One of the strangest moments of dialogue in any piece of Hemingway’s writing appears in *Across the River and into the Trees*, Hemingway’s maligned 1950 novel about a dying American colonel and his doomed love for Renata, an eighteen-year-old Italian contessa. In this bizarre but pointed stretch of dialogue, by expressing his devotion to Venice, the dying Colonel Cantwell exchanges unspoken subtleties with Barone Alvarito, the young man who, it is implied, will assume a relationship with the love of Cantwell’s life after he dies. In classic Hemingway style, the true issue is not confronted directly, but rather through suggestion. Their diction is striking, awkward, and a revelation. After some benign banter about the duck hunt they have just participated in, and then the weather, and then possibly eating something, and then the migratory habits of ducks, the Colonel penetrates deeper into the reality, which they almost, but never quite, discuss:

“And I love Venice.”

The Barone Alvarito looked away and spread his hands toward the fire. “Yes,” he said. “We all love Venice. Perhaps you do the best of all.”

The Colonel made no small talk on this but said, “I love Venice as you know.”

“Yes. I know,” the Barone said. He looked at nothing. (277)

In the context of the novel, it is clear that the name Renata should be substituted for Venice on all three occasions, which would make for an unmis-
takable admonition from the Colonel to the Barone that he cares deeply for Renata and—even after he dies—what happens to her and who takes care of her. But it is the choice of his language that is so striking, whereby the city he loves and the woman he adores become interchangeable. Just as he associates visiting Venice one final time with being with Renata, he also describes his love for Renata in terms of his nostalgia for Venice.

A portrait painted of Renata, which takes on such dramatic importance to the point that it virtually becomes a character in Cantwell’s imagination, is compared with Titian’s *Venus Rising from the Sea* (ca. 1520), a painting synonymous with the city just as the painter is synonymous with Venice and sixteenth-century art. In an interview Hemingway conducted just before the publication of *Across the River and into the Trees*, he referred to Titian admiringly as one of the “old Venice boys” (Ross 83). It was Hemingway and his protagonist’s wish that he could be considered similarly. As he wrote a friend around that time in 1950, “[I] am a boy with five home towns now—Paris, Venice, Ketchum (Idaho), Key West and Havana” (qtd. in Lyons 30). Any engagement with Hemingway’s life and work must consider Italy—as Hemingway himself did—as essential to his life and artistic development.

As awkward and even passive aggressive as Cantwell’s exchange with Alvarito is, coming at the end of *Across the River and into the Trees*, an occasionally stilted and forced performance itself, the exchange will remind us of the fundamental importance for Hemingway that Venice and all of northern Italy carried for the majority of his life.

Rather than attempt to offer an exhaustive view that encompasses every facet of Hemingway and Italy (for instance, canonical short stories such as “Now I Lay Me” and “A Way You’ll Never Be,” set at the Italian front during World War I), this book assembles representative papers that were delivered during the Hemingway Society’s biennial international conference in Venice in June 2014, which gathered almost 275 of Hemingway’s most esteemed scholars and devoted readers. By offering this collection, we hope to provide a sense of what the twenty-first-century landscape is of Hemingway’s Italian life, career, and legacy. These essays present new perspectives on how Italy shaped Hemingway’s writing, a topic that is now almost a full century old. The contributors to *Hemingway and Italy* reflect the current state of Hemingway studies. Each chapter contributes to celebrate the imbalance of the conference itself: of the sixteen essays, six are devoted to the
historical background of Hemingway and Venice, eight focus primarily on Hemingway’s Italian novels, and two address Hemingway’s offbeat Italian fables, written in early 1950, “The Good Lion” and “The Faithful Bull,” two short pieces not generally given critical attention.

Hemingway’s lifelong engagement with Italy was carried out in distinct episodes. He first traveled to Italy in the crucible experience of 1918, as a volunteer with the Red Cross serving the Italian Army during World War I. His war experiences—particularly his July 8 wounding and his subsequent convalescence in Milan, where he fell in love with Agnes von Kurowsky, the American nurse—became the substance for the Italian fiction that would follow. Of the five full-length novels Hemingway published during his life, two are set in Italy. Although these novels, *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) and *Across the River and into the Trees* (1950), are not precise autobiographical renderings, they do draw from Hemingway’s experience with the war, the Italian setting, and they mine his emotional investment in the culture, people, and events of his experience.

Hemingway’s estimation as a short story writer, too, depends to a large degree on this Italian context. Early efforts such as “Cat in the Rain,” “A Very Short Story,” “A Canary for One,” “The Revolutionist,” “Out of Season,” and “My Old Man,” to say nothing of the interchapters 6 and 7—a significant portion of the *In Our Time* (1925) collection that would win him his reputation—concern Hemingway’s involvement with Italy. Subsequent stories, such as “In Another Country,” “Che Ti Dice La Patria?” “A Simple Enquiry,” “Now I Lay Me,” “A Way You’ll Never Be,” and “A Natural History of the Dead,” depend on Hemingway’s firsthand experience with the physical and emotional realities of war. Even the 1936 masterpiece “The Snows of Kilimanjaro” suggests that close to two decades later, the scenes of the war still played out in his mind images of “the fighting on Pasubio, and of the attack on Perticara and Asalone” (CSS 42), referencing villages that became synonymous for brutal World War I battles.

The resonance of this early experience, in fact, motivated Hemingway critic Philip Young to formulate his “wound theory,” the notion that the impetus for Hemingway’s entire literary corpus evolved from his July 8, 1918, wounding. This wounding, which Hemingway first dramatized in chapter 6 of *In Our Time* with Nick Adams as the protagonist, would for Young “serve as climax for all of Hemingway’s heroes for at least the next twenty-
five years” (40). Hemingway’s Italian experience, then, and the early taste of war and wounding, would inform his entire life and career, whether a given work was set in Italy or not.

Hemingway returned to Italy intermittently in the 1920s, sometimes alone as a correspondent for the *Toronto Star*, and other times with his wife Hadley to show her in peacetime the Italy that he was able to see during the war. These early trips resulted in a clash between nostalgia and actuality that inevitably resulted in disappointment. Hemingway’s riveting 1922 article for the *Star*, “A Veteran Visits the Old Front,” warns that one can’t repeat the past:

> So we walked along the street where I saw my very good friend killed, past the ugly houses toward the motorcar, whose owner would never have had a motorcar if it had not been for the war, and it all seemed a very bad business. I had tried to recreate something for my wife and had failed utterly. The past was as dead as a busted Victrola record. Chasing yesterdays is a bum show—and if you have to prove it, go back to your old front. (DT 180)

Hemingway was also able to see the fascist government that rose following World War I, resulting in some scathing journalistic pieces as well as the devastating “Che Ti Dice La Patria?,” which chronicles the moral and physical wasteland of postwar Italy that he witnessed in 1927 with his friend Guy Hickock.

These sobering experiences from the 1920s, following the physical danger and emotional upheaval of his first Italian experience, combined to inspire the writing of *A Farewell to Arms* at the end of that decade, the defining novel of the Italian front during World War I.

Hemingway’s writing on Italy presented a constant and relentless criticism of Italian fascism. For this reason, he felt unwelcome in the country until after World War II and the election of 1948 that democratized Italy. Soon after, he returned to Italy, but as a wealthy celebrity, perhaps the world’s most famous writer, the author of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and just a few years away from being a Nobel laureate. His Italian experiences in the late 1940s, however, were not spent in trenches or war hospitals but in duck blinds at hunting reserves and in the best room of the ornate Gritti Palace hotel in Venice. His friends were not fellow ambulance drivers but Italian aristocrats eager to show him a luxurious time. Hemingway, not surpris-
ingly, took to this lifestyle with his fourth wife, Mary Welsh Hemingway, hunting frequently in the Veneto, sampling the Valpolicella wines from the casks of his friends, and visiting rich and well-connected Italians from the area.

This revivification of a love for Italy blossomed into his second Italian novel, *Across the River and into the Trees*, which Hemingway declared was devoted to “the city of Venice and the Veneto, which Hemingway has known and loved since he was a young boy” (“Hemingway Is Bitter about Nobody,” 110). It was irrelevant to Hemingway that he had not actually entered the city of Venice until October 1948 (Reynolds 180): in his mind, it was a lifelong love affair, and it suffuses every page of the novel, along with his interviews of the period and his correspondence. As a writer who had already reached legendary status, Hemingway was aware that he was entering into the grand tradition of Venetian art, the city that Sergio Perosa (in the chapter he has contributed to this volume) argues as affecting Hemingway with a quality of “decay and death haunting the city,” a sense of portent that would infuse Hemingway’s Venetian novel.

Hemingway and his wife would return to Italy in March 1954, following two harrowing East African plane crashes. Photographs from that visit show a solemn, aged Hemingway meeting with concerned friends, showing burn marks and visible signs of the terrible toll of those crashes. During that visit, he reunited with Adriana Ivancich, the young woman on whom *Across the River and into the Trees*’ Renata is based (and the sister of this volume’s first contributor), and then left Italy, never to return.

Several essays in this book reexamine Hemingway’s biographical ties to Italy, as well as the historical background of Venice and the arts. In our first essay, Giacomo Ivancich, the surviving brother of Adriana, offers his memories of Hemingway in Venice. Ivancich, who has served as an ambassador to various countries, delivered a moving presentation of his personal memories of Hemingway, eager to quell the salacious gossip that Adriana’s friendship with Hemingway inspired. A sense emerges of Hemingway as a man rather than as a persona, where discussions revolve around hamburgers, rather than war, love, or loss. Ambassador Ivancich also gives a firsthand account of the shelling that his home suffered from Allied bombing during World War II, which is mentioned in *Across the River and into the Trees*. In a perspective from another friend, Ruggero Caumo—legendary barman at Harry’s Bar in Venice—shares recollections of Hemingway and Giuseppe