

IT WAS WHAT THEY  
had  
INSTEAD OF GOD

AN ABSTRACT OF  
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by  
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Ernest Hemingway saw too much war too soon. In later life he wrote that if you went to war too young you had an illusion of immortality. Others were killed but never you. In Italy he found out differently, and almost all of his writing was an attempt to dispel that illusion. Using the Eliot "objective correlative" theory, Hemingway tried to delete all of the falseness and illusion from his prose in order to lay bare the truth.

For the generation of the Twenties who had been close to the war, God no longer worked. Orthodox religious concepts, in addition to many other traditional cultural values, had been abandoned by this generation which felt it had been betrayed into fighting a war not of its making. Ernest Hemingway knew that his "generation had danced to the devils' tunes and now had come shivering home to pray."

The Sun Also Rises was Hemingway's attempt at the penance of a whole generation. This penance was to find a reciprocal for the lost God, but Ernest Hemingway's Christian sensibilities were colored by his artistic consciousness of the way things were. What emerged instead was an ethical code of behavior which had as its essence a consistently moral point of view. The birth of the code occurs in the early stories; it reaches a high point in The Sun Also Rises and culminates in what is one of the most Christian parables of modern times--The Old Man and the Sea.

The purpose of this thesis will be to describe the code and the behavior of the code here in an attempt to show that Hemingway's code was essentially religious. This will be done by analyzing the system of symbols associated with the ritualistic performance of the code here in the early short stories; the first novel, The Sun Also Rises (for critical purposes The Sun Also Rises may be considered Hemingway's first novel since by his own admission he wrote the first draft before beginning his first published work, The Torrents of Spring); and the last novel, The Old Man and the Sea. From his aesthetic philosophy he created what he found missing in religion--a quasi-religious code whereby man's innate Christ-like nature is reaffirmed each time he faces death.