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PREVIEW

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PREVIEW

HEMINGWAY'S HEROINES

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PREVIEW

THESIS STATEMENT

Just as the heroes in Hemingway's fiction fit into a pattern, so do the heroines; but Hemingway's heroines fall into two distinct categories: the submissive mistress and the threatening, dangerous female.

PREVIEW

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CHAPTER I

HEMINGWAY'S HEROINES: INADEQUATELY TREATED BY CRITICS

The critics of Ernest Hemingway's fictional works present many discussions about the hero in the stories and novels, and most critics remark about the heroines or women, but comparatively few critics adequately investigate Hemingway's heroines.

At first glance, the heroines of Hemingway's fiction seem to be shallow and superficially portrayed. If the uninformed reader follows a cursory reading of the works by a survey of some of the opinions of leading literary critics, he is left with the general impression that Hemingway's heroines are quietly submissive, a "boy's dream of feminine response, quick and compliant figures."¹ Critic Untermeyer goes on to say that Hemingway fails "to create complete or even fairly credible women," and that only the extremes such as Brett and Pilar come through as adequately portrayed, while the others are only believable as complements to the virile heroes.² Some critics label the love relationships

¹Louis Untermeyer, Makers of the Modern World (New York, 1955), p. 725.

²Ibid.

of Hemingway's women and men as eroticism.³ And others criticize Hemingway's stories because there is no ordinary living, no partnership with the give-and-take necessary for a couple.⁴ Fiedler goes along with this attitude when he says that there are no women in Hemingway's books.⁵

Bardacke comments that Hemingway treats his heroines as wholly sexual beings, and he recognizes that "little . . . has been said of his heroines beyond an acknowledgement of an antagonism toward women that is especially noticeable in his later short stories."⁶

Some critics place the blame on Hemingway and dismiss the women by saying ". . . he is not a master of female

³W. M. Frohock, "Violence and Discipline," Southwest Review XXXII, Nos. 1 and 2 (1947), reprinted in Ernest Hemingway: The Man and His Work, John K. M. McCaffery, editor (Cleveland, Ohio; 1950), p. 275; Edward Wagenknecht, Cavalcade of the American Novel (New York, 1952), p. 376. Subsequent reference to McCaffery's anthology will read: McCaffery, Ernest Hemingway.

⁴Edmund Wilson, "Hemingway: Gauge of Morale," The Wound and the Bow (Oxford University, 1947), reprinted in McCaffery, Ernest Hemingway, p. 254n.

⁵Leslie Fiedler, "Men Without Women," Hemingway: A Collection of Critical Essays, Robert P. Weeks, editor (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey; 1962), p. 86. Hereafter reference to Weeks' collection will read: Weeks, Hemingway: A Collection of Critical Essays.

⁶Theodore Bardacke, "Hemingway's Women," in McCaffery, Ernest Hemingway, p. 340.

psychology,"⁷ or that "he did not, on the evidence of his novels, understand women, or their relations with men."⁸

According to Malcolm Cowley, "Most of Hemingway's heroines are in the image of Trudy; they have the obedience to their lovers and the sexual morals of Indian girls."⁹

John Graham observes that the love Hemingway portrays does not seem to be real because there is no idea of permanence or future. Love seems to be snatched as "physical and as emotional security" in the unstable conditions the characters find themselves in--wartime, or impending death.¹⁰

Typical critical reaction to this whole area of Hemingway's work can be found in the words of George Snell: "As a love story, For Whom the Bell Tolls falls far below A Farewell to Arms, but neither novel is strong for its tensions of love, which seem actually thrown in as a sop to public taste."¹¹

⁷Donald W. Heiney, Essentials of Contemporary Literature (New York; 1955), p. 72. Hereafter reference to this work will read: Heiney, Essentials of Contemporary Literature.

⁸J. Donald Adams, "Speaking of Books," The New York Times Book Review, July 16, 1961, p. 2.

⁹Malcolm Cowley, "Nightmare and Ritual in Hemingway," in Weeks, Ernest Hemingway: A Collection of Essays, p. 49.

¹⁰John Graham, "Ernest Hemingway: The Meaning of Style," Modern Fiction Studies, VI (1960), 300n.

¹¹George Snell, Shapers of American Fiction, 1798-1947 (New York, 1947), p. 166.

While many critics seem to think that Hemingway's creation of his heroines is inept, most of the critics themselves are superficial in their analyses of the fictional women. With very little comment, critics casually toss Hemingway's heroines into one of two general categories--good girls and bad girls. The categories are important, however, and offer the framework on which is built the discussion of Hemingway's heroines in this study, to be discussed at greater length in Chapter III. The two categories also provide a basis for fuller and more thoughtful treatment of the heroines by some critics. Carlos Baker comments:

The most frequent adverse comment on Hemingway's fictional heroines is that they tend to embody two extremes, ignoring the middle ground. This fact is taken to be a kind of sin of omission, the belief being that most of their real-life sisters congregate and operate precisely in the area which Hemingway chooses not to invade at all.¹²

The reference here is to Edmund Wilson's charge that since Hemingway does not portray the everyday bickerings of the "normal" or "real" married state, he is deficient in his art.

Baker summarizes:

By his failure, or his tacit refusal to depict realistically the occupants of this realm and to use them as the heroines of his fiction, Hemingway has somehow failed in his obligation to present things as they are.¹³

¹²Carlos Baker, Hemingway: The Writer as Artist (Princeton, New Jersey; 1956), p. 109. The reference is to Edmund Wilson's "Gauge of Morale," in McCaffery, Ernest Hemingway, pp. 236-275. Baker's work will be cited hereafter: Baker, Hemingway: The Writer as Artist.

¹³Baker, Hemingway: The Writer as Artist, p. 110.

In answer to Wilson's ideas Baker offers four points, more in explanation than rebuttal, however: (1) Hemingway's masculine outlook is shared by many writers of English and American fiction who do not expound on the dull commonplace aspects of female psychology; (2) Hemingway establishes a norm by comparison and "uses the established norm as a means of computing various degrees of departure from it."; (3) his heroines are meant to show a symbolic or ritualistic function in the service of the artist and the service of man; (4) all Hemingway's characters are placed in an accelerated world, in wartime, and in a premarital state. These men and women are judged by what they do, not by what they are genealogically.¹⁴

Baker presents valid, although incomplete, reasons for his four points. First, Hemingway's characters were the natural consequence of the kind of stories he chose to tell, stories about displaced persons searching for a way to live in a mixed-up world.¹⁵ And second, Hemingway's esthetic assumptions as of 1928-1929 led to his style of understatement. Both the kind of stories and the style are basic to the understanding of Hemingway's works, and of his women in particular. One must be aware of the nature of Hemingway's style and method of operation if one is to see the heroines as he intended.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 111.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 114.

Philip Young summarizes the "Hemingway style": First, it is a colloquial prose that is characterized chiefly by a simplicity of diction and sentence structure. The sentences are pared to the bare minimum. Second, the author describes events in the sequence in which they occur, and perceptions come to the reader without comment from the author. The effect of this technique is one of irony or understatement. Third, Hemingway's dialogue reduces speech to essentials characteristic of the speaker, giving an illusion of reality. And fourth, the style and content are interrelated: the prose is tense because the atmosphere in which the hero struggles for self-control is tense, and the tension in the style expresses that fact.¹⁶ To many people, Hemingway's prose style is his most important contribution to literature, and in 1954 when he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, "his powerful style-forming mastery of the art of modern narration" was cited.¹⁷

Hemingway partially reveals his method in an interview with George Plimpton, in which the famous iceberg theory is presented:

¹⁶Philip Young, Ernest Hemingway (University of Minnesota Pamphlets on American Writers, No. 1. Minneapolis, Minnesota; 1959), pp. 32-34. Hereafter this reference will read: Young, Ernest Hemingway (1959).

¹⁷Ibid., p. 27.

. . . I always try to write on the principle of the iceberg. There is seven eighths of it under water for every part that shows. Anything you know you can eliminate and it only strengthens your iceberg. It is the part that doesn't show. If a writer omits something because he does not know it then there is a hole in the story.¹⁸

With the theory of the iceberg in mind, one can read Hemingway's work with more understanding and depth. The iceberg method makes clear Hemingway's statement: "You can be sure that there is much more there than will be read at any first reading."¹⁹ Hemingway refers to writers in general, but it is very true of his own works, and this study will demonstrate that there is much more to the heroines than is gleaned with a first reading.

Edmund Wilson intimates that Hemingway has failed artistically in presenting his heroines as he does. These critical opinions can be understood, but not justified, when Hemingway's heroines are compared to other heroines in literature. After reading the novels in which they appear, one seems to know the heroines Becky Sharp and Madame Bovary; their characterizations are full and complete. One understands and has empathy for Hardy's Tess and Hawthorne's

¹⁸George Plimpton, "An Interview with Ernest Hemingway," The Paris Review, XVIII (Spring, 1958), reprinted in Carlos Baker (ed.), Hemingway and His Critics: An International Anthology (New York, 1961), p. 34. Succeeding references to Baker's Anthology will read: Baker, Hemingway and His Critics.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 29-30.

Hester Prynne; Clarissa, Pamela, Jane Austen's Emma--all are fully portrayed. But these heroines are the primary concern of their respective authors, and the narration is presented from their viewpoints. The heroines in Hemingway's fiction, however, are secondary, and with very few exceptions their viewpoints are not considered. It is impossible to measure Hemingway's heroines by the standards of main characters. But it is obvious that secondary characters are important and serve a purpose for the author, or they would not have been included. What significance would Don Quixote have without Sancho Panza, or Othello without Desdemona? Hemingway's hero would lack the same structural element. Thus, "if he went no deeper into the backgrounds of his displaced persons, he went as deeply as he needed to do for the purposes of his narrative."²⁰ His heroines are secondary characters, and Hemingway gives them secondary billing.

It is not a failure of the artist that some of his heroines seem only two-dimensional to critics. Hemingway intentionally left each heroine as she is drawn. There is ample evidence in his writings of his ability to sketch a completely rounded character in only a few words.²¹ In The Sun Also Rises, both the Count Mippipopoulos and Cohn's mistress, Frances, are well-rounded characters, yet they are

²⁰Baker, Hemingway: The Writer as Artist, p. 115.

²¹Ibid.

presented in a brief sketch. In A Farewell to Arms the Count Greffi, the priest, and Rinaldi are complete and believable. And in For Whom the Bell Tolls Anselmo and other members of the gypsy band are well-drawn.

Perhaps making a character sketch is easier than developing a character throughout a long novel, but a more important point is that in Hemingway's fiction it is the hero's story that is important. It is Nick Adams who experiences the violences of the world, and it is his sensitivity which concerns the reader. Lt. Henry's story is the focus of A Farewell to Arms, and Jake Barnes's problems with living are the most important comment in The Sun Also Rises. The Fifth Column is important for Philip's participation in a cause. Robert Jordan with his willingness to die for a cause is the substance of For Whom the Bell Tolls, and Colonel Cantwell is the center of attention of Across the River and Into the Trees.

Not only are Hemingway's heroines secondary, they are treated in such a way as to seem flat and incomplete. Hemingway, in his particular approach to fiction, portrays the hero subjectively--the reader knows his thoughts as well as his actions--while the heroine is presented only through the eyes of the hero. The women allowed thoughts of their own are only those in To Have and Have Not and then only as they reflect upon their relationships with their men.²² In

²²Bardacke, op. cit., p. 341.

all other instances the heroines are revealed in the attitudes of the hero toward them and in his treatment of them. Therefore, we know no more about the heroine than the hero reveals to us, which, in many cases is little. One might argue, for example, that there is not adequate motivation for the instant love recognition scene that Jordan and Maria stage in For Whom the Bell Tolls, nor for Henry's sudden love for Catherine in A Farewell to Arms when neither hero meant to fall in love with anyone. It is, then, sensible to accept the fact that Hemingway's male characters are likely to be more believable than his female characters because of the "subjective nature of his approach to fiction."²³

Hemingway's women are presented through the viewpoint of the hero, and they assume the views of the hero, affirming his worth and his ideas. The women have the hero's attitude of rejection toward conventional moral judgment in favor of relying upon experience. The "good" girls strive to uphold the code just as the hero does. Thus, Hemingway's women "rely upon their masculine counterparts for the actual conclusions drawn from male experience and thus become differential and eager students of the hero

²³Donald W. Heiney, Recent American Literature (New York, 1958), p. 149.

belongers."²⁴ It should also be noted that Hemingway's women might seem two-dimensional because of the author's special use for them. The focus is on only one facet of a heroine in a particular instance, just as it is on one facet of the hero. Each heroine is created to complement the hero, either by affirming him or opposing him.

Hemingway's heroines, then, are functions of his craft; they are integral parts of his style. Obviously, it was his intention to subordinate the heroines to such an extent that they would not detract from the hero's story nor from the mood the author wished to portray. Thus, Hemingway fell back on "stock" characters: the submissive mistresses and the dangerous, threatening females. These two types are complements to the hero, and in order to analyze Hemingway's heroines it is necessary to be aware of the accepted hero's pattern.

²⁴James B. Colvert, "Ernest Hemingway's Morality in Action," American Literature, XXVII (November, 1955), 384.

CHAPTER II

THE PATTERN OF THE HERO

Since the heroines in Hemingway's works are secondary characters and necessarily coupled with their respective partners, the male protagonists should be investigated to determine the proper context from which to study the heroines in Hemingway's fiction.

In three collections of short stories published by Ernest Hemingway, In Our Time (1925),¹ Men Without Women (1927), and Winner Take Nothing (1933), the reader is introduced to a character called Nick Adams. Carlos Baker notes that "well over half of the first forty-five stories center on Nick Adams, or other young men who could easily be mistaken for him."² This character, and the themes presented in these first stories, are very important to the student of Hemingway, because they were "truly the start of everything he

¹In Our Time is the New York edition of short stories which includes all of the miniatures published as in our time (uncapitalized) in Paris in 1924, together with some stories published in Paris in 1923. See Carlos Baker, Hemingway: The Writer as Artist, pp. 331-32.

²Baker, Hemingway: The Writer as Artist, p. 128.

was ever going to do."³ The stories are arranged chronologically, moving from Nick's boyhood to his young manhood, and all of these stories are thematically related."⁴

A brief biography of Nick Adams revealed in the three collections of short stories details the boy's education in the school of experience and his initiation into various forms of emotional stress. A summary of Nick's life is illuminating:

Nick is born, roughly at the turn of the twentieth century, somewhere in the Midwest. His father, a physician, is fond of hunting and shooting, and is concerned to teach Nick the proper ways of handling a rod and a gun. . . . [Dr. Adams] is intimidated by his wife--a suspiciously indistinct character who is a blur of polite nagging and vague religious sentiments--and, on one occasion, Nick is shocked to see his father back down from a fight. The pattern of cowardice and intimidation, never actually explained, comes to a disgusting (to Nick) finale when his father commits suicide in the 1920's. . . .

As a boy, Nick's adventures are an extreme distillation of the excitements, perplexities, and terrors that are classically supposed to accompany adolescence. He witnesses a lynching in Ohio, a Caesarean delivery by jack-knife and a razor suicide in an Indian camp; he has a very satisfactory initiation into sex with an Ojibway Indian girl whom he later discovers to be promiscuous. He

³Philip Young, Ernest Hemingway (New York, 1952), p. 2. Hereafter this reference will read: Young, Ernest Hemingway (1952). In this study all mention of Hemingway's short stories will refer to a collection combining the three American publications of stories: Ernest Hemingway, The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway: The First Forty-nine Stories and the Play The Fifth Column (New York: Modern Library, 1938). Hereafter reference to this work will read: The Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway.

⁴Joseph DeFalco, The Hero in Hemingway's Short Stories (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; 1963), p. 19.

also undergoes a puppylove affair with a "nice" girl, which he is tremulously strong enough to break off. Unexplainedly "on the road," he comes into contact with sentimental whores, sinister homosexuals, and a vaudeville team of professional assassins. His characteristic response to the situations in which he finds himself is open-eyed shock; . . . but rarely if ever does he actively participate in these events. . . .

The pattern continues and proliferates when Nick joins the Italian Army fighting the Austrians in north-eastern Italy. He is blown up at Fossalta di Piave, where he feels his soul go out of his body, go off, and then return. For a long time after this he has to leave the light burning at night to keep his soul in place. His convalescence at the hospital in Milan is aided and abetted by a love-affair with a British nurse, but he is finally returned to the Austrian front as a morale advertisement--in spite of the fact that he is in a severe state of combat trauma. . . . Somewhere along the line he has become by profession a writer--more often a newspaperman--and he has also married. There is surprisingly little information about his domestic life, other than that he is afraid his approaching fatherhood will put a restraint on his athletic diversions.⁵

The effects of such experiences can be realized, and they are even more poignant than at first glance, when one considers the age and extreme sensitivity of Nick at the time of each experience. As Young says, "By now it is perfectly clear what kind of boy, then man, this Adams is. He is certainly not the simple primitive he is often mistaken for. He is honest, virile, but--clearest of all--very sensitive."⁶ He is revealed to be "the outdoor man, who revels in the life of the senses, loves to hunt and fish and takes

⁵Earl Rovit, Ernest Hemingway (New York, 1963), pp. 56-58.

⁶Young, Ernest Hemingway (1952), p. 7.

pride in his knowledge of how to do such things. He is virile even as an adolescent, and very conscious of his nerve; maturity has forced a reckoning with his nerves as well."⁷ He has been wounded, and it is important to realize that his wound is not only physical, but psychical as well.

These "Nick Adams stories" are important because they form the background not only of Nick, but of the later protagonists as well. "The experience and young manhood which shape Nick Adams have shaped as well Lt. Henry, Jake Barnes, Colonel Cantwell, and several other heroes. They all have had Nick's childhood, Nick's adolescence, Nick's young manhood."⁸ These protagonists who resemble each other so closely have come to be spoken of in the singular--as Hemingway's "hero."⁹

The word "hero," however, embodies a dual characterization of two distinct types of protagonists:

There are, as criticism has come slowly to recognize, not one but two Hemingway heroes; or, to use Philip Young's designations, the "Nick-Adams-hero" and the "code-hero." The generic Nick Adams character, who lives through the course of Hemingway's fiction, appears first as the shocked invisible "voice" of the miniatures in our time; he grows up through Hemingway's three volumes of short

⁷Ibid., pp. 26-27.

⁸Ibid., p. 27.

⁹Young, Ernest Hemingway (1959), p. 3.

stories and at least four of his novels sometimes changing his name to Jake Barnes, Frederick Henry, Mr. Frazer, Harry, Robert Jordan, Richard Cantwell. . . .¹⁰

Thus a pattern is set for the Nick Adams hero or the Hemingway hero--so designated because of the similarity to Hemingway the man.¹¹

The second characterization is explained by Philip Young:

There is in Hemingway's works a consistent character who is sharply distinguished from the hero, and who balances the hero's deficiencies. This man is called the "code-hero"--this because he represents a code according to which the hero, if he could attain it, would be able to live properly in the world of violence, disorder, and misery to which he has been introduced and which he inhabits. The code hero, then, offers up and exemplifies certain principles of honor, courage, and endurance which in a life of tension and pain make a man a man, as we say, and enable him to conduct himself well in the losing battle that is life. He shows, in the author's famous phrase for it, "grace under pressure."¹²

A code hero is found throughout Hemingway's works, even in the early stories:

He dies of a cogida as Maera in in our time, and he is resurrected in a considerable variety of shapes, forms, and accents (usually non-American) through the bulk of Hemingway's creative output. His manifestations would include the Belmonte of The Sun Also Rises; Manuel in "The Undefeated"; the Major of "In Another Country"; Harry Morgan; Wilson of "The Short Happy

¹⁰Rovit, op. cit., p. 55.

¹¹Baker, Hemingway: The Writer as Artist, p. 128.

¹²Young, Ernest Hemingway (1959), p. 8.