

Hemingway's Strong Influence on the 20th Century Fiction



Literature

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Abstract

Hemingway cast a great influence on 20th century fiction. He fathered a distinctive protagonist and taciturn style which reflects his sensibility well. Hemingway attempts in 'The Old Man and The Sea' a more allegorical dramatization of his theme of "A man can be destroyed but not defeated". It was perhaps Hemingway's own sense of life which provides to him an adequate foundation for artistic endeavor in the 'The Sun Also Rises'. His style in 'The Sun Also Rises' is gripping and it is written in a lean, hard, athletic narrative prose that "puts more literary English to shame." The novel is written in spare, tight prose that influences countless crime and pulp fiction novels and makes Hemingway famous across the globe. Hemingway met influential painters such as Pablo Picasso, Joan Miro, and Juan Gris. They may have bearing upon the pictorial quality of his writing. Hemingway's prose may be simple as well as deceptive. The photographic snapshot style creates a collage of images. Some critics have characterized Hemingway's work as misogynistic and homophobic. Hemingway scholar Hallgren believes that the "hard boiled style" and the machismo must be separated from the author himself. Hemingway is a widely read novelist even today and most of the readers read him for his captivating narration, the cinematographic effect that he produces vividly.

Ernest Miller Hemingway had a strong influence on the 20th-century fiction while his life of adventure as a world war journalist and reporter, and his public image as a writer cast a great influence on later generations. Hemingway's legacy to American literature is his style of writing. Writers who came after him emulated it or avoided it.¹ After his reputation was established with the publication of 'The Sun Also Rises', he became the spoke person for the post-World War I generation, having established a style to follow.² Reynolds, the literary critic asserts the legacy is that "he left stories and novels so starkly moving that some have become part of our cultural heritage." In a 2004 speech at the John F Kennedy Library, Russell Banks declared that he, like many male writers of his generation, was influenced by Hemingway's writing philosophy, style, and public image. Hemingway produced most of his work between the mid-1920s and the mid-1950s and won the Nobel Prize in literature in 1954 for 'The Old Man and the Sea'. He published seven novels, six short story collections and two fiction works. Three novels, four collections of short stories and three non-fiction works were published posthumously. Many of these are considered classics in modern era literature. The New York Times wrote in 1926 of Hemingway's first novel, "No amount of analysis can convey the quality of 'The Sun Also Rises.' It is a truly gripping story, told in a lean, hard, athletic narrative prose that puts more literary English to shame."³ The novel is written in spare, tight prose that influenced countless crime and pulp fiction novels and made Hemingway famous across the globe. 'The Sun Also Rises', in fact, epitomizing the post-war expatriate generation, received good and appreciative reviews. Hemingway himself later wrote to his editor Max Perkins that the "point of the book" was not so much about a generation being lost, but that "the earth abideth forever". He believed the characters in 'The Sun Also Rises' may have been "battered" but were not lost. Hemingway got Nobel Prize for his mastery of the art of narrative, and for the influence that he exerted on contemporary style. He wrote the draft of 'The Old Man and the Sea' in eight weeks, saying that it was "the best I can write ever for all of my life". 'The Old Man and the Sea' became a book-of-the-month selection, made Hemingway an international celebrity, and won the Pulitzer Prize in May 1952, a month before he left for his second trip to Africa. James Mellow, his biographer claims Hemingway "had coveted the Nobel Prize"... Because he was suffering pain from the African accidents, he decided against travelling to Stockholm. Instead he sent a speech to be read, defining the writer's life: "Writing, at its best, is a lonely life. Organizations for writers palliate the writer's loneliness but I doubt if they improve his writing. He grows in public stature as he sheds his loneliness and often his work deteriorates. For he does his work alone and if he is a good enough writer he must face eternity, or the lack of it, each day." Hemingway excelled in English classes, and performed in the school orchestra with his sister Marcelline for two years.⁴ In his junior year, he took a journalism class, taught by Fannie Biggs, which was structured "as though the classroom were a newspaper office". The better writers in class submitted pieces to the Trapeze, the school newspaper. Hemingway and Marcelline both had pieces submitted to the Trapeze; Hemingway's first piece, published in January 1916, was about a local performance by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. He continued to contribute to and edit the Trapeze and the Tabula, the school's newspaper and yearbook. For this he imitated the language of sports writers and thus later on in his life his language of novels seems to be a vivid running commentary of the stock of situations he is dealing with. Like Mark Twain, Stephen Crane, Theodore Dreiser and Sinclair Lewis, Hemingway was a journalist before becoming a novelist; after leaving high school he went to work for The Kansas City Star as a cub reporter. Although he stayed there for only six months he relied on the Star's style guide as a foundation for his writing: "Use short sentences. Use short first paragraphs. Use vigorous English. Be positive, not negative."⁵ Carlos Baker, Hemingway's first biographer, believes that Paris where he went to work as a reporter provided him opportunities to meet the most interesting people in the world. In Paris Hemingway met writers such as Gertrude Stein, James Joyce and Ezra Pound who "could help a young writer up the rungs of a career". Stein, who was the bastion of modernism in Paris, became Hemingway's mentor. She introduced him to the expatriate artists and writers of the Montparnasse Quarter, whom she referred to as the "Lost generation"-a term Hemingway popularized with the publication of 'The Sun Also Rises'. A regular at Stein's Salon Hemingway met influential painters such as Pablo Picasso, Joan Miro, and Juan Gris. They may have bearing upon the pictorial quality of his writing. Biographer James Mellow believes 'A Farewell to Arms' established Hemingway's stature as a major American writer and displayed a level of complexity not apparent in 'The Sun Also Rises'. For Whom the Bell Tolls became a Book-of-the-Month Club choice, sold half a million copies

within months, was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize, and as Meyers describes it, "triumphantly re-established Hemingway's literary reputation". "In the late summer that year we lived in a house in a village that looked across the river and the plain to the mountains. In the bed of the river there were pebbles and boulders, dry and white in the sun, and the water was clear and swiftly moving and blue in the channels. Troops went by the house and down the road and the dust they raised powdered the trees". Opening passage of 'A Farewell to Arms' shows Hemingway's use of the words and overall prose diction effective enough to impress a reader. This may be one of the reasons that he could reach out to the maximum number of the readers across the globe and became a literary celebrity. The symbolism, the allegories which he uses in his writings might have taught the readers a lot of Christian mythology and compelled many of them to go through Christian scriptures & The Bible to understand him well. Jackson Benson believes Hemingway used autobiographical details as framing devices about life in general-not only about his life. For example, Benson postulates that Hemingway used his experiences and drew them out with "what if" scenarios: "what if I were wounded in such a way that I could not sleep at night? What if I were wounded and made crazy, what would happen if I were sent back to the front?" Writing in "The Art of the Short Story," Hemingway explains: "A few things I have found to be true. If you leave out important things or events that you know about, the story is strengthened. If you leave or skip something because you do not know it, the story will be worthless. The test of any story is how very good the stuff that you, not your editors, omit." ⁶ Simplicity of Hemingway's prose is striking. It may be deceptive as well. Zoe Trodd, the critic, believed that Hemingway crafted skeletal sentences and offered a 'multi-focal' photographic reality. The syntax, which lacks subordinating conjunctions creates static sentences. The photographic snapshot style creates a collage of images. Many types of internal punctuations are omitted in favour of short declarative sentences. The sentences build on each other, as events build to create a sense of the whole. He also uses other cinematic techniques of shifting quickly from one scene to the next or of splicing a scene into another. ⁷ This may be the quality of a journalist or a reporter reporting from a spot or a video editor capable enough in creating visual effects. In his literature, and in his personal writing, Hemingway habitually used the word "and" in place of commas. Hemingway's polysyndetic sentences used to convey immediacy. In his later novels his subordinate clauses contain conjunctions to juxtapose startling visions and images. Jackson Benson compares them to haikus, ⁸ an unrhymed verse form of Japanese origin having three lines containing *usu*. Many of Hemingway's followers thought this style intended to eliminate emotion. We should believe, it was rather a way to portray the things more scientifically. Hemingway thought he sculpted collages of images in order to grasp 'the real thing', the sequence of motion and fact which made the emotion. This use of an image as an objective correlative is characteristic of writers like Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, James Joyce and Proust. ⁹ Some critics, however, have characterized Hemingway's work as misogynistic and homophobic. Susan Beegel analyzed four decades of Hemingway criticism, published in her essay "Critical Reception". She found, particularly in the 1980s, "critics interested in multiculturalism" simply ignored Hemingway; although some "apologetics" have been written. Typical is this analysis of 'The Sun Also Rises': "Hemingway never lets the reader forget that Cohn is a Jew, not an unattractive character who happens to be a Jew but a character who is unattractive because he is a Jew." During the same decade, according to Beegel, criticism was published that investigated the "horror of homosexuality", and racism in Hemingway's fiction. ¹⁰ Nonetheless, Hemingway scholar Hallgren believes the "hard boiled style" and the "machismo" must be separated from the author himself. "Hemingway is a widely read novelist even today and most of the readers read him for his captivating narration, the cinematographic effect that he produces vividly.

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