quality of life and his ability to work.

Articles about the Hemingway rescue headlined many of the morning papers on 25 January 1954, such as in *The New York Times*: "Hemingway and Wife Reported Safe After Two Plane Crashes in East Africa" (Associated Press 1). The article is accompanied by a large photograph of the writer holding a rifle and posing with a dead leopard with the caption: "Ernest Hemingway with leopard he killed recently in Africa" (Associated Press 1). The photograph

depicts strength and virility: Hemingway's steady pose, chin held high, eyes proud, holding his rifle over the dead beast. He is the master, the leopard no match for his skill and expertise: Hemingway, the man of action. Hemingway endorses notions of masculinity tied to violence and aggression, as the risk-taker who is adventurous, fearless, and heroic. The rifle is not only an accessory; as a quintessential patriarchal metaphor, it can be viewed as an extension of Hemingway's manhood, signifying physical strength and sexual virility (Mankayi 34). And yet behind the photograph is another story. This safari was notable for the few clean kills that Hemingway made. His eyesight, always genetically weak, was now beginning to fail, and thus he struggled to shoot standing game with accuracy (Reynolds 267). Even the leopard in the photo was not clearly Hemingway's kill. Mayito Menocal, a wealthy Cuban friend, and Hemingway had fired at the leopard simultaneously. However, compelled to pose for *Look* photographer Earl Theisen, Hemingway uncomfortably and reluctantly took the credit, promising that he would kill another leopard before the *Look* article was published to ensure the prowess implied in the photo was authentic (Reynolds 268). This background reveals the story behind the pose; far from confident, he was self-conscious, almost embarrassed, and felt under pressure to maintain his masculine image at even the cost of possible misrepresentation.

Publicly, the Hemingway legend was upheld by stories of his alpha-male heroics, and his survival of the crashes only enhanced the already-potent myth. A. E. Hotchner called the whole crash experience "a series of violent misadventures in the dense jungle near the Murchison Falls" (75), and Anthony Burgess commented, "the incredible happened, proving that lightning always strikes the same tree twice" (104). As a result of the first crash, obituaries for Hemingway appeared in newspapers, which later had to be revoked when his miraculous survival became known (Hotchner 75). Hemingway seemed to defy death, telling the press, "My luck, she is running good" (Hotchner 75). Moreover, he capitalized on the newsworthiness of the story, making light of the whole incident in the ironically titled "The Christmas Gift" in *Look* magazine (20 April and 4 May 1954) for which he was paid $20,000. (Bear in mind, Hemingway had already been paid $15,000, the expenses needed for the safari, and an additional $10,000 for a 3,500-word article to accompany the safari experience by this same magazine (published on 26 January 1954). Although "The Christmas Gift" was a confessional piece designed for mass-market consumption, the injuries sustained in the second crash could not be hidden or

ignored. What emerges, as Rose Marie Burwell, author of *Hemingway: The Postwar Years and the Posthumous Novels*, has observed, is the portrait of a writer "trapped in the public image he once cultivated" (134).

Throughout the article, Hemingway presents a calm and collected persona who is cavalier about his experiences. This account, embraced by various biographers and critics, has become legend. However, as Mario Menocal, Jr. writes, the account is rooted in a pose Hemingway had carefully maintained during his career:

> Ernest, engaged in creating and perpetuating the Hemingway *persona*, and engaged in promoting and selling his works, was a part of the first personality while Ernest, engaged in the creation of his works, belonged to the second. […] No one was more conscious than Ernest of the figure and image he possessed in the minds of the American press and reading public. (qtd. in Meyers 239)

The pressure of upholding the tough image becomes apparent in the conflicting accounts of the crashes. In a letter dated 17 March 1954 to Kit Figgis, whose husband helped Hemingway after the second crash, Hemingway lists his injuries from both air crashes and a bush fire, almost nonchalantly:

> major concussion, rupture one kidney, damage liver, collapse of intestines, Paralysis sphincter, 3/4 lost sight in one eye (left) (never any good anyway), Burns head, Brush fire = burns on lips (light), left hand severe, right forearm ditto, abdomen (light), legs (Light).

Though the tone is light-hearted and "macho," Hemingway reveals in the same letter, almost parenthetically, that they were "the worst days [he] ever saw," thus betraying an uneasy dichotomy between the public persona and a man in pain.

Immediately following the second air crash, Mary Hemingway, writing in her journal on 7 February, recorded that:

> His kidneys were seriously damaged […]. The urine samples he keeps in glasses in the bathroom are bright, dark red with an inch of sediment, the wound on the leg not good, hearing bad in burned ear, eyes bad, the new glasses uncomfortable because of the broken or bruised bone at the ridge of the nose. (M. Hemingway 387)

In addition, Hemingway was in a confused state because he was suffering from a concussion. He had used his head to force the door of Cartwright's plane open in order to get out. He was unable to rest whilst staying at the New Stanley Hotel in Nairobi (M. Hemingway, 386), distracted by the unsettling experience of reading his obituaries and the added anxiety of writing the commissioned article. His irritability was exacerbated by the fact that he was expected to refrain from drinking alcohol. Unable to write standing up, his usual method (*SL* 700), friend Kit Figgis, "sat hour after hour waiting for Ernest to dictate his story" (M. Hemingway 387). An eccentric piece, the article is a strange mixture of honesty and exaggeration embellished with wish-fulfilment.

Hemingway's article is also affected by what he called a "strange vice" ("Gift" 2, 83): the obsessive reading of his obituaries. The opportunity to read tributes to and articles about one's life is an uncommon experience and gives further insight into Hemingway's state of mind as he was writing "The Christmas Gift." To read about his life must have invoked an odd experience of trauma and fascination. Poet, Robert Graves, had a similar "death-in-life" experience when he was reported dead during the battle of the Somme in 1916. Graves, however, successfully transformed the experience into one that was mythic and miraculous, and this fed into his writing. By contrast, Hemingway writes that reading one's own obituaries "could become extremely destructive to one's general equilibrium and cause one, perhaps, to lose one's status as a completely well-adjusted person" ("Gift" 2, 83)—which he assures us he is! For Hemingway, who was much older than Graves when he read his obituaries, the tributes painted an entire life of the artist and "man of action," which not only fed his ego and gave him much to live up to, but also made him feel aware of his own mortality. We can only speculate about the legacy that Hemingway would have left, had he been killed in the plane crash in 1954 rather than by suicide in 1961.

Tension between image and man, and man and artist, emerges immediately in the opening paragraph of "The Christmas Gift." The safari over, Ernest and Mary Hemingway began a three-day sightseeing flight tour of the Belgian Congo, leaving on 21 January. Hemingway writes that he had the "rather grand role" of being a temporary game ranger, which was only possible by being "honorary game warden" in the Emali-Loitokitok area of Kenya ("Gift" 1, 29). He was very proud of his position and took the responsibility seriously. (Indeed, this fact is developed in a semi-fictional rendering of the safari in the posthumous *Under Kilimanjaro*.) By opening his account with this informa-

tion, Hemingway presents himself not simply as a writer and man of action, but as a person who is able, trustworthy, responsible, and authoritative. However, Hemingway's enjoyment of his newfound role is marred by the fact that "the duties I had to perform were not in all ways pleasurable to my wife" ("Gift" 1, 29). He goes on to explain, "It was impossible, for example, to get to Nairobi and buy any form of Christmas gift, and our marital relations were frequently interfered with and almost severed by the constant minor forms of emergency which were presented" ("Gift" 1, 29). The reader is asked to empathize with the inevitable tension between being a good husband and fulfilling his obligation as game warden. At great pains to make his wife happy, Hemingway writes that the unlucky trip to the Belgian Congo was Mary Hemingway's wish. He writes, "Mrs Hemingway suggested that she would like for her Christmas present, which I had not been able to obtain in Nairobi since my duties made Nairobi inaccessible, a trip by air to the Belgian Congo" ("Gift" 1, 29). This information is significantly repeated later in *Under Kilimanjaro*, hinting that all their future misfortunes on the trip were Miss Mary's fault, especially as he had no desire to see this part of the continent himself ("Gift" 1, 30). In two clipped sentences, Hemingway writes: "Mrs Hemingway felt that she had not seen Africa. She wished to see the Congo" ("Gift" 1, 30). This negative portrayal of Mary is echoed in *Under Kilimanjaro* when she insists on finding the perfect Christmas tree, in spite of the dangers her search causes (8–12), and then later in her quest to kill a lion. Mary is portrayed as strong-willed, and in the process another side of Hemingway is revealed: that of an accommodating and patient husband. In this, readers may notice Hemingway's penchant for blaming others for his misfortunes. Jeffery Meyers writes in his biography about Hemingway that "in all his quarrels with wives, family and friends, he revised reality in his art, presented himself as a victim and projected guilt onto a convenient scapegoat in order to justify his own actions" (182–83).

Nevertheless, Hemingway details how Marsh flew the Cessna 180 up the western bank of Lake Albert toward the Victorian Nile to the Murchison Falls at a fairly low height. Again Mary is presented as the cause of the danger. Hemingway stresses that, despite the obvious hazard of low flying, Mary wished to take photos of the impressive sights. Hemingway describes what they saw:

> Lake Albert is a very beautiful lake and there are many fishing villages along its western shore. We watched the fishermen and saw their various methods of fishing. They were using both nets and

> set lines which were marked by buoys made of native woods. The fishermen were using dugout canoes and when they were collecting their catch we saw one fish that appeared to be a Nile perch of at least 200 pounds […] it was a truly splendid fish and to see him from the air made it even better. ("Gift" 1, 31)

What is interesting and revealing is Mary Hemingway's account of the same scene in her autobiography, *How it Was*: "[W]e saw one fisherman with a Nile perch we estimated to weigh at least one hundred pounds, boated in the bow of his dug-out canoe" (376–77). The obvious difference, of course, is the purported weight of the fish. Hemingway's exaggerated account of seeing a *200-pound* perch is, according to Gino Abreo, next to impossible, for the fisherman would have been unable to take such a large fish to shore in his canoe. In Hemingway's prose, the extraordinary becomes the standard by which everything is judged. On this sightseeing trip, the Hemingways did not take any hunting rifles, probably because the safari season was over and the area in which they were traveling was protected. However, they did take one fishing rod, expecting to fish for the local Nile perch; yet Hemingway did not fish during this trip to Africa. It is only as an observer that he recounts his sight of the Nile perch shortly before the first crash.

Hemingway then details the cause of the crash. He explains that Marsh, trying to avoid a flock of large black and white ibis, dived closer to the earth and flew into a "telegraph wire on an abandoned line":

> This telegraph had been abandoned when the radio network was set up and nearly all the wire had been removed for the benefit of the natives, who wore it in circular coils in their ears. This small section of the line remained, as it was inaccessible to the natives, who are more or less allergic to Murchison Falls. ("Gift" 1, 32)

With Hemingway's expert knowledge of the geography of the area and the locals, his account is colorful and humorous. His worldview having changed considerably since his first safari in 1934, Hemingway's depiction of the "natives" is one that shows knowledge and appreciation of their culture. However, the full accuracy of the account is questionable. Abreo maintains that it would be impossible to encounter a telegraph wire in this way because the location of the poles was too remote from the main population. These poles had originally been placed nearer to the people, but without success, as other, more old-fash-

ioned forms of communication were favored. Rather, Abreo argues, the plane hit a clay anthill, which could be as high as twenty feet in those parts. With their wide base that tunnels upward into a point, it would be quite easy to hit one of these phenomena of nature, but there is nothing particularly impressive or exotic about crashing into an anthill. So, bumping into one of these would surely be embarrassing, banal even—as well as a reason for not being able to claim from the insurance company. Yet, read on another level, the anthill may be said to symbolize the strength and power of nature.

The account of the build-up to the rescue is, like the story of the crash, full of humor and understatement in the light of very real danger. There is no terror, no surprise, as such experiences are understood to be taken in the author's stride. In this respect, the article seems a vehicle for reinforcing his image, fulfilling expectations about Hemingway's public image. However, later on in the article, Hemingway reveals, "In my nocturnal dreams, when they are not the bad kind that you get after a war where other people are killed, sometimes by your fault, I am nearly always a very gay and witty person faintly addicted to the more obvious types of heroism and, with all, a most attractive type" ("Gift" 2, 86). The persona depicted in "The Christmas Gift" is not simply artifice and pose; it seems a hardened veneer that Hemingway has placed on the events as a form of self-protection. It is not the Hemingway before the crashes or the half-invented Hemingway of *Under Kilimanjaro* and *A Moveable Feast*. The Hemingway shown here feeds, in an exaggerated way, into his masculine image. It serves as a form of denial since he has not yet grasped the implications of his injuries. Yet, the above quotation also hints at self-knowledge, which emerges unexpectedly during the article.

According to Abreo, the region had been put on high alert as radio messages were reporting the disappearance of a famous American author, his wife, and their pilot the day before. After the Cessna 180 failed to arrive at their destination in Masindi (West Uganda) for refueling, a search for the plane began. The launch happened to be on the river that day so the crew were asked to help in the search for the Hemingways. Their crashed plane had been spotted by Captain R. C. Jude (a pilot for British Overseas Airways), but Hemingway writes that Jude saw no sign of life from the air. (The group had moved away from the plane and were camping where they could face down the ridge near the river, thinking that they would be more visible and safe from threatening wildlife.) When after that first day, the searches for the party had been unsuccessful, it was reported in the international press that Hemingway was dead.

On the morning they were rescued, Hemingway writes of how *he* came to spot the launch sailing upstream. At first, he thought that it was a mirage and then "signaled" to it ("Gift" 1, 35), almost like hailing a taxi. He believed (mistakenly) that they were particularly lucky as the launch made its trip only "once a month, and therefore was a most fortuitous arrival" ("Gift" 1, 35). There is more to the story than Hemingway spotting the launch by chance as it was passing. Abreo remembers that the *M.V. Murchison* passed the area where the plane had crashed, three hundred yards from the river. It was logical that the launch be sent out to search for survivors—or bodies, especially as the area was known so well by the captain and crew. During this time of the year, the *Murchison* had at least two bookings a week—leaving the port at Butiaba at 5:00 p.m. There being no hotel in the area, tourists stayed at Masindi Hotel in Masindi (sixty-six kilometers away) and traveled by car to the port. Abreo says that the *Murchison* offered high tea to passengers in the late afternoon as they traveled through the White Nile, followed by dinner. Then, at midnight, the launch would drop anchor for an overnight stay. At dawn, the launch would go near the Murchison Falls, after a full English breakfast, they would dock at Paraa Safari Lodge at around 9:00 a.m.—when the skies were still clear enough for the passengers to go on a spectacular sightseeing tour. They would be accompanied by two crewmembers and an askari, the only member of the crew who was armed, in case they were approached by dangerous animals. Back at the launch, the passengers would have lunch and return to Butiaba in the late afternoon (where the crew's children would be waiting excitedly at the port for delicious leftovers!). Captain Abreo, who was already en route with a party on board, was sent an S.O.S. by East African Railways and Harbours (E.A.R.&H.) to scan and search the area. When the launch stopped and docked at the pier, allowing passengers to view the Falls, Captain Abreo also dispatched a party to search for the Hemingways, not the other way round. So, it was not by chance that Hemingway saw the launch, nor did he signal it. This is yet another example of Hemingway taking control of the narrative to make it his story: It was surely more exciting, more masterly, to take the credit. Yet, in doing so, he totally underrates the efforts put into rescuing him.

Aboard the *Murchison*, Hemingway writes, "It was lovely being aboard the launch which was clean, well run and had an excellent refrigerator containing Tusker beer and several brands of ale" ("Gift" 1, 36). Painfully sober during his convalescence, Hemingway manages his reliance on alcohol by writing about it instead:

> No hard liquor was served, but a bottle of Gordon's gin was obtainable from the Hindu [actually, Abreo was a Catholic] in charge of the launch who sold it for what I considered and he admitted to be a rather exorbitant sum. Under the terms of his charter, he could disperse this beverage by the drink at a fairly reasonable amount, but in Africa the average drink which is dispensed is of such a minute size that it has no comparison to the drink one pours on safari. ("Gift" 1, 36)

Suspecting that the captain would provide only small units of alcohol, which would not be enough to satisfy Hemingway, he "obtained a bottle of this gin which we held in reserve in case there should be any necessity for its use" ("Gift" 1, 36). The interesting choice of the word "necessity" stresses Hemingway's dependence on alcohol. He was at this point a heavy drinker, and alcohol was an important part of his daily routine.

Throughout "The Christmas Gift," there are frequent references to alcohol and his own consumption of it, allowing Hemingway to reassert his public image: that of a frontier, macho, tough guy. Indeed, in the second part of "The Christmas Gift," he observes, as would a scientist, that Gordon's Gin is *remarkable*: "effective in both internal and external application" (1, 37).

Aboard the launch was a "charming party […] consisting of a couple who were celebrating their golden wedding anniversary and their son-in-law [Dr. McAdam] and daughter and a young grandson named Ian" ("Gift" 1, 36). A party of five, now made eight with the addition of the Hemingway group, this coincidently was the maximum number of passengers allowed aboard the launch. Hemingway notes some interesting coincidences: Mary Hemingway's mother and father had just celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary, and McAdam was an "excellent" doctor, as Hemingway's father had been.

Just as Hemingway idealizes himself and events around the crash, he exaggerated how jolly it had been on board the *Murchison* when he dictated the story to Mrs. Figgis while convalescing in his hotel room:

> We were very happy on the boat and Miss Mary, after her examination, was offered the use of the bath which belonged to the golden-wedding couple. She had a good bath, rest and sleep and Roy Marsh also took a well-deserved nap, while Mr McAdam and myself discussed things in general. ("Gift" 1, 36)



Captain Edwiges Abreo

Mary Hemingway recollected things differently: "Mr. McAdam examined me and found only a couple of cracked ribs. […] Ernest asked for no examination, simply sitting huddled and quiet in a chair, and the surgeon did not offer any assistance" (M. Hemingway 381). The counter-narrative does not depict jolliness, nor *Hem*-machismo—the writer/action man who smiles confidently on the cover of *Look* magazine (20 April 1954); rather, it is of a man who feels overwhelmed, exhausted, and unwell.

Yet, in the article, Hemingway refuses to acknowledge any weakness in himself. Instead, he embellishes the facts in order to persuade himself and his readers of his strength and superiority in all matters. His description of the captain of the launch—whom he labels, "the Hindu"—is one such example:

> The commander of the ship was an Asiatic and had long hairs growing out of both ears. For some reason, possibly tribal, which we always respect, he had never cut these hairs and they had attained a length which was, if not enviable, certainly extraordinary. One might even say that they bristled like a hedge and gave him, possibly his only true distinction. ("Gift" 1, 36)

Hemingway paints a comical picture of Captain Abreo that ignores personality and individuality; he is not even named in "The Christmas Gift." The exaggerated title of "commander," followed by a description of the hairs sprouting out of his ears, presents a character who does not look "civilized." Abreo's striking ear hairs were, Hemingway speculates, due to some "tribal" custom. Hemingway's mockery of the captain creates distance between reader and subject, presenting a colonial caricature. Such a parody follows "a recurrent vindictive pattern" (Meyers 132), in which, whenever he has been threatened in some way, he takes his revenge through his writing. Meyers writes that "the motivation for the malice is like the iceberg in Hemingway's aesthetic theory: [I]t lies almost entirely submerged but influences everything that appears above the surface" (132). Hemingway's "motivation" may have resided in his resentment of the captain for charging "exorbitant" fees for boarding and alcoholic beverages. The captain, he writes, "had demanded as a fee for carrying us, 100 shillings a head. Since Mr. McAdam had paid for the charter and considered rescued characters could ride on a ship free at his invitation, he protested against this charge" ("Gift" 1, 36). Abreo explains that, while it was true that Mr. McAdam had chartered the launch, the number of passengers had increased and the captain's concern was to have the accounts in order, even if Hemingway was a famous writer.

Hemingway continues:

> Being conversant with maritime law, and knowing that the master of the ship was well within his rights even though an exaggerated amount of hair protruded from his ears, I paid this charge and Mr McAdam made a formal protest in writing. I explained to Mr McAdam over a bottle of Tusker [beer] that you always paid these charges and then recovered them when you were right. ("Gift" 1, 36)

Hemingway reminds the reader of the strange sight of the captain's sprouting ear hair, making it difficult to take the situation or the captain seriously. Aggressive words such as "demanded," "exaggerated," and "protest" suggest a pugilistic stance against the captain, who is then totally humiliated as the writer has the last word: "This was subsequently proved true by the receipt of a cheque for 300 shillings from the East African Railways and Harbours, an eminently just institution which employed the skipper with the slight overgrowth of hair in and on his ears" ("Gift" 1, 36). The final comment about the hairs ends the cartoon caricature of the skipper. Hemingway ends the account of their experience on the launch as he began—by indirectly blaming Mary for the second crash:

> At Butiaba, we had the choice of spending the night on the *Murchison*, which I thought would not be too attractive to Miss Mary since a small vessel moored alongside a quay with her sleeping accommodation below offers little ventilation, or going by motor car to Masindi. ("Gift" 1, 36)

This, along with the fact that Captain Reginald Cartwright, "who had been searching for […] [them] all day" ("Gift" 1, 36), insisted that he fly the Hemingways directly to Entebbe, "eager to deliver [them] to the [waiting] press" (M. Hemingway 382), led Hemingway to choose the drive to Masindi. Mary Hemingway, however, recounts the event differently: "I thought how pleasant it would be to sleep in any rentable bed right there in little Butiaba and postpone joining civilization until the morning" (382). Underlying Hemingway's explanation of their rash decision to get onto the second plane that led to the second crash is the hint that Mary's comfort was ultimately the cause for not staying in Butiaba that night.

So what is the story behind the fishing rod? Hemingway's image of manhood is reinforced through examples of prowess and a particular standard of machismo, which includes the aggressive and scathing account of the captain. Why, then, would Hemingway, an avid fisherman, part with such an item and give it to a man he ridiculed so mercilessly—and not mention this generous gesture in his account? And what was the effect on him of parting with this prop?

Immediately following the two air crashes, Mary Hemingway left her husband behind at the hotel to participate in a previously planned fishing holiday on the Indian coast. She set off with Hemingway's son, Patrick, and his wife, Henny, on 13 February, and they traveled to rented cottages south of Mombasa (M. Hemingway 387–88). Hemingway, still unwell, eventually joined his family on 21 February, but did not fish, uncharacteristically preferring to stay at the cottage (M. Hemingway 389). In a disconcerting reversal of roles, his wife fishes instead, leaving her husband at home. Perhaps, binary opposites of strength and weakness, and masculine and feminine, in the wake of the crash, were now unstable. Symbolically (and a bit playfully), we might imagine that without his fishing rod, Hemingway felt defenseless. But he was unable to accept his new and helpless relationship with nature and the environment. This was demonstrated when a bush fire started in the area of the cottage during Mary's absence. Hemingway could not resist joining in the firefighting, but he was badly burned in the process, after falling into the fire. Mary returned to the cottage to find that: "Both his legs, his stomach and chest and chin looked like raw steak, and his hand and arms like hamburger" (M. Hemingway 391). The violence of the imagery, the pain of his injuries, are almost presented as a punishment for trying to uphold his myth of male worth and identity, which was ultimately measured by the need to be a "man," to feel and present himself as secure and strong. The rod was a prop, almost like armor, in Hemingway's construct of masculinity (McDonough 113), and without it, he was vulnerable and unable to protect himself.

Beneath the bravado of Hemingway's account of the rescue in "The Christmas Gift" is trauma. "The Christmas Gift" is not only the end of the story told in *Under Kilimanjaro*, but also its prologue, because it was written earlier. It is significant that the articles were published immediately after the events of January, in April 1954. The Hemingway of the articles was partly the man he thought he still was— truer than the real man. *Under Kilimanjaro* was written at a later stage, when the actual extent of his injuries and his inevitable change in lifestyle had been impressed upon him.

Epilogue

Behind the cruel portrait of the captain is another story.

The rod was a prized possession of Edwiges Abreo, who was a keen fisherman, until his death (coincidently in the same year as Hemingway's) in 1961. It is likely that Hemingway and Abreo discussed fishing, and the former had had enough respect and regard for him to give him such a valuable fishing rod, with a breaking strength of 200 pounds. Hemingway had intended to fish for the Nile perch during their sightseeing trip. Gino Abreo relates that the rod was of a striking sky blue color, with a big reel and a long line. Attached to it was a colorful fish lure.

> My dad was an avid fisherman. My two brothers and I went fishing with him during the holiday and saw my dad with this grand rod. We all had smaller rods and reel fishing tackle. We were so excited when we saw my father with this big one and asked where he had got it. He related the story of how he had rescued this famous American writer. No one paid much attention to the story but we all loved the rod! I wanted to fish with it—I knew that rod was for big fish—and I was frightened—remember I was only ten years old—as I could be pulled into the water. My father would only allow Francis, my oldest brother, to use it because he was a good fisherman like my dad.
>
> My mother and two brothers left Africa in 1971 and had to leave many possessions behind, including the rod, which she gave to a neighbor.

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