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Ernest Hemingway and Alice Walker: Branding the Great American Writer

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Ernest Hemingway and Alice Walker:
Branding the Great American Writer

Senior Project submitted to
The Division of Languages and Literature
of Bard College

by
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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York
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To my mother, you have always been my number one source of inspiration, encouragement, and support. I thank you for providing me with the drive to achieve more than I think I'm capable of. I am forever grateful to have you in my life. I do this all for you.

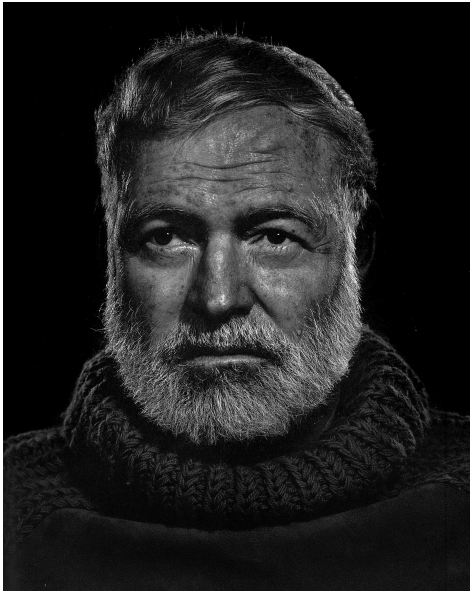
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Until Death Do Us Part:
What is An Author?



Hemingway Portrait



Alice Walker Portrait

There are no two authors apparently more different than Alice Walker and Ernest Hemingway. To the right, is a woman, smiling and poised. Her arms crossed, she gives off an air of confidence yet there is a gentle sweetness behind her exterior. Adorned atop Walker's head are her locs which she describes as, "one of those odd, amazing, unbelievable, stop-you-in-your-tracks creations—not unlike a zebra's stripes, an armadillo's ears, or the feet of the electric-blue-footed boobie—that the Universe makes for no reason other than to express its own limitless imagination." (Walker, "Oppressed Hair"). To the left is a middle-aged man, with a stock-white beard, expressionless except for his eyes. They almost seem dreary yet remain fixed on a particular object in front of him, which I cannot see. He says in an interview, "I have seen all the sunrises there have been in my life, and that's half a hundred years. I wake up in the morning and my mind starts making sentences, and I have to get rid of them fast—talk them or write them

down”(Ross, “How Do You Like It”). His eyes are sensitive, he says, supporting his early awakening and a drive to rid himself of the sentences forming continually in his mind.

For it is in the sensitive, vulnerable parts of these two seemingly different individuals where the connection begins. Both describe parts of their bodies, equal parts of their life experiences, to be their source of inspiration for writing the way they do. Walker’s limitless imagination and Hemingway’s early awakening coincidentally mesh into a routine for each writer. Allow the mind to take its course and see where that takes the writer. But that’s all that these two are—writers. I am interested in the image projected by each of these writers to become the authors we now understand them to be.

It’s become all too common to label writers as authors just because they’ve written something. As I’m writing this and by the end of this project, I’m sure readers will be inclined to call me an Author. But, am I *really* deserving of that title just because I’ve met certain judgment criteria readers have placed onto my words?

Studying what an Author is and understanding the place of an Author cannot be done without understanding some of the purposes of writing. Today, writing is often used as a form of expression, creation, and storytelling. The act of writing though, has its own means. My understanding of this act of writing is provided by Michel Foucault’s theory on authorship. Writing is not confined nor restricted to a specific subject or voice, yet continually creates what Michel Foucault has described as, “a space into which the writing subject constantly disappears”(Foucault 209). The writing subject’s vanishing act is only a result of the type of focus used by readers. When people read a text, they pay attention to the plot, the characters, and the type of storytelling they’re engaging within. The writing subject is not necessarily at the forefront of his/her text. In this case, then, the term “Author” suffices only as a label imposed

onto the writing subject after the fact. It does not truly exist. Who we know the Author to be is actually “dead,” though obviously not literally – as with one of the writers I discuss in this project, Alice Walker.

The writing subject, on the other hand, is alive and active in the text itself and, more importantly, in the spaces through which the text circulates. He/she has a name, a language, and his/her own way of communicating. These aforementioned possessions make up a writing subject’s individuality and help dictate how that subject will be perceived. Unfortunately once the writing subject accepts and settles on the title of Author, those traits disappear. The label of Author becomes generalized and loses the essence of what makes that writing subject unique as a being. The tension between this writing subject and the object we recognize as the Author is the focus of my investigation in this project.

How Does the Author Function?

It’s unbelievable that all of these associations and inquiries can be pulled out of a single name. The large weight a writing subject’s name holds is only more proof that the dead “Author” title silences much more than it seems. The silence produced by the title “Author “ requires more of the function of the Author to create an accurate or desired perception. Foucault describes the author function as,

...linked to the juridical and institutional system that encompasses, determines, and articulates the universes of discourses; (2) it does not affect all discourse in the same way at all times and in all types of civilization; (3) it is not defined by the spontaneous attribution of a discourse to its producer but, rather, by a series of specific and complex operations;(4) it does not refer purely and simply to a real individual, since it can give rise simultaneously to several selves, to several subjects–positions that can be occupied by different classes of individuals (Foucault 216).

Once a writing subject accepts this role, mentally and emotionally, as an Author, the subject can then begin to think about how to act in moments of discourse, which the author function partly dictates. The author function is like a judge. It has to assess discourse, see all the sides to that discourse, and ultimately “determine and articulate” what that discourse will be. The judge is the penultimate decision maker and can only rule in favor of one side or another; he/she makes it clear what direction the narrative will take. At the same time, every path will be different for every discourse and every intended audience. Since the Author is “dead,” there is no direct discourse-to-Author correlation. The Author does not have ultimate control. Instead, the relationship is between the self asserted in one discourse to the self received or understood by others within that discourse. As seen earlier, a name only links two works together in that they share the same producer. The selves asserted in each discourse may be completely different. So how does a “self” help define the author function?

The “self” is multidimensional. It is “transdiscursive,” as Foucault would say. One’s self can appear in discourses of theory, tradition, and politics, for instance. These selves take shape and form in and around the conversations had and narratives told in each entity, building upon the qualities and knowledge of the real person engaging in these sites of discourse. As I have shown, the writing subject can be and often is an Author of more than one book. Writing subjects who hold this kind of position, produce a greater work—the possibilities and the rules for the formation of other texts (Foucault 217). Transdiscursive writing subjects dictate and set the tone for other writing subjects who comes after them.

In narratives, the way a writing subject positions him/herself determines what kind of rules and tones a text will have. I think this is due heavily to the role of the narrator, often but not always in tandem with that of the implied author. The narrative effect of the implied author

depends on how the narrator is presented, whether the narrator is his/her own person or whether he/she shares the same beliefs and features as the writing subject. Wayne C. Booth describes the implied author as a second self who “is always distinct from the “real man”—whatever we may take him to be—who creates a superior version of himself, a “second self,” as he creates his work”(151). Here, the Author is asserting him/herself, in real life, through the superior second self, who may have ulterior motives. If the second self is truly superior, *this* self appears to be in control over how a discourse is articulated and understood. Even though discourses may have different types of narrators, each one subconsciously depends on a second self, even with the proposition of “I”. In many texts, I believe audiences connect with this second self more than they do the real person who wrote a work because of how they’re reading texts and how the experiences discussed in the texts mirror or comment on events relative to readers’ experiences in their personal lives. All in all, the Author directs how texts and discourses take shape but only through this external, “second self” that is similar or different to the writing subject’s self in real life.

What’s In a Name?

Rather than let the Author rest in the abyss that is death, it’s necessary to unearth the literary silences created by the term so that we can understand how it functions. The generality of “Author” silences individual, identifiable features that make the writing subject who he/she is. Let’s look at the writing subject’s name, which ought to support the power of an author. What is in a name, you ask? As I will show later in my project, one’s name is the key to telling one’s story. It’s what helps separate one’s struggle from another’s, my upbringing from your upbringing. As Foucault demonstrates, a name is the “equivalent of a description” (209). With Aristotle as an example, Foucault reveals,

When one says “Aristotle” one employs a word that is the equivalent of one, or a series, of definite descriptions, such as “the author of the *Analytics*,” “the founder of ontology,” and so forth. One cannot stop there, however, because a proper name does not have just one signification (209).

A writing subject’s name comes with a string of positive as well as negative connotations and affiliations that people ascribe to that name. These associations are usually outside of the text the subject writes. When a writing subject goes out and participates in the public sphere, he/she is creating these references just by action alone. In Foucault’s Aristotle example, Aristotle *chose* to write *Analytics*. He *chose* to investigate and theorize what we know as ontology. It is through actions that these orientations become accessible to the public, urging writing subjects to maintain the dignity of their name through their productions. Someone’s affiliations ultimately become part of his/her being as a name. This is what I will refer to explicitly throughout this project as “a brand.” The Author concept as a brand, restricts or shapes meaning, allowing only certain associations to surface, while creating a very specific, marketable commodity in the literary marketplace, as we shall see.

A name also signifies the performance of that authorial identity across multiple texts. Once a name is placed in relation to titles of various texts, a connection and relationship is established, leaving readers to think about the assertion of multiple but interconnected selves associated with that specific author. The name gives texts validity as well as authority with those who read them. In other words,

the fact that the discourse has an author’s name, that one can say “this was written by so-and-so” or “so-and-so is its author,” shows that this discourse is not ordinary everyday speech that merely comes and goes, not something that is immediately consumable (Foucault 211).

While I agree with Foucault that the idea of the Author is not reducible to a single text, individual works do make possible the emergence of what I am examining as a celebrity or

publishing phenomenon. This name (or brand) is something to be consumed. Thinking of the Author in this way leads us to consider discourses such as PR/publicity and marketing/advertising that treat the literary work and its producer as objects to be positioned in an explicitly commercial system of exchange. The name of the Author confers value on texts and specifies a distinct type of discourse held within them. This “brand” summons a specific audience to consume this discourse while simultaneously suggesting that a book is not merely an object to be consumed or disposed of. Something persists and endures under the name of the author and is not “immediately consumable,” as Foucault suggests, even as that durable function also serves to increase the value of literature and those who produce it. Specific marketing practices in the business of publishing have developed to allow for this complex process: public relations and publicity.

Signed, Sealed, Delivered. I'm Yours!
Foundations of Public Relations & Publicity

What is Public Relations?

Public Relations as a practice is very new, still. Critically, the field has yet to be isolated, deconstructed, and understood for its functions in and out of the public spotlight. In studying this field though, we find that its history is rather rich and filled with unexpected occurrences, which PR has used to its advantage from its earliest early stage of development. Only the name or concept is new. My understanding of this history of public relations is informed by Edward Bernays' thought and publications, particularly his work, *Public Relations* (1952). Public relations are as old as, and even older than, Ancient Egypt, Sumeria, Babylonia, Assyria, and Persia. What we understand of these societies, Bernays suggests, is available through their own attempts to mold public opinion in art and literature (13). After five thousand years, personal and

political publicity from these societies remains intact as a source of influence for publicity to come. In Ancient Egypt, specifically, priests were specialists in public persuasion and opinion and the consciousness of their public relations with their followers was apparent in poems by laymen who criticized their arbitrary conduct. Art and literature was used to impress the public of the greatness and importance of kings, priests, nobles, scribes, and other leaders using symbols such as status, pyramids, tombs, and the like (Bernays 13). It is from here too that we account for Alexander the Great employing public relations with the veneration of deities and Gods in the ancient world and adoption of this practice by the Romans who blessed political authority through their gods. Political image formation and rhetoric is one of the most important forms of public relations that remains today with us.

According to Bernays, the greatest influence on public relations today is traceable to the Greeks and Romans. Ancient Greece, being a democratic and individualistic society similar to America, valued opinion in public life. They purported to prize a two-way street of communication and encouraged interpersonal relationships to flourish. Greece also established an open marketplace for the exchange of opinions, using oratorical practices primarily to affect opinion. Even as art developed, what we call the idea of “the brand” and the medium of persuasion came into being. For example, Pericles and Demosthenes used oratory to resist foreign invaders. Socrates used philosophic dialogue to teach the good life based on knowledge; Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides used drama, and Thucydides and Herodotus used history to inspire national consciousness in time of crisis (Bernays 15). These individuals or groups expressed their opinion in different mediums as they specialized in and became known for that niche. As with the Greeks, Romans also had their notions of public relations as they coined words such as *Rumores* (“rumors”), *vox populi* (“voice of the people”), and *res publicae* (“public

affairs”), from which the West takes the term “republic” (Bernays 15). Romans used pamphlets and developed a public relations device they recognized as “the news.” According to Bernays, “Centuries before the invention of printing, handwritten pamphlets were circulated in the Rome of Julius Caesar, who also recognized the importance of news in molding public opinion by publishing the *Acta Diurna*, a daily newspaper” (16). Prior to the newspaper, handwritten leaflets were the primary means of shaping political discourse. News grew to have great influence on public opinion. What people expressed in pamphlets affected the way they looked at the society they lived in. Despite the conquest of Western Europe by Germanic tribes, the West ultimately revived the Roman and Grecian forms of public opinion and modern public relations, which we still have today.

The earliest contributors to American press combined the functions of reporters, editorial writers, and press agents. The maintenance of this chief medium relied on political cases to mold colonial opinion in the direction of independence. When the United States became an independent country, Thomas Jefferson made clear in 1787 that

The basis of our governments being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right; and were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspaper without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter. But I should mean that every man should receive those papers and be capable of reading them (Bernays 28).

This statement remained true for publicity and public relations into the nineteenth and twentieth century. Public relations in the 20th century saw acceleration in agents of communication such as the power press, the linotype, the typewriter, the telephone, the wireless, the telegraph, the motor truck, and the automobile. The development of newspapers and low-priced magazines also helped further public relations activities. Coined by Ivy Ledbetter Lee, the phrase “the public be informed” accurately represents the PR developments of the 1920s and 1930s. In modern

America, as Professor Norman Scott Brien Gras defines it, public relations are the connections, economic, legal, journalistic, and sentimental, that businessmen have with others outside their own business units. It is the relations between business groups and non-business groups (97). The tension that still exists between “public relations” and PR points to shifting understandings of these practices.

What Is Publicity?

Originally, Edward L. Bernays thought that the term used for informing the public should be “publicity.” In *What Is Publicity?*, Henry Adams finds publicity to have three functions; publicity states the public’s mind, it states its interests, and it states the claim it is making (Adams 896). He thought that publicity should be defined by its functions, some of which included dispelling the suspicion that industrial power is used in a tyrannous manner, as well as making it possible to specify the ground of complaint should investigation prove the suspicion well founded, let the light in and let out the facts, while assisting in keeping open the door of opportunity for the independent producer. Though originally established to serve a business mindset, “publicity” is now understood to describe everything involved in the expression of an idea or of an institution to be promoted in public—including the policy or idea expressed (Lee 8). The communication of said ideas always includes a plan of action, publicity’s main principle. Someone can publicize a product through radio, television, newspapers, magazines, billboards, and even books. Though there are many communication channels, what someone publicizes has to be interesting to the public today or else it won’t be important—it won’t be news. Keeping your idea or company connected to the interest of the public is one half of publicity. The actual relationship between that idea or company and the people is the other half. To that point, Eric F. Goldman maintains, “that relationship involves far more than *saying* – it involves *doing*” (9). To

put it simply, publicity is the action taken to inform the public and to shape or influence its behaviour.

Publicity is a little different according to Ivy Lee. He perceives publicity to represent the entire gamut of expression of an idea or of an institution, whereas advertising is a mere phase of publicity (Lee 7). In its ultimate sense, Lee believes publicity to also be the actual relationship of a company to the people and that relationship involves far more than *saying* – it involves *doing* (Lee 48). Publicity comprises the radio, the moving picture, magazine articles, speeches, books, mass meetings, brass bands, parades; everything involved in the expression of an idea or of an institution – including the policy of the idea expressed (Lee 7-8). Lee sees the job of the publicity man as one that speaks truth and facts of the corporation or business that he represents. The publicity man serves as an advisor who helps create publicity that the public will find significant and can fully understand. He shall not only advise his client accordingly but also uphold the standards he sets for his clientele in his personal life.

The way that publicity can adequately be secured, seen, and consumed by a reading public is through news and newspapers. Lee defines news as,

...that which is interesting to the public today...That does not necessarily mean that it is an event that happened today; the event might have happened a thousand years ago; but if it is *interesting* to the people who read it *today*, it is news...If the people are interested in reading it *today*, as distinguished from yesterday or tomorrow, it is news (Lee 13).

The press invests in stories that are interesting and not necessarily important. In putting out news, it is important to consider how impressionable the public is. According to Lee, the public mind, "...is so influenced by the information that is put before it that the public is entitled to know the source of the information that reaches it" (Lee 28). If you have a publicity man who

holds a good reputation, then using him as a source will make the news even more trustworthy and credible, in this account.

So Are Public Relations & Publicity One? – The Importance of a Brand

PR has now become transformed into a practice that crosses many fields of work including technology, medicine, and importantly for my project, literature. Basically, today public relations focuses on business-to-business and brand-to-audience connections while publicity refers to practices used to inform a public about a specific person, product, event, or company. Publicity relies upon identifying and marketing an identity for this product or a brand.

A “brand” is, as Seth Godin puts it,

A stand-in, a euphemism, a short cut for a whole bunch of expectations, worldview connections, experiences, and promises that a product or service makes, and these allow us to work our way through a world that has thirty thousand brands that we have to make decisions about every day. One of the cues and clues that we use for identifying a brand is, “What does the packaging look like?” But the packaging is *definitely* not the brand” (Millman 171).

Now, Seth Godin is speaking from an early 2000’s mindset, long after Alice Walker and Ernest Hemingway’s publishing debut. His definition holds true nonetheless. A brand is a concept that represents a cumulative experience around a particular object, service, or in my case, a person. This cumulative experience can take shape through a brand’s appearance, unique font/typeface/logo, and offerings to the public it is targeting. The brand is supposed to invoke a sense of euphoria or a type of self-realization caused by a particular experience with the object or product being sold, ultimately creating a coherent set of expectations and associations with the name of that object or product.

In the author’s case, branding becomes evermore important because it is the marker not only of success but also of social relevance. Once readers can associate an author’s name with

either the work he or she has published, his or her personal beliefs, or even a visual image, the brand becomes that much stronger. These associations come into being only after intense repetitive signals are given to specific publics over time. The ability to be memorable is not automatic or easy for the writer. It starts with what one has to offer. What can people take away by experiencing something or someone in a particular way? How does an Author's brand come into being and change over time?

What We Think, We Become
Why Mesh Authorship + Publicity Together?

Everyone wants a publicist these days, from the “Instagram Famous” to the latest app in the Apple iOS App Store. Why? In our digital age, a publicist can help catapult a brand from a no-name to a everyone-knows-your-name. All a publicist needs is an interesting story and any given brand can be at the top of the news circuit by morning. This is the art of publicity and public relations—being able to craft a story that the public can either sympathize with or react against with force and immediacy.

With this project, I propose that publicity is more than a technique for selling cell phones. It is actually a major part of creating who Authors are today. We often assume that authors are not a creation or construct of economic forces but rather a person's embodiment through language in particular works of fiction. As Foucault demonstrates, however, an author “function” truly is a creation. I want to go further. It is publicity's job to maintain or to market the image of this creation by articulating what the author does—what he/she writes, his/her opinion on social issues, what events he/she appears at, and so on. In general, public relations will maintain the relationships of the ‘author,’ as an entity, through a variety of news sources whether it be

newspapers, journals, or blogs, as well as advertising and marketing through public appearances, book tours, readings and interviews.

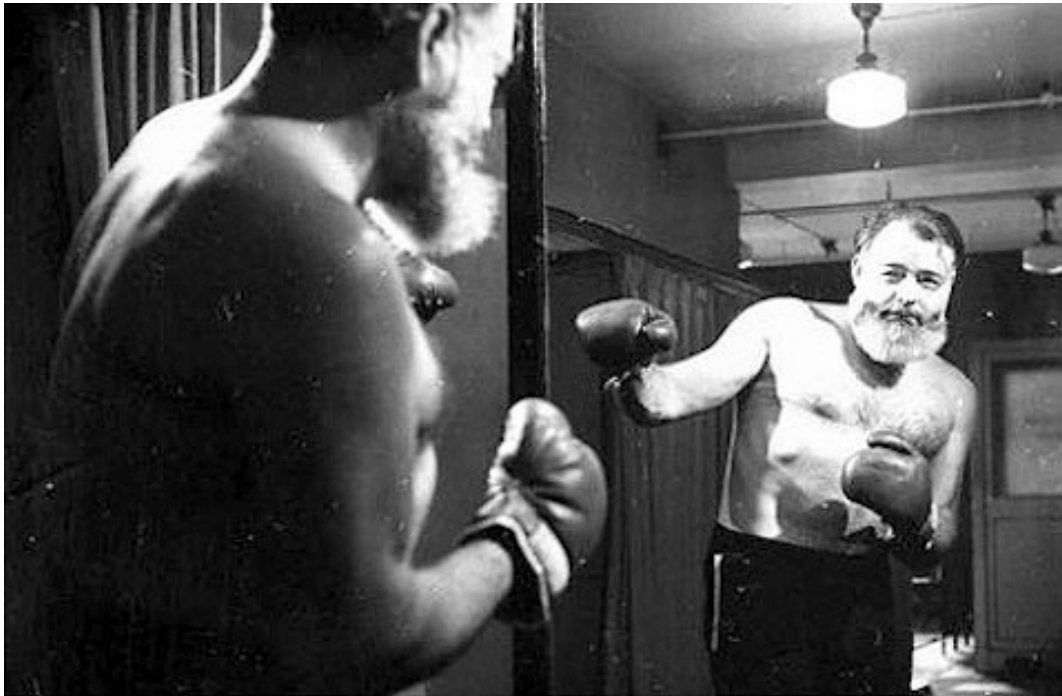
Without publicity, I argue, iconic authors such as Ernest Hemingway and Alice Walker, two prominent literary visionaries in 20th century literature and in 21st century media, would not hold the same position they do today in American letters. Hemingway and Walker each represent distinct “brands” in terms of authorship. These writers have created unnerving works, beckoning an international audience to attend to their fiction. By looking closely at events surrounding the publication of two of their most celebrated works, *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952) and *The Color Purple* (1982), I will focus on how publicity/PR influenced their reception and reputation, recognizing the creation, shaping, and consuming of an author and authorship by the writers themselves as well as their reading publics.

Ernest Hemingway and Alice Walker are two contrasting figures in almost every respect. Yet, they are known to among the most influential writers of the 20th century. Hemingway is a White¹, male author that academia celebrates as one of the greatest writers produced in this country. I want to understand this Hemingway obsession and trace his reputation back to the “brand” he self-consciously helped to create. I selected Alice Walker because her “brand” as one of the most successful Black women authors in American literature stands in contrast to Hemingway’s White masculinity. Black authors are often stereotyped as one kind of author who tells one kind of story. Was Walker part of that story or not? I want to delve deep into Walker’s personal and authorial history to understand how she became this celebrity we know today. In

¹ When referencing racial categories, I will be using the terms “White” and “Black.” Both are capitalized to disassociate the terms from the colors “white” and “black.” If the terms are in a quote the case of the letters come directly from that specific quote. If White is in parentheses, I am referencing the names of an Author.

² There was a lot debate by predominantly by Black critics around how Walker portrayed Black men in *The Color Purple*, often as negative and abusive. Walker insisted that she only portrayed

the process of examining Hemingway and Walker together, I will ask questions about how each writer knowingly participated in “branding” his or her own image and work, as well as the unintended consequences of fame or literary celebrity for each after the successful marketing of a major work of fiction. In what follows, I will not be performing a close reading of either work. Rather, I will be writing a history of branding and authorship in 20th century American literature through a case study approach to such crucial moments in the careers of Ernest Hemingway and Alice Walker.



Hemingway Boxing

Hemingway as Prize Fighter

Ernest Hemingway viewed authorship as a blood sport competition amongst the greats, a prize fight for bragging rights as the supreme living author in American literature. Writing stood in for punches and acclaim was a manifestation of judging and scoring. The greatest author who hit hardest and scored highest would be the winner. In a conversation with his publisher Charles Scribner III, Hemingway describes himself as engaged in such metaphorical matches with authors Henry James, Turgenieff, and Maupassant where he *beat* them – in the sense of achieving greater acclaim than they do. Seemingly, Hemingway always came out on top, except when it came to Shakespeare, whom he revered as the best. Even in outlining his future plans for writing, at the time of this interview, Hemingway sought to take on Melville and Dostoevsky by throwing “lots of mud in their faces because the track isn’t fast” (Hemingway, Bruccoli, and Baughman, XX). Hemingway was apparently so confident in himself and his position as an

author that he could get away with challenging “the greats.” By taking on these historical writers, Hemingway asserted his dominance over contemporary writers in the present. He viewed his peers as unworthy of getting in the ring with him. They’re not in the same weight class; the fight would be unfair. Hemingway’s presentation of an overtly masculine persona, by way of this language of prize fighting, puts forth an aura of distance between himself, as a contender to become the great American writer, and his contemporaries who couldn’t even touch him. His only ambition in life was to be champion of the world (Hemingway, Bruccoli, and Baughman, XX). Hemingway positioned his authorial self in such a way as to bring this charisma and gusto to the public, even if his personal and private self lacked this type of certainty.

Despite his bravado, Hemingway was not the kind of author who talked personally about himself to a great extent. In many interviews, when probed with questions about his own life, Hemingway would often allude to what sounded like a complete answer, but then veer off into a second-person example. As he put it, Hemingway just wanted to write well. That was his main concern. In a 1949 interview with Arnaldo Cortesi of *The New York Times*, Hemingway responds to Cortesi’s questions by declining to discuss his personal life as well as the work of his contemporaries. He found such critique “distasteful” because “any good professional writer knows the strong points and the weaknesses of other professionals. He is not under any obligation to point them out to the other writer’s reading public... I see no reason to try to put him out of business by disillusioning anyone he may mystify”(“The Position of Ernest Hemingway”). Hemingway understands his role as a critic in much the same way as he understands his role as a writer. What he says can be used against whomever he is speaking about and it seems that Hemingway did not want to burn any professional bridges at the time. So too, he positions himself as above the fray; by comparing himself only to dead “greats” he

assumed a position of implied superiority. He could afford metaphorically to “fight” with writers of the past because they were not alive anymore and because there was room for their reputations to be challenged. As a writer maintaining a masculine image, he would be playing with fire if he challenged one of his modern contemporaries, who might have the ability to beat Hemingway in terms of literary criticism/reviews or public appeal. That act would make the reputation Hemingway had built over time seem vulnerable and unconfident, both aspects counter to the general public understanding of his particular brand of White male authorship at the time. Maintaining positive or at least neutral relationships with peers who were writing at the same moment was necessary for protecting and sustaining his reputation in the literary sphere.

Hemingway frequently described the position of the professional writer as an illusion. The writer creates and puts forth the persona he or she would like to be viewed by others and cultivates that persona through writing. Towards the end of the 1949 interview with Cortesi, Hemingway apologizes for not expounding on “the writer's Views on things, and the Literary Scene, and which are my favorite books (the answer to that is the ones with the stiff covers), etc”(“The Position of Ernest Hemingway”). and shifts blame to the distraction of his location at the time of responding back to his questions, presumably on a ship to Venezuela. It was clear that Hemingway did not offer his opinion where he personally felt it unnecessary. He also did not offer his writing where it would not benefit him. Unlike his peers, such as Faulkner, Hemingway chose not to flood the literary market with content. Instead, he worked with Max Perkins carefully to time publications of his stories, serializations in magazines, novels, story collections, and ads in such a way that appearances kept his name in public consciousness throughout his career (Moddelmog 94). Hemingway saw through and worked to control publicity and fame as the result of conscious effort rather than happenstance.

Hemingway understood the mystification of the writer so well because that's exactly what he did with his own persona of "Ernest Hemingway." From the time Hemingway started writing for his high school's newspaper, he seemed to know that he wanted to make a name for himself. He wrote for the *Trapeze*, a newspaper, and the *Tabula*, a literary magazine, primarily about sports. In a short story published in the April 1916 issue of the *Tabula* called "A Matter of Colour," Hemingway explores the hiring of a Swedish boxer to stand behind a curtain on one side of the ring and knock out the Black boxer who is fighting the White man. "The Big Swede", as Hemingway calls him, knocks out the wrong man and when told off about it by the man who hired him he explains the cause of the mix up is due to the fact that he is "color blind" (Lundin). In this early story, Hemingway is prone to exaggeration with lines like "...with that left hand of yours that couldn't punch a ripple in a bowl of soup" (Lundin). The Black man that is referenced in the text happens to be Joe Gans, the first Black American boxer to win a Lightweight Championship and be known as one of America's greatest lightweight boxer. Hemingway not only pays homage to history, but also utilizes material that he had observed and/or experienced. Around the time this story was published, boxing was a very popular but a racially tense sport, with the likes of Joe Johnson and Hemingway taking boxing lessons in a Chicago gym. He transformed his experiences with prizefighting there into a piece that commented both on the national atmosphere and his awareness as a young man of race issues. Hemingway was already forming the image of himself as "Hemingway the Writer."

In writing for a literary magazine, he began experimenting with his notoriously terse relation to the English language. With his experience on the school newspaper, he expanded this relationship to focus on including both local and global issues. It wasn't until he obtained a job at the *Kansas City Star*, however, at the age of 18 that he ventured into other forms of journalism

like war stories. As Hemingway ventured off on this professional path, his stories became exaggerated. In *Wounded 227 Times*, Hemingway recounted his experience of being injured in the war to his family as a self-published letter. He claimed that he was in fact wounded more than one hundred times, yet he was able to survive it all. Stretching the truth, amongst other literary skills, gave Hemingway the tools he needed to develop as a writer. Hemingway went on to work as a foreign correspondent for the *Toronto Star*, as well as a war correspondent for the North American Newspaper Alliance (NANA) and *Collier's*. He even scored a seven-month apprenticeship with *The Kansas Star* where he noted that their manual, promoting the use of short sentences, short paragraphs, and vigorous English, was “the best rules I ever learned for the business of writing, I’ve never forgotten them” (Sindelar 24). From my understanding, Hemingway’s work in the field of journalism helped him to cultivate a certain style of writing that was already prominent in and associated with that domain. At this stage, Hemingway would storm magazines with a barrage of stories. His stories would often be rejected but he would receive advice from house editors to write from experience, avoid happy endings, and include “heart interest” (Moddelmog 91). This advice would in turn shape his written voice and the presentation of masculinity in his stories, introducing the famous style and a specific cadence that helped to transform American literature.

The content behind the persona Hemingway established revolved around personal interests such as fishing and hunting, which he was introduced to as a young child by his parents. Both his mother and father dabbled in fishing, though his father was more of a hunter. In fact, many of his extended family's interests became his own interests. For instance, Hemingway’s grandfather served in the army for a few years. This knowledge prompted Hemingway’s interest in joining the army. His experience in the army gave way to an article he wrote upon his return to

America, where he was noted as a hero and a survivor—ultimately a veteran of war. As displayed in this article, Hemingway cultivated his image around these kinds of personal experiences. For instance, in 1934 Hemingway went on a three-month safari in Kenya Colony, East Africa which contributed to his “...masculine, authoritative image of himself as the big game hunter and sports fisherman, augmented with photographs of himself with fallen lions or four hundred pound marlin” (Sindelar 7-8). Hemingway wanted his writing to speak for itself. He didn’t want to cloud judgment about the persona he’d already established. The visual images that circulated of Hemingway, however, helped to shape reception of his texts as well.

Hemingway, in the 1920s, began his own explicit brand cultivation through letters and correspondences. While he was in France, he would send letters back and forth to his publisher to discuss the editing of his novel, *The Sun Also Rises*. In between publishing books, Hemingway would maintain his profile by publishing articles in magazines and offering reviews of

HOW WOULD YOU put a glass of Ballantine Ale into words?
Here—Ernest Hemingway turns his famous hand to it...

Ernest Hemingway
ERNEST HEMINGWAY
FROM YOUR SAN FRANCISCO DE PAULA CLUB

Bob Hemingway first introduced me to Ballantine Ale. It has been a good companion ever since.

You have to work hard to deserve to drink it. But I would rather have a bottle of Ballantine Ale than any other drink after finishing some out of you by strenuous exercise. Ballantine puts it back in.

We keep it stowed in the belt box with chunks of ice packed around it. And you ought to taste it on a hot day when you have worked a big muscle that means there were shots after him.

You are tired all the way through. The fish is made untroubled by shots and you have a good long after you have finished it. That's the aftereffect as when it's going down. Ballantine.

Ernest Hemingway

In every refreshing glass... Purity, Body and Flavor

BALLANTINE
America's largest selling ALE

© Ballantine & Sons, Newark, N. J.

Ernest Hemingway Balentine Ale Ad

work. He continuously maintained a physical presence in the media also with advertising, endorsing products like Ballentine Ale and 51 Pen with the help of his publishers at Scribners, who capitalized on marketplace innovation, serializing Hemingway’s *Farewell to Arms*, for instance, in their magazine for \$16,000.

Hemingway could come across as pompous, at times, and displayed moments of seeming invincibility. What really threatened the core of this authorial self, however, was criticism of his work. The negative criticism that followed Hemingway's publication of *Across The River* in 1949, the book published directly prior to *The Old Man and The Sea*, really tempered his approach to the fame he once enjoyed in the 1930s, determining how he would promote *The Old Man and The Sea*, his most commercially successful work of fiction.

The Old Man and the Sea, published in August 1952, first appeared in *Life* magazine, and sold 5,300,000 copies in two days. While on a trip to Cuba, one of Hemingway's co-conspirators, Hollywood agent Leland Hayward, insisted that *The Old Man and The Sea* be published in a popular national magazine like *Life* or *Look* with wide distribution. *Life*, with its reliance on pictorial content, fit Hemingway's brand because it allowed his readers to experience his world both through his writing and corresponding visual images. According to Henry R. Luce, founder, the magazine provided a way for American people "to see life; to see the world; to eyewitness great events...to see things thousands of miles away... to see and be amazed; to see and be instructed...to see, and to show..." ("First Issue of Life is Published - Nov 23, 1936"). *Life* was primarily an image-based periodical, shaping its news-centered focus and exerting considerable influence on American life in the 20th century.

Hemingway wasn't sure if Scribner's, his literary firm and acting agent, would like the text of *The Old Man and the Sea* but Leland Hayward took the typescript back to New York and shopped it around to different editors. Apparently, this was the first time that Hemingway allowed someone else other than Scribner's to act as his agent. The definitive shift to Hayward at this point arguably brought Hollywood-style PR to bear on Hemingway's fiction and personal brand, as "Papa Hemingway," at this late stage in his career. Hayward urged the editor at *Life* at

the time, Dan Longman, to contract for single-story publishing of *The Old Man and The Sea*. Hemingway himself also wrote to Longman about publishing his story in *Life*. *Life* agreed to print the text without ads, featuring Hemingway on the cover, and offered \$40,000 compensation for the story. The publicity generated around this work was massive. The magazine issue premiered on Labor Day in September 1952 with more than five million copies on sale and sold out within two days, setting a future precedent for *Life* magazine as a venue for such major publishing events. So too, its policy on advertising set a precedent because they were willing to publish a major writer's entire book without ads.

Ads in magazine culture create a sense of desire for a product in readers. They invoke a hunger in consumers, saying "You need this in your life. It will enhance it supremely." It shifts readers' attentions to the product being sold. In the 1920s, advertising and public relations grew to command distinct prominence and respect in American business culture. Publicity became a significant part of American life arousing new thoughts, desires, and actions. Advertising also spurred consumerism in the late 1930s and 40s, which in turn influenced the literary public sphere in ways that Hemingway's publisher, Scribner's had to acknowledge. His editor, Max Perkins, was well aware of this changing landscape of publishing. The new way of advertising was suited not only to sell cars or luxury goods but also books (Rodenberg 26). This understanding definitely helped Hemingway position himself in an advertising culture, whose most prominent medium was magazines by the mid-twentieth century.

The key to selling books in advertising was through imagery. Magazine publications like *Esquire* also heavily utilized the visual image. As early as the 1930s, Ernest Hemingway was participating in this image culture, when he helped to launch *Esquire*. Founded by David Smart, a publisher in Chicago, and Arnold Gingrich, an editor, *Esquire* was presented as a men's magazine for "leisurely pursuits" (Chaikivsy). It developed to become the first "glossy" men's magazine and the only general-interest men's magazine of the day. *Esquire* prided itself on defining, reflecting, and celebrating "what it means to be a man in contemporary American culture" ("Esquire | Hearst"). The magazine saw itself as "required reading for the man who is intellectually curious and socially aware,...speaks to the scope and diversity of his passions with spirited storytelling, superb style and a tonic splash of irreverent humor" ("Esquire | Hearst"). *Esquire* aligned itself with a literary culture of the "sophisticated man." The co-founders reinforced that ideal when in 1932 Gingrich convinced Hemingway, after running into him in a

MARLIN OFF THE MORRO

A Cuban letter

by ERNEST HEMINGWAY

There rooms on the northeast corner of the Amber Mundo hotel in Havana look out, to the north, over the old cathedral, the entrance to the harbor, and the sea, and to the east to the Casablanca peninsula, the roofs of all houses in between and the width of the harbor. If you sleep with your feet toward the east, this may be against the tenets of certain religions, then, coming up over the Casablanca side and into your open window, will blow on your face and make you no matter where you were the night before. If you do not choose to get up you can turn around the other way in the bed or roll over. That will not help for long because the rain will be getting stronger and the only thing to do is close the shutter you look across the harbor to the flag on the fortress and see if it is straightened out toward you. You look out the north window past the Morro and see that the smooth morning shows is rippling over and you know the trade wind is coming up early. You take a shower, pull on an old pair of khaki pants and a shirt, take the pair of moccasins that are dry, put the other pair in the window so they will be dry next night, walk to the elevator, ride down, get a paper at the dock, walk across the corner to the cafe and have breakfast.

There are two opposite cafes about breakfast. If you know you were not going to be into fish for two or three hours, a good breakfast would be the thing. Maybe it is a good thing anyway but I do not want to trust it, and I take a glass of whisky, a glass of cold milk and eat a piece of Cuban bread, read the papers and walk down to the boat. I have hooked there on a full stomach in that sea and I do not want to look any more of them that way.

We have an lobster that runs across the stern of the boat with bait tied down on one side and beer and fresh food on the other. The best bait for big marlin is fresh cow manure or kinefish of a pound to three pounds weight. The best beer is Hatuey, the best fruit, in season, are Pigeon mangoes, good pineapple, and alligator pears. Ordinarily we eat the alligator pears for lunch with a sandwich, bring them with pepper and salt and a freshly squeezed lime. When we run into the launch to anchor, swim and cook a hot lunch on days when fish are not running you can make a French dressing for the pears, adding a little mustard. You can get enough flour, for example to feed five people for fifteen cents.

The boat is the Anita, thirty-four feet long, very able in a sea, with plenty of speed for these fish, owned and skippered by Capt. Joe Russell of Key West who brought the first load of liquor that ever came into that place from Cuba and who knows more about overfish than most. Key runners do about grants. The other man on board is the best marlin and swordfisherman around Cuba, Carlos Gutierrez, of Zapata, 31. Havana, 54 years old, who goes Captain on a fishing smack in the winter and fishes marlin occasionally in the summer. I met him six years ago in Dry Tortugas and feel toward about the big marlin that run off Cuba from him. He can, literally, gaff a dolphin through the head back-handed and he has studied the habits of the marlin since he first went fishing for them as a boy of twelve with his father.

As the boat leaves the San Francisco wharf, torpedos are rolling in the air. Going out of the harbor you see more of them rolling over the five fish runs that are hoisted alongside the line of anchored fishing smacks.

Off the Morro in the entrance to the harbor there is a good crowd bottom with about twenty fathoms of water and you pass many small boats bottom fishing for mutton fish and red snappers and jipping for mackerel and occasional kingfish. Outside the levee fringing the sea and so far as you can see the small boats of the marlin fishermen are scattered. They are fishing with four or six heavy leadlines in from forty to seventy fathoms drifting for the fish that are travelling deep. We troll for the ones that are on the surface feeding, or travelling, or cruising fifteen or twenty fathoms down. They use the two big lemons on the hair and come up with a smack, usually going head and shoulders out of water on the strike.

Marlin travel from east to west against the current of the gulf stream. No one has ever seen them working in the other direction, although the current of the gulf stream is not so stable, sometimes, just before the new moon, being quite slack and at others running strongly to the westward. But the prevailing wind in the northeast trade and when the blow the marlin come to the top and cruise with the wind, the scythe tail, a light, steady, traveler, cutting the sculls as it projects and goes under; the big fish, yellow looking in the water, swimming two or three feet under the surface, the huge peculiar form tucked close to the flanks, the dorsal fin down, the fish looking a round, fast-moving leg in the water except for the scree curve of that scythe tail.

The line for the current runs to the eastward the more marlin there are; travelling along the edge of the dark, swirling current from a quarter of a mile to four miles off shore; all going in the same direction like cars along a highway. We have been fighting a fish, on days when they were running well.

Continued on page 27



Black marlin, 12 feet, 8 inches, 466 pounds, the biggest catch of this season, brought to gaff by E. H. in 63 minutes



Father Hemingway gaffing a white marlin



Gaffing the left from a boat in the second hour



J. H. N. Hemingway with his first marlin, 67 pounds



Big black marlin we heard the doctor



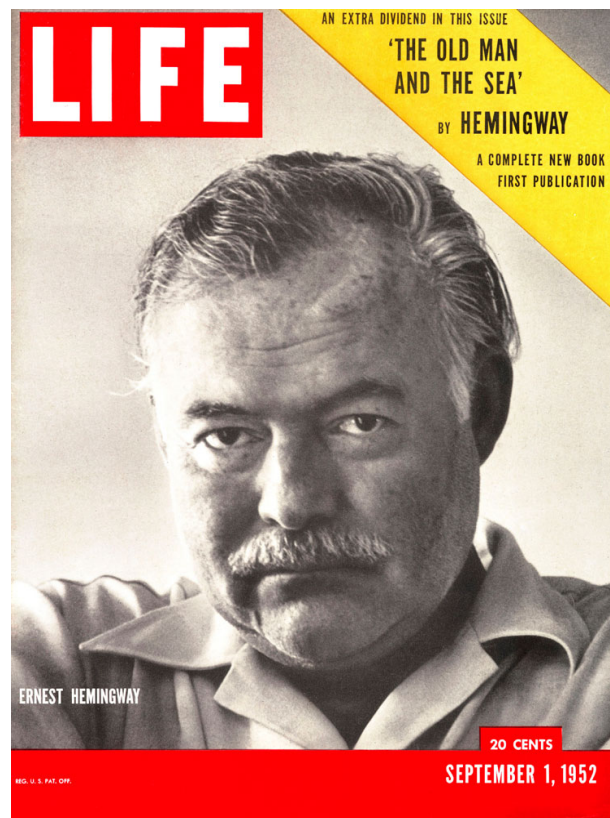
A glass of man-milk for one the sharks got

The Anita in Cienfuegos harbor, looking out to sea. A mile off shore from here, extending four miles to eastward, is one of the best marlin grounds on the coast

Ernest Hemingway's Marlin Off The Morro *Esquire* Story

bookstore, to write for the magazine. Gingrich used Hemingway's name to propel the sales of advertising space in the first issue of *Esquire*. Hemingway embodied this idea or brand of the manly yet "sophisticated man." In the premiere issue of *Esquire* in Fall of 1933, Hemingway debuted his first article, "Marlin off the Morro, a "Cuban Letter." The piece focused on deep-sea fishing, highlighting Hemingway's extensive knowledge and expertise on the subject. Accompanied by sixteen photographs featuring him alongside his record-setting catches, this debut article was as much about Hemingway's "brand" as it was about fishing. It established Hemingway as a symbol of extreme masculinity, the counter-part to a pin-up girl. This referential piece can be interpreted as a sign of the trend toward the visual image in the advertising world, marking a distinct point in time for the writer and public reception of his work, but also an indication of Hemingway's particular understanding of the "brand" he wanted to create.

LIFE continued this conventional, by now, advertising route when they advertised Hemingway's later, best-selling work. On the September 1952 issue, Hemingway appeared on the cover with his black and white headshot contrasting with the colors the magazine logo, footer, and content banner of *LIFE* magazine. The contrast puts the focus on Hemingway while his confident stare in the



Ernest Hemingway 1952 *LIFE* Cover

picture can be interpreted as communicating “this magazine is for you, reader.” The title of the book and the name “Hemingway” right above his head creates a reference, similarly to *Esquire*, to the man who wrote *The Old Man and the Sea*, what he looks like, and what name you should know him by. This is the Hemingway Brand. In both *LIFE* and *Esquire* images of Hemingway often precede his work. Counter to the masculine “pin-up” image in *Esquire*, the images of *LIFE* paints Hemingway as an Author, a commander at the center of what the magazine stands for.

LIFE decided not to insert advertisements within the text of *The Old Man and the Sea*. By getting rid of ads within the story, the publisher and editors drew attention *to* the text of the story by having it in its own section instead of drawing attention *away* from it by settling it between a myriad of advertisements for unrelated products. The lack of ads was new for Hemingway and transformed his image on the cover into an advertisement for the literary work itself. In the text of *The Old Man and the Sea*, instead of ads, there are interspersed small black and white images that are hand drawn with a touch of color on almost every page. These images depict fishing, arm wrestling, men’s fists, boats—the embodiment of sea life for the average man. It is no coincidence that the page before the story begins shows Hemingway himself, astute in his yellow short sleeve flannel, white pants, and a stick in his hand positioned forward against a background of boats on the sea. The author’s image can be conceived of as an “ad” for the work, but also as a means for positioning visual imagery of Hemingway in relation to his readers. He wants to be physically seen as and associated with the archetype of the “manly man” who enjoys fishing often. So he positions himself by posing for this kind of picture. When readers look at that image and continue on reading *The Old Man and the Sea*, they will think of “Hemingway” as this kind of figure. It is unclear to me if Hemingway was involved in creating the imagery for this specific photoshoot. Perhaps he was merely responding to a photographer’s prompt. Gaining

access to the archive of correspondences between Hemingway, his agent, and the editor or photographer for *LIFE* would best aid scholars in obtaining this knowledge. Consulting 1950s magazine culture, however, we certainly see that visual imagery like this was quite popular. It mediated associations around public figures, like Hemingway, and ushered in a new type of celebrity that focused on the image in uneasy relation to the work as well as the private life. For Ernest Hemingway, this virile image took on its own life. Hemingway constantly tried to maintain a carefully cultivated brand, integrally linked to the work as his appearance in *LIFE* make clear.

Prior to publishing in *LIFE*, Hemingway released a promotional piece for its pre-book publication. He states:

I'm very excited about *The Old Man and the Sea* and that it is coming out in *LIFE* so that many people will read it who could not afford to buy it. That makes me much happier than to have a Nobel Prize. To have you guys being so careful and good about it and so thoughtful is better than any kind of prize....

Whatever I learned is in the story but I hope it reads simply and straight and all the things that are in it do not show but only are with you after you have read it....

I had wanted to write it for more than 15 years and I never did it because I did not think I could....Now I have to try to write something better. That is sort of rough. But I had good luck with this all the way and maybe I will have luck again....

Don't you think it is a strange damn story that it should affect all of us (me especially) the way it does? I have read it now over 200 times and everytime it does something to me. It's as though I had gotten finally what I had been working for all my life...(Hemingway, Bruccoli, and Baughman, 121).

Hemingway makes it seem as if he cares about who has the ability to access his book. Catering to a popular form of media consumption can break down barriers to access and expose many more people to his work than ever before. Remember, Hemingway's work prior to *The Old Man and the Sea* was criticized very negatively by reviewers and not always well received by the reading public. Publishing in *LIFE* may have just been his way of making a statement about the value of his work. He's smart in his engagement with readers, putting them first and saying that

having them read his story is more delightful than any award that could ever be given to him.

Hemingway sees this new work as being in competition with all the other pieces he's written, which in fact it is. So too, he's competing with younger writers, because he's aging by this time, with many of his best known works behind him. He's also competing with literary critics who are quick to judge. Lastly, he's competing with his own persona and seeing if he can bring back the "Ernest Hemingway" that everyone knows and understands—the one who revels in all his masculine glory, doesn't undermine his fellow writers, but isn't fearful of challenging celebrated, long-dead writers who he thinks are on his level, as well as whose writing or images are often seen in men's magazines like *Esquire*.

In correspondence, Hemingway insisted that he had no intention of commenting on the novel, nor would he go to New York for the novel's release. The first week's reviews for *The Old Man and the Sea* were largely positive. Hemingway read all the reviews his clipping service sent him but generally remained in the dark about what others critics had to say. He turned down national television appearances, as well as a speaking opportunity at Princeton, and ignored letters to the editor at *LIFE*. Hemingway did not like in-depth public exposure. He wasn't fond of the media delving into his personal life. He had a literary reputation to protect and also two sets of lives to protect in the United States and Cuba. He could not always divulge information as journalists needed. But he was willing to project *an idea* of the personal self ("Papa Hemingway" a Brand), if need be, to ensure sales and attention for his novels.

Winning the Pulitzer

People loved Hemingway's brand, the fantasy of this ultra-masculine "personal self," so much so that it helped to sell his work. *The Old Man and the Sea* won him the Pulitzer Prize in 1953, a culminating moment in his career as a writer. The Pulitzer Prize was established through

the will of Joseph Pulitzer, a Hungarian-born journalist in the 19th century. The Pulitzer Prizes were created as an incentive to excellence in journalism, literature, music, and drama. In his will, Pulitzer appointed an advisory board that had the “power in its discretion to suspend or to change any subject or subjects, substituting, however, others in their places, if in the judgment of the board such suspension, changes, or substitutions shall be conducive to the public good or rendered advisable by public necessities, or by reason of change of time” (Topping and Gissler). The board could also refuse to give any award where entries fell below its standards of excellence. Winning the Pulitzer, among other prestigious literary awards, was meant to confer lasting honor or status on the recipient. Yet Hemingway saw the prize as partially destructive and “damaging to the work” (Moddelmog 35). He told Carlos Baker in their correspondence that, “it is rough when people expect you to answer letters promptly or else be considered a son of a bitch” (Moddelmog 35). From this statement, it seems that winning the Pulitzer Prize took up a lot of his time, making him unable to respond to correspondence quickly. Hemingway understood the importance of brand, an image that people would hold of him as a Pulitzer Prize winner. This accolade presented Hemingway as an accomplished writer and also increased the amount of attention he was receiving from readers and critics who expected him to respond to their letters and requests. The “Author” function or brand eventually threatened to eclipse his life as a writer.

The Pulitzer Prize reinforced how much of a hostage Hemingway has become his own persona by the end of his life. The “Hemingway” brand he built was expected to be macho and sophisticated, a man’s man, but also responsive to the demands of his reading public. Realistically, he could not handle living up to his own publicity. Under this facade of confidence and virility, Hemingway’s anxieties about his reputation revolved around living up to what he

had created for himself. *The Old Man and the Sea* and the Pulitzer marked Hemingway's last work before his death. Hemingway suffered from misdiagnosed Hemochromatosis, a disease that allows one to build up excessive amounts of iron causing heart disease, internal damage of joint and organs, and depression, which biographies suggest Hemingway suffered from in his later years. This decline in his mental state revealed that although on the outside he seemed like a tough man who could conquer all, Hemingway was vulnerable and ultimately self-destructive. He was just as good at creating the Hemingway person or brand as he was at writing novels. But the man, the writing subject, could not outlast the image of the Author he had labored so long to produce.

Trust the Brand:
Alice Walker's Authorial Vision

In *The World Has Changed* (2010), Alice Walker describes writing as a form of emotional release. As she tells it,

I am eight years old and a tomboy...My playmates are my brothers, two and four years older than I...One day while I am standing on top of our makeshift "garage"...holding my bow and arrow and looking outward toward the fields, I feel an incredible blow in my right eye. I look down just in time to see my brother lower his gun. Both rush to my side. My eye stings, and I cover it with my hand. "If you tell," they say, "we will get a whipping. You don't want that to happen, do you?" I do not (Byrd and Walker 4).

In 1952 at 8 years old, Walker was shot, by one of her two older brothers, in her right eye while playing a game of Cowboys and Indians. Walker construed the event as an accident but still fell into a deep depression after losing sight in one eye, suffering from a dismembered face and isolation from peers in her community. The last thing she remembered seeing with her right eye was a tree growing by the side of her childhood home. The trauma and isolation she felt led her in the direction of writing and helped her to found an inner vision for the basis of her art.

At this point, Walker took to writing in the form of scrapbooks. A second trauma in young adulthood compounded the first. In 1965, as a Sarah Lawrence college student, Walker found out she was pregnant by a White male student, who was formerly an exchange student at Morehouse College. Her choice was either an illegal abortion or committing suicide. Walker was going to go through with committing suicide, as her efforts at finding an abortion were coming up short, but she was swayed by friends and mainly by the beauty of the world to abandon that plan. Walker described her attempt by saying, "In those three days, I said good-bye to the world (this seemed a high flown sentiment, even then, but everything was beginning to be unreal); I realized how much I loved it, and how hard it would be not to see the sunrise every morning, the

snow, the sky, the trees, the rocks, the faces of people, all so different..." (Byrd and Walker 37). She would hate not to be able to see the trees grow, the flowers spring up, and the world flourish without her taking pleasure within it. Instead, she informed the white male student about her choice to seek an abortion via letter and he put forth his savings to help her fund the operation. After her abortion, she "felt as if her life had been returned back to her" (Byrd and Walker 8). Walker embraced the inner vision she had cultivated with the previous traumatic experience and sought to focus her life on truth telling as a writer. In an effort to regain a sense of order, Walker wrote poems. She noted, "I had need to write them, but I didn't care if they ever got published. That was irrelevant to me" (Byrd and Walker 9). As we will see, for Walker authorship is linked consistently to trauma, survival, and truth-telling, but also to this sense of ambivalence over publishing and being read/seen by others.

These two life-altering instances—first, her loss of sight in one eye and then, her abortion—proved to Walker that writing would be her primary coping and ordering mechanism, serving as an emotional way out of her situation at only 21 years old. Fortunately, Walker's Sarah Lawrence adviser Muriel Rukeyser, to whom she gave her poems by slipping them under her office door, circulated these poems to publishers with the help of her literary agent Monica McCall. McCall gave the poems to Hadyn Hiram, editor at Harcourt, Brace, who was immediately interested, although he did not publish Walker until 1968. It was Rukeyser's support and her connection to poet Langston Hughes that made it possible finally for Walker's first story, "To Hell With Dying," to be published in Hughes's anthology *The Best Short Stories by Negro Writers* in 1967. "To Hell With Dying," influenced by Walker's contemplation of suicide, was about an old man, Mr. Sweet, who is revived from death by young children's love and kisses until death finally takes him in his 90s. This book featured works from well-known

writers in Black communities such as James Baldwin, Zora Neale Hurston, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Richard Wright. To appear in this company was a huge milestone for Walker as an up-and-coming writer. Even so, Walker is grouped in this collection as a *Black* writer in what dissenters may call a “Black book.” This term signals that Walker’s brand is that of a “Negro Writer.” Even in this her first publication, Walker is already racialized and establishing a brand rooted in race, whether or not she wants to. By “brand,” once again, I mean the label and set of accompanying values the name of the Author signifies as a way of presenting his or her work to the public. This is the writer’s brand. The type of opportunities one takes as a writer in order to get one’s name out there and expose others to one’s work affects how that writer will be perceived by the public and within the literary market. Working with Hughes helped to define Walker’s opportunities and reception as an Author (in the Foucaultian sense). Alice Walker was very excited about this specific publication and it was the beginning of a close relationship with Hughes. He became Walker’s mentor and dear friend, a relationship that lasted up until the famed poet’s death in 1967. In her early writing career, getting published wasn’t difficult for Walker because she had this specific network of people to back her up. For Walker, friendships went a long way toward helping her launch her career, as we will see when we consider her experiences leading up to the publication of *The Color Purple*.

Getting published so early on in her career with the help of Rukeyser and Hughes set Alice Walker up to maintain the idea that “publishing is easy for the author,” at least within this racially-marked or “branded” segment of the industry. Around the same time that “To Hell With Dying” was published, Walker began her association with Monica McCall, who as we have seen represented her undergraduate advisor, Muriel Rukeyser. McCall would shop Walker’s manuscript out to different editors just to have the manuscript returned the next day. She would

then get on the phone and try to persuade editors to publish Walker, maintaining that they would kick themselves later for not working with Alice Walker when they had the chance. “The conventional wisdom was that there was just no market for books about the Black or African experience,” McCall’s former assistant, Mitch Douglas vividly remembered (White 127). This “wisdom,” thinly covering bias in favor of White authorship, was dominant even after a time of emergent Black literary talent, the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s, 1940s (John O. Killens, Ann Perry), and 1950s (Paule Marshall). Yet, Black authors of the 1960s and onward were barely given a look unless they were well-known by Whites already in the publishing industry. It was as if there was no place for Black authors unless they conformed to very specific expectations. McCall’s job as Walker’s representative was to market an understanding of Walker’s work as appealing and “relatable” to existing White markets. She had to take assertions about what the manuscript says and turn them into facts that editors would personally understand and support. The market exists, it’s just a matter of how the agents and editors understand that market and connect it to their authors. Despite the “lack” of market, McCall pushed forward to publish Walker, ultimately helping her receive an American Scholar Award later on in her career. But the alliance was unstable. Walker notes, “Monica sold everything I wrote and sent her that was worth selling...but I couldn't communicate with her well” (White 229). There may have been a cultural difference between the two. McCall, a British woman, may have had a specific attitude or way of communicating that radically differed from the style of Walker as a Southern American woman. The uneasy relationship between the pair may well have been a matter of temperament. McCall’s work with Walker shows that publishing definitely was not easy for the author, especially the *Black author*, even with the advent in the 20th century of Harlem Renaissance writers such as Hughes. There are more loopholes prepared for one to go

through in order to get the necessary critical attention than Walker needed at the time. I know that I keep mentioning Walker's Blackness, but it must be understood that race played a pivotal role in the opportunities that Walker received. Maintaining this public façade as a "Black Author", however, was only going to last Walker for so long.

After her relationship with Monica McCall ended, Walker moved on to work with agent Wendy Weil, a Wellesley grad recommended to her by other writers. Weil negotiated, on behalf of Walker, the placement of her short story "Roselily" in *Ms.* magazine in August 1972. In my reading of "Roselily," Walker narrates the thoughts of a woman, presumably to an interlocutor outside of her race, as she is getting married to a man she barely knows ("Roselily: Alice Walker Short Story"). Walker received \$400 dollars for the story as well as an immediate ally—the friendship of *Ms.* co-founder Gloria Steinem. The two met formally at a political rally in Jackson, MS, after Walker's work was shown to Steinem by a *Ms.* staffer. "I first fell in love with Alice on the page. I was drawn to her and her work because she seemed to be such a true person, just like a touchstone" (White 265-266). This truth that Steinem received as a reader speaks to the strength of Walker's literary mission. She aspired to tell truth and if that understanding was grasped by the likes of *Ms. Magazine* and Gloria Steinem, Walker was cultivating her image effectively.

Ms. was a good fit for Walker because of what the magazine stood for. Founded by Gloria Steinem and Patricia Carbine, *Ms.* started out as a sample insert in *New York Magazine* in December 1971. Steinem and Carbine wanted to create a magazine that focused on women's issues. Feminism and the women's liberation movement were not yet at the heart of mainstream media coverage but Steinem was becoming a celebrity and the movement was gaining momentum. Many women magazine's at the time focused on conventional gender roles and

topics such as raising babies and using the right cosmetics. Upholding an ad-free model too, the preview issue spoke on subjects such as the housewife's "moment of truth", "de-sexing" the English language, and abortion ("About") *Ms.*'s content impacted a broad demographic--women--so that when the first issue appeared on newsstands in July 1973, their 300,000 test issues sold out in eight days. *Ms.* was the first national magazine that gave feminist voices and journalism a platform readily available to the public.

When it came to figuring out content, both internal and external, Letty Cottin Pogrebin, co-founding editor from 1971–1989 distinctly noted, "When we put a woman on the cover—a real person—she had to be a worthy real person, not a Hollywood beauty" ("How Do You Spell Ms"). The choice to place someone like Alice Walker on the cover of *Ms.* was central to the magazine's mission. Walker embodied both the unconventional feminist thought that *Ms.* was producing and was perfect for a cover story as she was a real person with flaws and all, whose life experiences could be represented as illustrating how the "personal" and "political" were coming together in the women's movement in the seventies

Walker on Her Own Image

Walker realized quickly and began to shape her role as a "Black woman writer." In an 1983 interview with Claudia Tate, a professor of African-American Literature at Princeton University, she noted, "We Black women writers know very clearly that our survival depends on trust" (Byrd and Walker 63). Trust, in this sense, is dependent upon both White and Black people and those respective reading demographics. She had to find the *right* White and Black people—those people that would uplift her and allow her to grow as a writer—to propel her career forward, such as her editor John Ferrone at Harcourt Brace. She offered a truth about race that was

available across identities in general. Trust remained key to her appeal with a broad public no matter the race, gender, sexuality, nationality, or ethnicity of her readers.

In America, as we have seen, the literary market has been historically and predominantly White and male. For a Black woman writer publishing in the 70s, the likelihood of being taken seriously was slim Walker was for one a woman and second a *Black* woman. Due to what can be seen as a double negative, the Black woman writer was criticized more harshly and her work was hardly reviewed in the press. According to Walker herself in 1983, critics, “do not even make the attempt; they prefer, rather, to talk about the lives of Black women writers, not about what they write” (Byrd and Walker 48). This tension between being a producer of texts and viewed as the text itself is particularly accurate in Walker’s case. So too, Walker realized that race was always going to be a factor in her literary career. She made sure that exposure of race, as it presented itself to her, would be noticed. Much of Walker’s interests as a writer, her “preoccupations” as interviewer John O’Brien describes them, lie in “the spiritual survival, the survival whole, of [her] people.” “But beyond that,” Walker announces, “I am committed to exploring the oppressions, the insanities, the loyalties, and the triumphs of black women” (Byrd and Walker 51). Walker worked to established herself as “*The Black woman writer*” and affirmed that purpose in her 1982 novel, *The Color Purple*, by exploring “the oppressions, the insanities, the loyalties, and the triumphs” of Black female protagonists, Nettie and Celie.

Walker’s Marketing Strategy

Let us turn now to *The Color Purple* as a case study similar to Ernest Hemingway’s *The Old Man and The Sea*. Looking at the circumstances surrounding publication of the book is a way to focus on how PR and literary market forces created Alice Walker as an “Author” or “Brand.” There was a shift from Alice Walker being part of a way of thinking about “Black

Writers” to her emergence as “The Black Woman Writer.” In my analysis, I look carefully at how *The Color Purple* makes this shift happen.

Walker’s previous works, her poetry, though highly praised, did not sell well. Although editors like Joyce Engelson believed that *The Color Purple* was a “big book” (White 341) and that *The Color Purple* would sell more than her previous work, her fervor was not at first widely shared (Travis 222). As critic Trysh Travis has argued, the book was not heavily publicized. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Walker’s publisher, did not send advance copies of *The Color Purple* to readers in the industry (222). The people who were supposed to be supporting Walker the most were underestimating their own client’s ability to reach a broad reading public. The success of Walker’s novel depended instead on her own efforts, through her understanding of the network she entered through her relationship with *Ms.* magazine. She was her own publicist.

Releasing “*The Color Purple*” Early

Taking matters into her own hands, in an effort to prove that her novel was worthy of promotion, as well as to receive feedback about her upcoming work, Walker released *The Color Purple* early for review to select critics she *trusted*. People such as Barbara Smith, a prominent writer at *Ms.* magazine, and Gloria Steinem, editor at *Ms.*, were given advance copies of *The Color Purple* and the opportunity to read Walker’s work prior to publishing. This suggests that Alice Walker saw mainstream liberal feminists, the audience for *Ms.*, as a core constituent of her audience/readership. She also determined that this group could help her to reach a much broader population of readers.

Smith read *The Color Purple* in “galleys [proof pages] and understood immediately that we were dealing with a book that was going to rock the publishing world,” she continued, “A black girl? Incest? Lesbianism? Letters to God? In black English? It was from another planet”

(White 336). Walker was writing about what would be considered at the time taboo topics, including race, in *The Color Purple*. From Smith's point of view, no one had ever written a book like this before. The book talked about the issues no one wanted to confront in a form that was rarely seen. It subverted the stereotypical voice of Black authors and created a Black Southern Dialect voice that standard American English did not support. The book mixes religion with literature, taking readers to a divine place to parse the 'sins' it raises within this conversation with God. This action of going against the grain made Walker the Other of all authors—being both Black and a woman.

Smith's critique of *The Color Purple* may also have much to do with her own background. Smith founded The Combahee River Collective, named after a successful military operation that was led by Harriet Tubman during the Civil War at a river in South Carolina. *The Combahee River Collective Statement* identified the group as a class-conscious, sexuality-affirming Black feminist organization. Some concerns the collective dealt with were specific to Black women including, "...anger with black men for dating and marrying white women,...the differences between the mobility of white and black women...also attacking the myth of black matriarch and stereotypical portrayals of black women in popular culture" (Hine, Hine, and Harrold). Smith was for raising consciousness around Black feminism one hundred percent. The socio-political climate Smith was part of, as a Black woman, made her a perfect fit for promoting Walker's work. She understood the struggle.

In a February 1974 piece called "In Love & Trouble," published in *Ms.*, Smith deemed Walker's "honest exploration of the "textures and terrors" of black women's lives a major breakthrough in American letters" (White 336). Even the form of *The Color Purple* makes this clear. Walker's exploration of the epistolary form was "honest" because it stuck to the truth of a

history that had been occluded. The history of the novel starts with the emergence of letters as popular form of writing. One can say that Walker's exploration was a homage to the early history of the novel. Yet Walker asserts that her usage of letters pays homage to Harriet Tubman rather than epistolary fiction. Tubman's children were stripped away from her and sold into slavery. She used letters as a form of spiritual communication with them and with God. Walker's recontextualizing of the form of letters in a novel creates an awareness of the past and present, literary history and the history of slavery in America.

The epistolary novel is often seen to be the bearer of the most immediate truth, which is showcased throughout Celie and Nettie's conversations. Walker brings a new vision of Black women to light, one never seen before due to earlier fiction's stereotyping of Black women's lives. Instead, she asserts that Black women are ever-evolving, but don't always have it so easy at times. She places them, as speakers, at the center of their own history or narratives. Smith praised *The Color Purple* in such a way, however, that Walker is marginalized at the same time. Smith regarded *The Color Purple* as "without question,...the most radically brilliant book I'd ever read" (White 336). Smith felt empowered by Walker's novel using "radical" as a term of praise or even endearment, but the claim that Walker's work was unlike any other also served to "brand" the author, as herself, radical, with specific consequences for her reception and later career.

Gloria Steinem also received an advance copy and wrote to Walker while on a flight on October 25, 1981. Steinem stated:

You bring people straight off the page...who seem full of hate and irredeemable...and then allow them to redeem themselves—which gives us faith on the possibilities of changing everything, even ourselves...The lenses of somebody's race or somebody's sex that we are used to viewing everything through suddenly melt away, and there's a person there, whose race or sex is only one cherished part of them (White 338).

She goes on to state:

That means that love and injustice and anger and just plain silliness or whatever cross all the barrier is because they just aren't barriers anymore....How you make all this happen without ever selling short on telling the truth about people's habit of humiliating and torturing and breaking each other's spirits—precisely because they feel only boundaries and no empathy—is the real miracle... (White 339).

Steinem ended with “and your novel is also the best + most human description of the injustice of colonialism—worth a dozen dry textbooks” (White 339). According to Steinem, Walker connects to her readers by giving them hope, giving them faith in their ability to change their current state of mind. She understands that race plays a huge role in the society they were living in at the time and that Walker's work is all-encompassing of that. Even so, Walker is able to let race go to the backburner and focus on other aspects of personhood. She allows readers to see more sides of her characters and not just the physical or sexual aspect. Steinem praises Walker's ability to be very frank and straightforward about people's habits towards others, seeing that as an author she does not shy away from pinpointing accountability to maintain the truth. Steinem's closing, however, represents another hasty moment of judgment for me. *The Color Purple* is seen to conform to a political “description of the injustice of colonialism.” Yes, Walker tackles inhumanity in the treatment of others, but her work does not explicitly articulate itself in terms of colonialism. Walker sees this novel as a book to help mend the broken aspects of the Black community. She said, in a 2003 interview with Monikka Stallworth of *Black Film*, *The Color Purple* was “a way to support men and women who are in abusive relationships, you know? Who are trying to figure out how we got into this position, where after, you know, 400 years of slavery, we're still treating each other like slaves” (Stallworth). As a critic of Walker's work,

Steinem completely misses that aspect, or rather feels a need to “universalize” it for the benefit of her liberal and presumably White readers.

Though well-intentioned, critics can both shape and limit the way readers perceive and understand a writer’s work, particularly when it first appears but also in the long run. With Gloria Steinem and Barbara Smith’s critiques, we see the limits to how much a critic can relate to and fully understand the work the writer is trying to do and what is being accomplished with their writing. There are biases that critics inherently carry with them—they too are shaped by race, knowledge of the author, reading of that specific work, and personal experience as it relates to the work’s subject matter. Smith and Steinem show that they are only so capable of critiquing this work because of these factors. They have personal relationships with Walker, to be sure, but their readings of Walker’s work and their personal experiences in relation to *The Color Purple*, specifically, compromise the authorial power they are trying to create with their critiques of Walker’s novel. It seems that this is why many critics reserve the right to represent the meaning of the book itself, as many early reviews did, by what I would describe as a critical approach.

The Color Purple was published in Spring 1982 and heralded with a book party organized by Oakland writer Daphne Muse, who sidelined as Walker’s events planner. The party was held on a yacht that cruised the San Francisco Bay (White 428). After this release some popular newspapers and magazines began to review the novel. These early reviews of Walker’s epistolary novel also helped market her to the White literary public as a “color blind” author who offers a new understanding of “human” experience to readers. In this response, Walker’s work is not about race in particular for these reviewers, but rather about general notions regarding identity and humanity.

Early Reviews of "The Color Purple"

Peter Prescott reviewed *The Color Purple* in the June 21, 1982 issue of *Newsweek* with "A Long Road to Liberation." Prescott states that the novel is a work of "permanent importance," meaning it would have a lasting effect in the literary world. He commends Walker's efforts at "making difficulties for herself and then transcending them" (Prescott qtd in White 348). He really examines the novel carefully, which is something that Walker sees a general lack of in response to her work. Prescott critiques her narrative by the way it advances in letters "that are either never delivered or are delivered too late for a response, and most of these are written in a black English that Walker appears to have modified artfully for general consumption" (Prescott qtd in White 348). Prescott argues that using a modified Black dialect of American English proves that the formal elements understood within a niche market must be adjusted in order for a broad market to understand it. He reveals that Black writers like Walker, who choose to write in dialect, must often alter the way the dialect is written for it to be considered literary or to be "generally consumed." Prescott's critique presents an interesting point of view on the function of language as point of entry for distribution in a mass market. The written language used in a book may predetermine what kind of audience will be able to relate to it and how many people would understand what is being said. Walker doesn't let the language confine her. In fact, the dialect allows for a liberation of understanding amongst her audience. Her readers, like Prescott, are impacted by the content of her narrative even though the language choice may come off as exclusive or exclusionary.

Rita Mae Brown, an author herself and writer for *The San Francisco Chronicle and Examiner*, reviewed *The Color Purple* as "...a work to stand beside literature from any time and any place. It needs no category other than the fact that it is superb" (Brown qtd in White 348)

Brown advised readers that “once you close [*The Color Purple*] you will be left with your own heartbeat...” (Brown qtd in White 348). Her critique is resonant of her own political views. Brown participated in the anti-war, feminist, and the Gay Liberation movements. In the 1970s, she helped found The Furies Collective, a lesbian newspaper collective in Washington, D.C. She is a firm believer in non-categorization, telling *Time* magazine in 2008, “I don’t believe in straight or gay...” (Sachs). She praises Walker’s work as superb because she believes not in categorization but in the values and self-determination of people. Walker’s work can only be judged by its own values. Brown also asserts that *The Color Purple* is never time nor place limited, which makes sense because international markets also understood the content and were greatly impacted by the book. This critique doesn’t focus on race or sexuality, however. Brown, the bestselling author of *Rubyfruit Jungle* (1973), chooses to focus on *The Color Purple* as a good piece of literature, maintaining a color-blindness that would strengthen the novel’s appeal and reach a popular audience.

This next review is a big deal for *The Color Purple* because it brings in a critic representing one of the leading literary publications at the time. Influencing how Walker’s novel will be approached by a popular audience, Mel Watkins, writer for *New York Times Book Review*, was arrested by the content of Walker’s novel. He recalled the most prominent aspect to be:

...the estrangement and violence that mark the relationships between...black men and women....Walker explores the estrangement of her men and women through a triangular love affair....The cumulative effect is a novel that is convincing because of the authenticity of its folk voice....Walker’s...handling of the epistolary style has enabled her to tell a poignant tale of women’s struggle for equality and independence... (Watkins qtd White 349).

This kind of response was important because it also sparked debate, particularly around how Walker portrayed her male characters.² Watkins distances himself, presumably as a White man from the story Walker tells, as he fashions himself as an outsider looking in. Unlike Walker's supporters, he maintains this critical viewpoint by having no attachment to the author or the book's content. He is swayed by the novel's effect via trust but a trust in the language as an experience of the Author: if the language is written in a certain way by someone who is familiar with it, then it is probably true. Watkins pays homage to Walker's southern roots with this Black Southern dialect connection. As a critic though, he too maintains colorblindness of *The Color Purple* by defining it as a story of "women's struggle for equality and independence," rather than a book defined by Black history. Mainstream praise for Walker's novel (the New York Times represents tremendous cultural prestige and authority) hinged both on recognition of the book's Otherness in content and form *and* on its accessibility to readers across categories of identity. What these three reviews make clear is that Walker's persona or "brand" was coming to be associated with authenticity, truth-telling, and trust. Walker became a representative figure not only for a group of White feminists but also for readers of Newsweek and the New York Times, all in a relatively short period of time.

Self Consciousness Arises

It was this kind of self-awareness that allowed Walker to ignore much of the criticism that turned the focus away from her work to rest on *her* as a "story," as the Author, a brand, or really as an *object*. This too was the cost of *becoming* the brand "Alice Walker." Following the

² There was a lot of debate by predominantly Black critics around how Walker portrayed Black men in *The Color Purple*, often as negative and abusive. Walker insisted that she only portrayed Black men in the ways that they showed themselves to her. She would not actively go out of her way to demean Black men. This controversy created many divided opinions on *The Color Purple* and discussion about the kind of work the book does in the Black community.

celebration and controversy over *The Color Purple*, she knew how critics would attack her character before they even put a pen to paper. Her perception of self was so strong that even when presented with the opportunity to gain a lot of traction within the public sphere, she questioned it and maintained a sense of detachment or skepticism.

On top of releasing her epistolary novel early to specific people and gaining strong initial reviews for *The Color Purple*, Walker also scored the cover of *Ms.* magazine for the June 1982 issue, courtesy of Barbara Smith and Gloria Steinem. Both women realized that Alice Walker needed to be presented to the public on a larger platform. *Jane Fonda's Workout Book* was set to release that year and supporters of Walker, including these two women, were worried that this book would overshadow Walker's efforts. Jane Fonda was a feminist



Alice Walker 1982 *Ms.* Magazine Cover

icon in the media in the early 1980's. She embodied what the movement stood for at the time: self-empowerment and equal rights for women. The movement focused on the liberation of middle-class women with respect to issues such as reproductive rights, removing the “glass ceiling” in the workplace, and affirmative action. Fonda was avid about female empowerment and women being able to do everything that men do. She even went to represent anti-war sentiment in Vietnam, receiving the nickname “Hanoi Jane.” This workout book was the epitome of women motivating each other to be their very best self. Fonda was well placed to be the

“face” of the liberated woman for *Ms.* readers. There was no way that Walker, who didn’t have celebrity on her side at the time, could have outpublished Fonda, and Steinem and Smith knew that. Steinem was already falling in love with Walker’s work and Smith was a student of Walker’s who had also vowed to help women writers of color in whatever way she could. With her supporters committed to advancing the cause of the woman writer of color, making the case for her centrality was key. Steinem and Smith prepared the first full-length cover story on the literary career of Alice Walker, helping to cement the connection between Walker and readers of *Ms.*. This 1982 issue featured other women writers, such as Mary Gordon and Joyce Carol Oates, both White women. The cover announces, “Alice Walker: A Major American Writer,” with Walker poised front and center, bringing the viewer to ask: What does it mean to be “major” much less an “American Writer”?

The most immediate impact of the *Ms.* cover story was on Alice Walker’s self-esteem. The photoshoot made her confront psychic wounds that still lingered from injuring her eye as an 8 year old. At the shoot, she worried that due to the lack of sleep, her right eye might “drift out of orbit” and result in an unflattering image for the magazine. In “Beauty: When the Other Dancer is the Self,” she wrote,

“At night in bed with my lover I think up reasons why I should not appear on the cover of a magazine.

‘My meanest critics will say I’ve sold out,’ I say. ‘My family will now realize I write scandalous books.’

“But what’s the real reason you don’t want to do this?’ he asks.

‘Because in all probability,’ I say in a rush, ‘my eye won’t be straight’ ” (White 343).

As much as Walker tried to heal personal aspects of her life through her writing, feelings about her wounds subconsciously lingered, eating away at her opportunity to present a better, healed version of self and also shaping the self she presented to the public and her readers. She

cared about her image and how people would perceive what she looked like. Could this be a manifestation of Black people constantly proving themselves to White people? Sure. But, it could also be her awareness that the author/writer image she was putting forward as a Black woman writer—someone who is othered but who is also revered and any fault overlooked—was itself an alienating construct. As a woman, too, she worries about how her image will be seen and interpreted as the essay's title makes clear: "Beauty: When the Other Dancer is the Self." The image is a part of the writer's branding efforts to create visual associations with work that is put forth to the public. Walker's worries about her visual presentation to the public differ from Ernest Hemingway's complex relation to his image as "Papa," which instilled a very different set of associations with his brand. Yet both writers realized that the "brand" they created had a life of its own.

The established brand of the Author and its validity is often recognized in the literary marketplace through the conferring of a prize. A literary prize is meant to be a specific if inadequate affirmation of an achievement that has already been more reliably measured elsewhere and otherwise: a worthy winner brings his or her value, and indeed his or her (future, if not present) canonicity, to the prize, not vice versa, as literary historian James English has argued (241). A literary prize suggests that there is only one writer worthy of occupying this seat in a literary domain. The Pulitzer Prize for *The Color Purple* presented to Alice Walker in 1985 identified her as THE Black woman writer at a moment when only she was worthy enough to sit atop this literary domain. She became the first African-American woman to win a Pulitzer in Fiction. The Pulitzer made her even more conscious of how her image would be marketed and perceived. After the news of her winning the Pulitzer Prize came out, Walker's home phone rang off the hook. Her family, her publishers, and editors from magazines called to congratulate her

on the award. As happy as she was, she couldn't handle the attention. She unplugged her landline and shut the blinds in her home so photographs could not be taken of her. Walker's personal and private self did not take well to all of the attention toward the Author or brand she had become. She even declined to go to the dinner arranged by the Pulitzer organization to celebrate her victory and had the \$1000 monetary prize mailed to her. From my understanding, Walker wanted the public to focus their attention on her work and not her image, which included photographs and even her own physical presence. The Pulitzer Prize was not supposed to be about her. It was about her work. But what Alice Walker found was that *The Color Purple* had turned her into an object of critical scrutiny. She had become a marketing triumph and a PR event. At that point, success and fame was something Walker decided to put to the side. "Fame exhausts me," she said (Edemariam)

The Great American Brand

*“Creation is a sustained period of bliss, even though the subject can still be very sad. Because there’s the triumph of coming through and understanding that you have, and that you did it the way only you could do it. You didn’t do it the way somebody told you to do it. You did it just the way you had to do it, and that is what makes us **us**.”*

-Alice Walker, “Alice Walker: Beauty in Truth”

Alice Walker resigned from her position at *Ms.* Magazine as an editor in 1986. In her resignation letter she states,

*“I am writing to let you know of the swift alienation from the magazine my daughter and I feel each time it arrives with its determinedly (and to us grim) white cover ... It was nice to be a *Ms.* cover myself once. But a people of color cover once or twice a year is not enough. In real life, people of color occur with much more frequency. I do not feel welcome in the world you are projecting” (“How Do You Spell *Ms.*”).*

Walker asserts that *Ms.* Magazine is perpetuating a White aesthetic. As a feminist magazine, this means that the aesthetic is aligned with a specific agenda. Walker obviously feels like she doesn’t fit into *Ms.* Magazine’s White agenda, which is something she decides not to put up with. Walker realizes that she has value as a Black woman and as a Black Woman writer (after winning a Pulitzer Prize). She includes her daughter, a half White and half Black child, in her statement to show that this aesthetic or branding of American feminism is affecting the outlook of the younger generations, hinting that if the movement intends to stay relevant they must adapt to the times and not stay in its own bubble. *Ms.* magazine is not attuned to the evolving times. The editors’ efforts at showing people of color are not enough. She informs them that people of color are not just a moment in time, but rather a reality that they must face and fully incorporate if they intend to survive as a publication. By leaving *Ms.* Magazine, Walker is able to abandoned a feminist movement she associates with White woman and pursue her own philosophy.

"You see," she says, "one of the problems with white feminism is that it is not a tradition that teaches white women that they are capable. Whereas my tradition assumes I'm

capable. I have a tradition of people not letting me get the skills, but I have cleared fields, I have lifted whatever, I have done it. It ain't not a tradition of wondering whether or not I could do it because I'm a woman" (Bradley).

This tradition Walker speaks of is what she calls womanist. The idea of a 'Black feminist' does not describe things correctly for her. Womanist is a word that is "organic, that really comes out of the culture, that really expresses the spirit that we see in black women. And it's just . . . womanish...you know, the posture with the hand on the hip, 'Honey, don't you get in my way'"(Bradley). Aside from defining its derivative from the term "womanish" and as a synonym for Black feminist or feminist of color, Walker also defines womanist as:

1. A woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women's strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or nonsexually. Committed to the survival and wholeness of entire people male *and* female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health. Traditionally universalist, as in: "Mama, why are we brown, pink, and yellow, and our cousins are white, beige, and black?" Ans.: "Well, you know the colored race is just like a flower walking to Canada and I'm taking you and a bunch of other slaves with me." Reply: "It wouldn't be the first time."
2. Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender (Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* xii).

Womanist is part of a long tradition of Black women as universalists, according to Walker. She says, "When a black woman looks at the world, it is so different . . . when I look at the people in Iran they look like kinfolk. When I look at the people in Cuba, they look like my uncles and nieces" (Bradley). As a Black woman, Walker can relate to others around the world in a way that transcends racial barriers but also recognizes shared experiences of oppression in relation to dominant cultures.

At this moment, Walker's break from the magazine signals an awakening for a new authorial self. She presents a particular exclusionary practice that the feminist centered magazine

observed and in turn severs herself from the “Alice Walker” persona and feminist brand *Ms.* thought they knew. Her break with the magazine gave her a human agency over her brand. This break reinforced the fact that her brand was not permanent. It has the potential to change over time, which a brand should. She brought to the magazine’s attention a particular exclusionary practice that was affecting younger readers, who have the economic power to make or break the magazine’s reputation. Walker’s departure from *Ms.* exposed the power she had over the image cultivated for her, ultimately killing her own brand as “Alice Walker, *THE* Black woman Author.”

Yet that brand is living on in the book through such iterations as the 1985 Steven Spielberg directed film, which used a \$15 million dollar budget and featured Oprah Winfrey and Danny Glover. Most recently, John Doyle revived *The Color Purple* as a theatrical production on Broadway in 2015, originally casting actors such Jennifer Hudson, Danielle Brooks, and Cynthia Erivo. The 2015 revival, starting in London and moving on to New York City, was coupled with the release of a new edition of the novel that featured show artwork from the upcoming production. The novel was re-released on November 10, 2015, as the Broadway production began previews for the show. Clearly Alice Walker has extended the life of her work through other avenues, accounting for a wider publicity of the book’s story. Many people probably consumed *Color* first or exclusively through Broadway or in a movie theater.

Meanwhile, Walker has become more outspoken on her views and beliefs regarding the world’s many socio-political issues. She has spoken out through many news outlets on her political views, as recently as 2012 for rejecting the publication of the Hebrew edition of *The Color Purple* because she objects to Israel’s treatment of Palestinian people (“Alice Walker Rejects Hebrew Edition of ‘The Color Purple’”). She now writes blog posts on her website

<http://alicewalkersgarden.com> expressing her views and beliefs on the happenings of the world.

Walker is probably now known more for her political views than for her work as a writer, something that she has noticed about Black women writers since the early 80s.

Ernest Hemingway left a legacy with a heavy influence in academia and beyond, as well as the production of Hemingway inspired products including hot sauce, eyewear, spirits, and a writing app. When he was alive though, Hemingway would rather his audiences focus on his winning of the Pulitzer Prize than seek to understand “Ernest Hemingway, the person.” The Pulitzer Prize was the culmination of decades of writing and contributions to the literary sphere since the 1930’s. After the prize, Hemingway won the Nobel Prize in Literature for *The Old Man and The Sea* while in Cuba in 1954. Both prizes, and even the concept of accolades came as a reward for his work—for his brand cultivation. Suppressing his depression and self-consciousness, along with needing to be the best of the best and the “champion of the world,” all seem to come together. His “brand” was praised because it was believed, even as it diverged from the private man’s experience.

Still, we might say, success of the brand killed him. In 1961, Hemingway committed suicide with a gun, leaving *Old Man* as his last contribution to the literary world. He suffered from depression throughout his life; now the press and the public believe mental illness to be the main attributing cause of his death. What the public didn’t know, and neither did he, was that he suffered from misdiagnosed Hemochromatosis. Hemochromatosis, an “iron-overloading disorder that causes internal damage of joints and organs, cirrhosis of the liver, heart disease, and depression,” most likely exacerbated his hereditary illness (Olson). The blood disorder is painful and genetic and it runs in Hemingway’s family history as grandfather, father, brother, sister and granddaughter all committed suicide (Olson). This disease did not compromise the legacy of

Ernest Hemingway. In fact, it has turned him into a medical case study, becoming the face of Hemochromatosis Awareness Month. His granddaughter, Mariel Hemingway, has also exposed the Hemingway's medical history in her 2013 Sundance film "Running from Crazy" (Landau).

With his brand as a macho and even arrogant man, Hemingway was "running" from the "crazy" in his mind. Using his brand as a wall between his two selves, the writer sought to purge negativity associated with the public identity of "Hemingway." In creating these images for his readers and his fans, Ernest Hemingway sought support from others and took matters into his own hands to create a sufficient and impactful brand. So did Walker.

Both of these writers answered the question that has haunted writers since the founding of the republic: "What is American literature?" Being American goes beyond skin color and into self-cultivation. Part of America's fascination with literature and the literary marketplace has centered on the dream of one "Great American novel," a work that can sum up all experiences far and wide and produce the greatest cultural impact. It is presumed that whoever writes the Great American novel is also the Great American writer. In their respective times, due to successful branding and critical accolades, both were seen as Great American writers. Alice Walker and Ernest Hemingway both prove that experience and cultivation of an authorial self can be successful both in life and in death. Authorship will have its permanence in the public sphere but in private, authorship can be a burden. It can even threaten to destroy you. In a *New Yorker* interview, Hemingway said, "After you finish a book, you know, you're dead,...but no one knows you're dead. All they see is the irresponsibility that comes in after the terrible responsibility of writing" (Ross). The writer is dead and the Author emerges as what I have described as the Brand, something that is other than the writing self with a reality and a life of its own.

While the Author as Brand seems to have both helped and hurt Ernest Hemingway and Alice Walker after the publication of their most well-known works, the legacy their respective brands hold is still questionable. How lasting *is* each of their brands? I cannot give a concrete answer and maybe how much a brand lasts cannot be quantified (publishing and sales data would be the place to start, but they cannot measure critical reception over time. Hemingway and Walker's brands can only be assessed by their relevance to today's American culture. I would say both are still very relevant for specific readers. Ernest Hemingway is often brought up as "an Author you must read" in academia even though he's been long dead and although Alice Walker published her latest novel *The cushion in the road – Meditation and wandering as the whole world awakens to be in harm's way* as recently as 2013, it is her political views rather than her fiction that continue to be talked about. An online magazine called "The Revelist" recently published an article focusing on Beyoncé's latest album in 'Lemonade' isn't just about cheating and men — it's also about this one beautiful thing: Womanism. Womanism. Womanism.' The article discusses Alice Walker's womanist philosophy and its ongoing relevance to 21st century Black Feminist thought. Both writers have endured as "Authors" or "Brands" over time. Maybe time, in the end, is the most important thing a brand needs to become something more, to become part of literary history.

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