Literary Criticism of Ernest Hemingway's Works

Modern American and fiction have been altered due to the contributions of Ernest Hemmingway. Through his minimalistic writing style, Hemmingway instigated a conversation about masculinity, war, and the individual perspective of time. By addressing convoluted themes such as masculinity, Hemmingway created a shift in writing from elaborate to simple and direct fiction. Hemingway influenced modern American and fiction by using a minimalistic writing style portraying themes such as war, disillusionment, and masculinity in his works A Farewell to Arms and The Sun Also Rises to convey his principles to his readers.

Hemingway created a lasting imprint on today's fictional literature through his existentialist worldview and his minimalistic writing style, inspiring authors and aspiring writers to mimic his work. Hemingway anticipated his readers to freely reflect on his work. As stated by Schoenberg and Trudeau in their article The Influence of Ernest Hemingway, " He prefers to leave the work of psychological reflection to his readers and this freedom is of great benefit to him in spontaneous observation'(Schoenberg and Trudeau 2). Through the "freedom" provided by this reflection, the reader can create interpretations of his work, allowing the individual to fashion an adaptation. Consequently, the International Imitation Hemingway Competition—where aspiring authors can submit their writing to the competition, and winners can be added to a book titled The Best and Bad of Hemmingway—was created.

Hemmingway's work had an impact on other authors such as the American poet, Robert Morgan. Admitting that his fiction is frequently influenced by Hemmingway's work, especially by A Farewell to Arms. Morgan gave a speech at the Air Force Academy's Conference on Hemmingway and War, stating he "had begun to discover a new kind of poetry…one that could achieve the most powerful effects with quiet language and – something new to me"(Grimes 2). Subsequently, Hemingway's presence is noticeable in Morgan's short stories included in his 1999 collection, The Balm of Gilead Tree as an acknowledgment to the influence of Hemingway.

Hemingway's literary accomplishes not only inspire authors but prompt them to use his name as a marketing tool. For example, "The prefaces for Jimmie 'the Barman' Charters and Jerome Bahr testify to the growing power of the Hemingway name and his confident familiarity with the publishing industry"(Tangedal 4). The author of Jimmie 'the Barman' Charters asked Hemmingway to write the beginning of his novel, revealing his respect for him. In "correspondence with Charters and his editor, Morrill Cody, shows that they recognized the importance of Hemingway's name for marketing and selling their book"(Tangedal 4). As a result, Hemmingway became not only a literary influence but also an influence on business authorship.

Although Hemmingway has influenced literature, he was also inspired by Gertrude Stein, someone whom he wasn't particularly fond of. However, when Hemmingway was in a bad place Stein helped him. Even though Stein was partially responsible for Hemmingway's mental state, during which he stated, "I am going to chuck journalism I think. You ruined me as a journalist last winter. Have been no good since. Like a bull, or a novillo [i.e., a fighting bull under the age of three] rather, well stuck but taking a long while to go down" (Knight 2). Nevertheless,

Hemmingway states that if it weren't for Stein, he may have given up on writing. Though they had a complicated relationship Hemmingway admitted Stein's influence on his work stating that he hated her attitude but loved her for caring for him. Stein inspired the repetition present in Hemingway's writing, which became a staple for his minimalistic writing style.

Hemmingway utilized his minimalistic writing style to portray his philosophy on masculinity. Though he wasn't very open with his sexuality, it played a crucial role in his work such as A Farewell to Arms. Moreover, his views of masculinity and femininity mirrored contemporary theorizing. As a result, influencers wanted Hemingway to show his true emotions. As stated in her pseudo-autobiography of Alice B. Toklas, Gertrude Stein prophesied: 'what a book would be the real story of Ernest Hemingway, not those he writes but the confessions of the real Ernest Hemingway. It would be for another audience than the audience Hemingway now has but it would be very wonderful'(Hewson 1). Ultimately, Hemmingway portrays himself through his characters, especially Jake in The Sun Also Rises.

By examining the uncertainty Hemingway manifests in A Farewell to Arms about questions of gender and identity, it is noticeable how closely his opinion mirrors contemporary theorizing. Consequently, Hemingway's troubles with early 20th century constructions of gender and sexuality prompted a serious redressing of previous criticism, leading to studies such as Joyce Wexler's 'Feminist Defense of A Farewell to Arms,' Miriam Mandel's discussion of the lesbian aspect of Catherine's relationship with Helen Ferguson, and Peter Cohen's exploration of the underlying homoeroticism between Frederic and Rinaldi. All such works undoubtedly 'increase our understanding of the two main characters and allow us to glimpse the sexual politics and prejudices at work in the novel' (Mandel 18), presenting readers with a new and different Hemingway.

Hemmingway struggled with his sexual identification which affected his interpretations of the socio-political views of gender present in A Farewell to Arms. According to Hemmingway, western culture has historically privileged masculinity at the expense of the feminine, creating a hierarchy of gender in which the masculine value is positive and the feminine negative. This exemplifies the dual effect of silencing women and forcing men to repress their femininity. Ecriture feminine recognizes and exposes this politicization of gender and attempts to circumvent it by voicing femininity not bound by cultural repression: 'First we have to get rid of the systems of censorship that bear down on every attempt to speak in the feminine... There's Work to be done ... against the pervasive masculine urge to judge, diagnose, digest, the name' (Cixous 51). Sensitive to gender difference, society might validate both sexes and both genders without fear of discrimination. For such a scheme to succeed, Cixous admits, a 'political revolution' is necessary whereby the 'masculine man will let go of his phallic position and accept ... the possibility of something else' (Readings 27). She warns that gender relations and identities, which are 'always clearly a question of war, of battle' (Castration 47), must change if men and women are to relate without confrontation. It is this message that Hemingway appears to give by the end of Farewell, even if he is unable to allow Frederic and Catherine to live "happily ever after".

Hemmingway opposed modern socio-political views on gender. To him, they were regressive and unnecessary. This can be seen through the relations between his characters such as Jake in A Farewell to Arms and his own life. He revealed the idea of self-awareness/self- knowledge that exposes the difficulties that rigid gender roles imposed on both sexes. As stated by Hewson, "By so obviously juxtaposing the worlds of war and love in the book, Hemingway can

explore how ideas of masculinity and femininity were governed by early 20th-century social values and to imagine ways beyond them" (Hewson 2). Consequently, Hemmingway accurately portrays Frederic and Catherine's relationship. This provides a different perspective on war and love.

Hemingway's novel, The Sun Also Rises, grasps this very subject subliminally, forcing the reader to attempt to accurately analyze Hemingway's somber tone and sparse writing style to find the hidden symbolism and themes captured within this literary work. The protagonist, Jake Barnes, experiences prodigious pain. In Hemingway's philosophical hypothesis, it is subconsciously encoded that Jake suffers from poise and refinement. He does not become irritated with Brett for her decision, but accepts her promiscuity and even chooses to help her in a multitude of ways, even though she repeatedly claims that she loves him. Jake keeps his pain suppressed so as not to undermine himself any further. Jake knows the two can never initiate a relationship yet he still wishes to do so; his undying desire to be with Brett serves as his illusion even though it is a complete contradiction of his reality, as presented in the novel. This is the disheartening romantic imagery that deceits his realistic views. For example, in Chapter 7, Hemingway's use of minimum dialogue between Brett and Jake has much meaning, which is rarely expressed throughout the novel. "Couldn't we live together, Brett…" "I don't think so. I'd just tromper you with everybody." (Hemmingway 62) Essentially, what Brett is saying is that due to his handicap all she would do is hurt Jake and commit constant infidelity against him, therefore, any chance for commitment is irrational. This direct dialogue sets the underlying conflict as a form for one of the main themes expressed by Hemingway throughout this novel.

At the start of The Sun Also Rises there was a festival or an allusion to a festival, that was a collection of drunks. Eventually, this "festival" turns into a large fight. This aids Hemingway in his attempt to distract from impotence through his connection to Jake. Moreover, the title The Sun Also Rises has a biblical reference to Solomon's quote: "The sun also riseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose."(unknown 1) Solomon's quote was slightly nihilistic saying that life was an illusion and ultimately meaningless. Similarly, Hemmingway sometimes portrays a nihilistic view in his works as a result of his political philosophies.

Hemingway also created disillusionment with the location in The Sun Also Rises. He played on the American view of Paris, and how arrogant it can often sound. Since the war had just ended Paris was not in a state of harmony or elation that Hemmingway alludes to stating

It was a pleasant café, warm and clean and friendly, and I hung up my old waterproof on the coat rack to dry and put my worn and weathered felt hat on the rack above the bench and ordered a café au lait. The waiter brought it and I took out a notebook from the pocket of the coat and a pencil and started to write. (Bolton 23)

That was what the American society believed France was, but sadly that was not the case. This façade that Hemmingway creates serves as the last frontier for the main character Jake, as well as Hemmingway, to conquer.

Hemmingway and Jake share many qualities such as military background. Moreover, they were both injured during war. War gains a different meaning in both The Sun Also Rises and A Farewell to Arms. Though both works have war as an underlying theme, there is little to no physical death depicted, rather, there is a death of morals prevalent throughout both novels. As

a result, there is a deprivation of society that correlates with the lost generation— an unfulfilled generation coming to maturity during a period of instability—which is noticeable in Hemmingway’s life and works.

The disintegration of society, deprived of any notions of moral concepts, unacquainted with the past generations that had a firm idea of what was right and vice versa, was a major theme in Hemmingway’s work. Jake’s love towards Brett was no longer possible primarily because of his injury at war. The other reason might be his psyche that could not accept Brett’s numerous infidelities, although it must be said that he was trying to be her real friend, the only one, indeed, whereas she was not going to understand it. Although, it should be said that the solution to the problem was not to be searched only in Jake. Far from it. The writer has depicted Brett as an even less possible incarnation of love. Because war too has spoiled her to such a degree that Brett was not realizing it herself.

Jake also experiences deprivation of morals when he goes fishing. The fishing he had done in his adolescence only betrayed him. It would bring up memories of the past that would only sadden him. Consequently, Jake stops focusing on the past or future and started to live in the present. Hemmingway found living in the present was the greatest gift. Hemmingway was also physically and mentally wounded from his past traumas from the war ' The war left him with a fear of night, a fear said to relate to his abrupt confrontation with his mortality”(Stewart 1). He began to idolize Jake because he was capable of achieving a state that was impossible for Hemingway. His wounded morals caused him to critically analyze the world and realize how fragile it is.

Although written over a decade after the war, 'The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber' offers another possible expression of the male psyche's postwar anxiety of having been figuratively unmanned by the war, coupled with a fear of what Gilbert labels 'the deadliness of female [sexual] desire' (291). Hemingway leaves the story ambiguous, but perhaps in terms of his status as a veteran of the Great War the story's final answer is irrelevant. What matters is this veteran's expression of a protagonist first unmanned on a foreign expedition and subsequently killed by his promiscuous wife.

A chain of associations connects Mrs. Macomber with the Great War, specifically with woman-sponsored pro-war propaganda. Margot Macomber was drawn from Jane Mason, and both the fictional and the actual woman appeared in a magazine beauty-product advertisement; that magazine, in Jane Mason's cases, was The Ladies' Home Journal, a publication which unabashedly supported the war effort in World War I. (7) According to Joanne L. Karetzky's The Mustering of Support for World War I By The Ladies' Home Journal (1997), The Journal deliberately participated in the transformation of the American public's 'traditional isolationism to a new willingness to become actively involved in world affairs'--in, that is, the First World War (1). In January 1917, The Journal's editor, Edward William Bok, met with President Woodrow Wilson to offer his magazine's service in the patriotic cause: 'Not only did the President outline The Journal's wartime mission, but Bok credited him with suggesting specific topics as well' (20). Despite its male editorship, the magazine appeared to voice women's encouragement of the war and their menfolk's manly duty to fight. It even printed letters identical in spirit to the one Grace sent her son after learning of his wounding.

No one can say that Hemingway intentionally wanted us to read 'Macomber' as a war story, nor that he consciously associated the Jane Mason advertisement with The Journal's pro-war

ideology, but he most decidedly had the war on his mind while finishing the story in early 1936, as evidenced textually by Wilson's past and contextually by contemporary events. Only a few months earlier, Hemingway had joined some two hundred volunteers to help clean up the over six hundred bodies of World War I veterans killed during a hurricane that over swept their makeshift camps in the Florida Keys. Later that month, Hemingway's article 'Who Murdered the Vets?' appeared in New Masses, and his 'Notes on the Next War' appeared in Esquire. Memories of the past war with Germany and talk of the next one were significant presences during the composition of 'Macomber.' (Uncited works are being fixed)

Hemmingway was physically and mentally affected by war, forcing him to acknowledge and express his ideals on masculinity, femininity, and ultimately the disillusionment of society. Through his minimalistic writing style, Hemmingway effectively exposed the false ideals and repression of the sexes and the ignorance of entitled opinions creating a lasting imprint on society. Through his influencers such as Stein and his influence on others, society is shown one of its many faults. As a result, Hemmingway’s philosophies and writing style will remain prevalent in society through events such as the International Imitation Hemingway Competition.