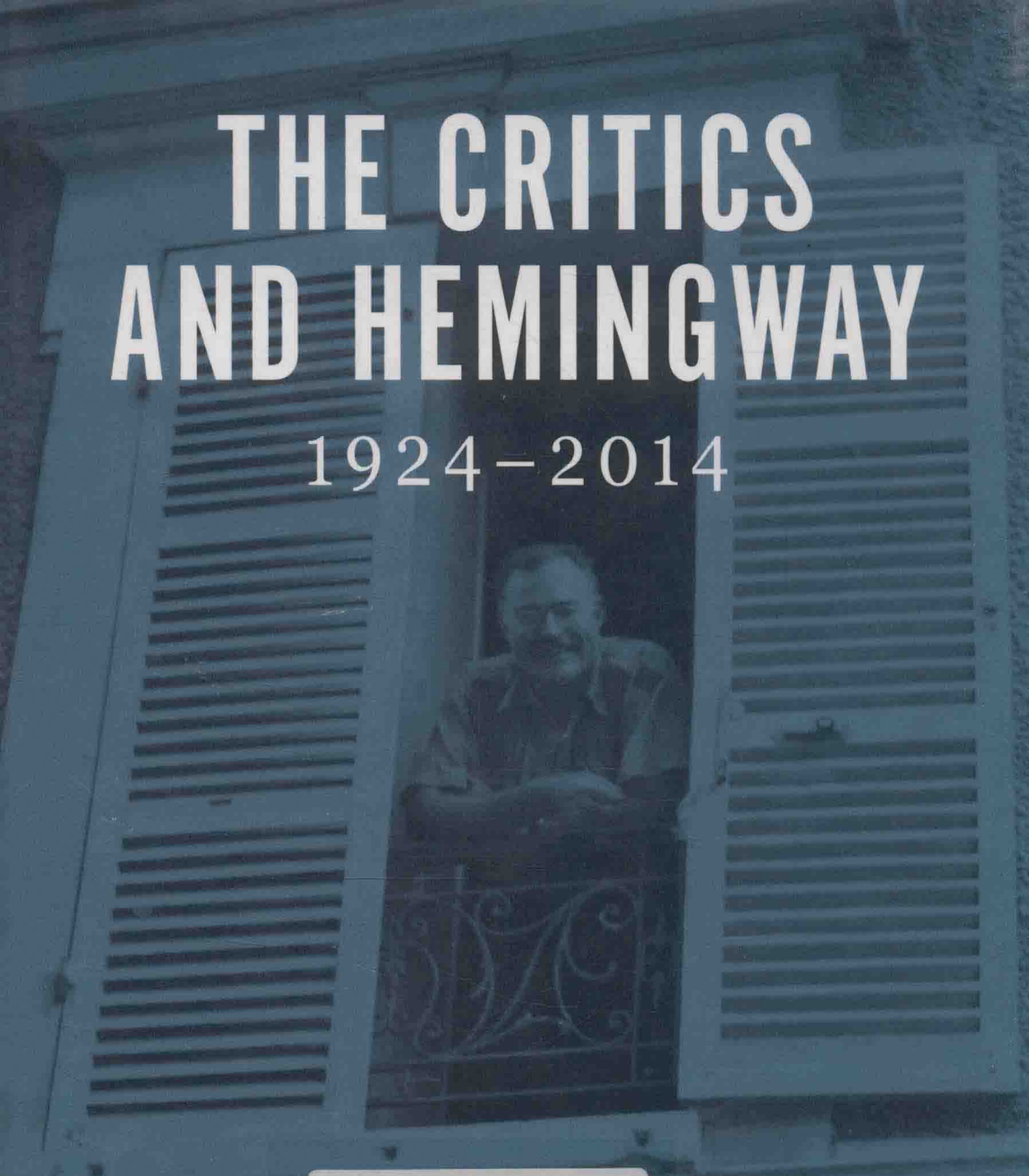
THE CRITICS AND HEMINGWAY

1924–2014



Shaping an American Literary Icon

LAURENCE W. MAZZENO

The Critics and Hemingway, 1924–2014

Shaping an American Literary Icon

Laurence W. Mazzeno

CAMDEN HOUSE
Rochester, New York

First published 2015
by Camden House

Camden House is an imprint of Boydell & Brewer Inc.
668 Mt. Hope Avenue, Rochester, NY 14620, USA
www.camden-house.com
and of Boydell & Brewer Limited
PO Box 9, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 3DF, UK
www.boydellandbrewer.com

ISBN-13: 978-1-57113-591-9
ISBN-10: 1-57113-591-X

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Mazzeno, Laurence W.
The critics and Hemingway, 1924–2014 : shaping an American literary icon / Laurence W. Mazzeno.
pages cm. — (Studies in American literature and culture: literary criticism in perspective)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-1-57113-591-9 (hardcover : acid-free paper)—
ISBN 1-57113-591-X (hardcover : acid-free paper)
1. Hemingway, Ernest, 1899–1961—Appreciation. 2. Hemingway, Ernest, 1899–1961—Influence. 3. Hemingway, Ernest, 1899–1961—Criticism and interpretation. I. Title.

PS3515.E37Z741744 2015
813'.52—dc23 2015020976

This publication is printed on acid-free paper.
Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

Studies in American Literature and Culture: Literary Criticism in Perspective

Brian Yothers, Series Editor
(*El Paso, Texas*)

About *Literary Criticism in Perspective*

Books in the series *Literary Criticism in Perspective* trace literary scholarship and criticism on major and neglected writers alike, or on a single major work, a group of writers, a literary school or movement. In so doing the authors—authorities on the topic in question who are also well-versed in the principles and history of literary criticism—address a readership consisting of scholars, students of literature at the graduate and undergraduate level, and the general reader. One of the primary purposes of the series is to illuminate the nature of literary criticism itself, to gauge the influence of social and historic currents on aesthetic judgments once thought objective and normative.

Acknowledgments

My first thanks go to Jim Walker and the editorial board at Camden House, who have once again given a vote of confidence to my work. I would like to acknowledge the cheerful support I have received from the staff at Alvernia University's Frank A. Franco Library, especially Roberta Rohrbach, without whose assistance I would still be struggling to locate material important for completing a study of this kind. I also owe a note of thanks to the staff of the Swem Library at the College of William & Mary, where much of this book was written. Though most of them have no idea who I am, I know them well and appreciate their professional competence.

Contents

Introduction: "The Most Interesting Man in the World"

His charm is so contagious vaccines have been created for it.

His beard alone has experienced more than a lesser man's body.

People hang on his every word—even the prepositions.

He lives vicariously through himself.

He is . . . [the] "Most Interesting Man in the World."

Ron McFarland (2012) cites these epithets (and more) in his essay "The World's Most Interesting Man," an examination of fiction in which Ernest Hemingway appears as a character. Anyone familiar with Hemingway who has seen the Dos Equis beer commercials instantly recognizes in the bearded actor with piercing eyes and chiseled features (actor Jonathan Goldman, as McFarland points out) the larger-than-life writer awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1954.

Hemingway biographer Scott Donaldson (2009) once observed that "Hemingway died the most famous writer of his time, and (we can confidently say now) the most famous writer of the twentieth century" (15). John Raeburn (1974) argues that Hemingway was the first genuine celebrity among American writers, emerging not only as an important author but also as someone in whom the public was interested apart from his writing. Expanding on this idea in *Star Authors: Literary Celebrity in America*, Joe Moran (2000) says Hemingway was the darling of the Luce magazine chain (publishers of *Time* and *Life*), appearing frequently in profiles or news articles. More than fifty years after his death, Hemingway's name remains a kind of shorthand, immediately conjuring up images of the macho, hard-driving, hard-drinking daredevil who lives life to the fullest. Popular books such as Marty Beckerman's (2011) *The Heming Way: How to Unleash the Booze-Inhaling, Animal-Slaughtering, War-Glorifying, Hairy-Chested, Retro-Sexual Legend Within*, Craig Boreth's (2012) *The Hemingway Cookbook*, and Philip Greene's (2012) *To Have and Have Another: A Hemingway Cocktail Companion* rely on the Hemingway image to sell copies even though the content of their books has little to do with Hemingway or his writings. Additionally, new biographies continue to draw attention not only from academics, but from major newspapers and popular periodicals as well. Long reviews in the

New York Times, *Washington Post*, *Atlantic*, and *New Republic*, to name a few, attest to the continuing interest in Hemingway's life and work. Papa, as he liked to call himself in his later years, continues to be appropriated as a fictional character in novels and stories long after his death (McFarland 2014). In marketing-speak, "Hemingway" has become a brand—so much so that he is the only modern literary figure profiled by Robert Cottrell (2010) in *Icons of American Popular Culture*.

The famous "Hemingway style" that influenced more than one generation of writers is often held up as a model for students given to prolixity, careless syntax, and sloppy organization. To "write like Hemingway" has become a kind of gold standard for expository classroom prose (never mind that Hemingway was writing fiction and literary nonfiction). It is no surprise that a twenty-first-century entrepreneur with one eye on Papa's prose and another on his own bottom line has created "The Hemingway Editor," an online editing tool that "makes your writing bold and clear" (www.hemingwayapp.com).

Hemingway still generates sales, too. His books remain in print, and with the blessing (and often through the direct efforts) of his family, his writings are being repackaged along thematic lines in attractive volumes with titles such as *Hemingway on Hunting* (Hemingway 2003a), *Hemingway on Fishing* (Hemingway 2004), and *Hemingway on War* (Hemingway 2003b). The posthumous publication of works Hemingway left in manuscript form at his death has generated significant controversy.

Thanks to the movies and television, many who have never read Hemingway still speak confidently (if not always correctly) about his work. Adaptations of his novels and stories began in 1932 with the production of *A Farewell to Arms*, an early blockbuster featuring established stars Helen Hayes and Gary Cooper. The big screen has provided a way for people to experience the tough-guy Hemingway hero: Cooper again in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1943); Humphrey Bogart in *To Have and Have Not* (1944); Burt Lancaster in *The Killers* (1952); Gregory Peck in *The Macomber Affair* (1947) and again in *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* (1952); Tyrone Power and Errol Flynn in *The Sun Also Rises* (1957); Spencer Tracy in *The Old Man and the Sea* (1958); and George C. Scott in *Islands in the Stream* (1977). These male leads played opposite an array of Hollywood's most popular female stars, including Ingrid Bergman, Lauren Bacall, Ava Gardner, Joan Bennett, and Susan Hayward. More recently, a ballet version of *The Sun Also Rises* was performed at Washington, DC's Kennedy Center (Macaulay 2013).

Family and friends have contributed significantly to creating Hemingway's popular image. He was dead less than a year when younger brother Leicester's *My Brother, Ernest Hemingway* and sister Marcelline Hemingway Sanford's *At the Hemingways: A Family Portrait* appeared in 1962. His sister Madeline Hemingway Miller published a more provocative look

into her brother's life, *Ernie: Hemingway's Sister 'Sunny' Remembers*, in 1975. Though they waited a decent interval before sharing their secrets with the world, in the late 1970s two of Hemingway's wives finally published their versions of life with Papa. Mary Welsh Hemingway's *How It Was* (1976) offers a portrait that, though colored by her perceptions as a fourth wife, provides useful correctives to some of the stories Carlos Baker got wrong in his 1969 biography. Two years later Martha Gellhorn (1978), Hemingway's third wife, published her account of her years with Hemingway, *Travels with Myself and Another*.[1]

Hemingway's son Gregory's (1976) *Papa: A Personal Memoir* is biased in a way that only sons can be toward their fathers. From a critical perspective, however, its best feature might be Norman Mailer's preface, which offers some insight into the way Hemingway influenced the next generation of American writers. Years later daughter-in-law Valerie Hemingway (2004), Gregory's wife, provided her perceptions of the family in *Running with the Bulls: My Years with the Hemingways*. Grandson John Patrick Hemingway's (2007) *Strange Tribe: A Family Memoir* has the advantage of perspective but still remains close to the family legend.[2]

Friends like longtime associate A. E. Hotchner have also capitalized on their relationship with Hemingway, perpetuating his legend in a series of books with supposedly inside information about him. Jed Kiley (1965), William Seward (1969), Arnold Samuelson (1984), and more recently David Nuffer (2008) have published similar memoirs. Veteran reporter James McLendon's (1972) *Papa: Hemingway in Key West* collects reminiscences by numerous family members, friends, and acquaintances.

It is doubtful, however, whether all this hoopla would have been successful in making Hemingway a literary and cultural icon if his work had been substandard. Hemingway's early novels were well received by American readers and sold well throughout his lifetime. Topping the list was *A Farewell to Arms*, which sold 1.8 million copies in hardback and more than a million paperback—ahead of quite a few notable titles, including all of Faulkner's. *The Sun Also Rises* had sales of 1.17 million copies in hardback, 1.1 million in paperback. Sales of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* totaled 805,400 in hardback; the novel reached number four on the *New York Times* best-seller list for 1940, falling only to number five the following year. Even a work that is today held in low regard, *Across the River and Into the Trees*, was number three on the best-seller list for 1950. Surprisingly, perhaps, *The Old Man and the Sea* was number seven in 1952 despite appearing late in the year and having so many people read it in *Life* magazine, where it was published before being issued as a book. Three years after Hemingway's death, *A Moveable Feast* was number eight on the nonfiction list for 1964 (Hackett 1967). Few who claim to be writers of serious fiction can boast of such sales.

Hemingway's works also achieved a certain level of notoriety early in his career because of actions taken by associations and government agencies who saw his fiction as either unseemly or dangerous. In 1929 several monthly issues of *Scribner's* magazine were kept off store shelves in Boston because they carried chapters of *A Farewell to Arms.* Italy banned the novel "because of the painfully accurate account of the Italian retreat from Caporetto" (Haight 1954, 102). Pressure from the Italian government resulted in private censorship of the screen version as well. A Hemingway story was in a 1932 issue of a Paris quarterly magazine suppressed by customs authorities in Melbourne, Australia (Notice 1932). The Nazis burned his works in 1933 ("Foolish Fuel" 1933, 4). Five years later, officials in Detroit removed *To Have and Have Not* from bookstores and from circulation in public libraries; the book was "preserved" in library collections, however, "among writers of standing" (Haight 1954, 10). In the same year *To Have and Have Not* was banned in Wayne County, Michigan, "on complaint of Catholic organizations"; the ACLU reported that it was the "only book suppressed during the year" (Haight, 103). Coming late to the party, so to speak, the Irish government banned sales and distribution of *A Farewell to Arms* in 1939, and fourteen years later it banned *The Sun Also Rises* and *Across the River and Into the Trees.*

Notoriety and strong sales may be important, but for a writer to remain in the public consciousness, there is no substitute for literary skill. And yet that, too, may not guarantee lasting success. As Robert O. Stephens (1977b) sagely observes, even if one acknowledges "the energy and craftsmanship" of Hemingway's "extraordinary contribution to narrative art in the twentieth century," one must still recognize that his reputation "was also the product of those who read him and told others about him" (ix). The list of contemporaries who reviewed Hemingway's work is formidable: American critics Edmund Wilson, Allen Tate, Dorothy Parker, H. L. Mencken, Granville Hicks, Malcolm Cowley, Louis Kronenberger, Alfred Kazin, Lionel Trilling, Joseph Wood Krutch, Howard Mumford Jones, Mark Schorer, Joseph Warren Beach, Stanley Hyman, and Irving Howe all reviewed his books, as did writers F. Scott Fitzgerald, Sinclair Lewis, Stark Young, Virginia Woolf, William Faulkner, Evelyn Waugh, and John O'Hare. As early as 1937, when Hemingway wrote what many considered his first really bad book, *To Have and Have Not*, reviewer Charles Poore (1937) noted that, conservatively, "twenty times as much is written about Hemingway as by him" and "ten books appear bearing traces of his influence for every one that bears his name" (21). Less than a decade after he published his first book, Hemingway was the subject of an article in an academic journal (Lovett 1932). By contrast, as a search of Jackson Bryer's (1967) *The Critical Reputation of F. Scott Fitzgerald* indicates, while a brief note in a 1932 issue of *Scholastic* provided a biographical sketch,

serious academic study of Fitzgerald's fiction was not initiated until 1944, when Leo and Miriam Gurko published "The Essence of F. Scott Fitzgerald" in *College English*. By then, critical articles on Hemingway numbered in the dozens.

Unquestionably, Linda Wagner-Martin (1998) is on target when she notes in *Ernest Hemingway: Seven Decades of Criticism* that "in some academic circles, Hemingway's work lives as much through the secondary criticism devoted to it as through its valid existence as text. The best criticism changes the lenses, and thereby gives readers new ways of reading, seeing, visualizing the art. It is in the interaction between the literature and its criticism that Hemingway's *oeuvre* remains most vital" (10). The trajectory of Hemingway criticism bears out her claim. When Hemingway started writing, critics, especially academic critics, were interested in the aesthetic, moral, and philosophical qualities of a work—elements that ostensibly transcended time, place, and even authorial intention. This rather Arnoldian approach to literary studies gave way in the second half of the century to a variety of critical approaches (structuralism, poststructuralism, feminism, new historicism, narratology—the list could go on), almost all of which viewed a literary work as a social construct, bound by time, place, and in most cases, the dominant ideology of that moment. It is not surprising that attitudes toward Hemingway changed as critics began viewing his work through different critical lenses. As Morris Freedman (2001) notes in his provocatively titled essay "Disparaging Hemingway," the result has not always been positive: "Hemingway has been the target of critical and academic discounting as perhaps no other writer in the English world since Shakespeare while simultaneously becoming a revered icon" (78).

The principal reason for what can only be described as wild swings in Hemingway's reputation lies in his simultaneous claims to literary genius and celebrity status—a combination that does not always bode well for writers who attract the attention of the academic world. An observation made a century after his death by future *Hemingway Review* editor Suzanne del Gizzo (1999) comes very close to defining the problem: "Hemingway is a peculiar literary figure. He is indisputably one of the most popular American writers of the twentieth century, yet there is far from universal consensus, especially within the academic community, regarding his level of skill or status as an artist." While the "dissonance" may be attributable to Hemingway's attempt to "straddle the high/low cultural divide of the twentieth century," del Gizzo finds that Hemingway still "inspires a certain degree of anxiety in the literary establishment." Often, she notes with a wisdom that belies her relatively junior standing in the academic community at the time of her writing, "one's critical opinion of Hemingway is often elided with the degree of one's sympathy for his 'way of life' and/or for Hemingway himself" (35).

It is sometimes hard to know whether a writer's career demands certain critical interpretations or if critical methodologies *au courant* at a given time steer critics to read writers in certain ways. That observation underlies *The Critics and Hemingway: Shaping an American Literary Icon*, in which I examine the way Hemingway and the many reviewers and critics inside and outside academe conspired, and continue to collaborate, in creating and sustaining his reputation as a literary and cultural icon. Its focus is as much on the critics as it is on Hemingway, and provides a critique of their assessments in order to identify the principles, predilections, and biases shaping their judgments.

As the foregoing narrative makes clear, writing about Hemingway's reputation requires one to take a broader view than might be required in studying the work of other authors. Almost from the moment Hemingway published his first collection of stories, he was noticed by both the popular press and the literary establishment. Within a decade he had become a bona fide celebrity, with people paying as much attention to his much-publicized globe-trotting adventures (and his romantic liaisons) as they did to his fiction. His work was the subject of essays in scholarly journals as early as the 1930s, and the stream of academic criticism has not abated. To understand the status of Hemingway's reputation, then, one must look at all these sources, since they tend to feed on each other, constantly revising and reworking critical and popular opinion.

Fortunately, the scholar who chooses to write about Hemingway has several useful guides to previously published work. Foremost among them is Audre Hanneman's (1967) *Ernest Hemingway: A Comprehensive Bibliography* and her (1975) *Supplement*, which are discussed at some length in Chapter 4. Her work was continued in Linda Welshimer Wagner's (1977) *Ernest Hemingway: A Reference Guide* and Kelli Larson's (1990) *Ernest Hemingway: A Reference Guide 1974–1989*. Larson's (1992) "Stepping into the Labyrinth: Fifteen Years of Hemingway Scholarship" provides important commentary on the quality of Hemingway scholarship, which had increased substantially in the previous decade following the establishment of the Hemingway Society and the opening of the Hemingway Collection at the Kennedy Library. Annual bibliographical lists in the *Hemingway Review* and bibliographical essays in *American Literary Scholarship* further extend the important project of cataloging the burgeoning array of criticism devoted to Hemingway and his work.

A number of other bibliographic studies complement these major efforts. In "The Hemingway Industry" William White (1963) highlights some of the books and articles that appeared within two years after Hemingway's death. Philip Young's (1964) annotated summary of criticism published after 1960 is impressively long, and Frederick Hoffman's (1969) bibliographic essay in *Fifteen Modern American*

Authors covers twenty-five pages. Bruce Stark's (1989) lengthy essay on Hemingway in Jackson Bryer's (1989) *Sixteen Modern American Authors* summarizes some of the more influential criticism published between 1972 and 1988.

Hemingway scholars are fortunate to have available a number of reference handbooks that make research easier. Miriam Mandel's (1995) rather formidable *Reading Hemingway: The Facts in the Fictions* is a compendium of information about every person, place, event, or object referred to in the novels and short stories, a handy guide for making sense of the many casual allusions in Hemingway's work and placing the fiction in its historical and cultural context. In *Ernest Hemingway: A Documentary Volume* in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* series, Robert Trogdon (1999) weaves newspaper accounts, reviews, letters, and snippets from Hemingway's fiction into a factual narrative of his life and accomplishments. Charles Oliver's (2007) *Ernest Hemingway: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work* provides brief sketches of virtually every character Hemingway created, plot summaries of his work, a brief biography, and appendixes providing information on Hemingway's family, a chronology, a list of adaptations, and brief bibliography of the scholarship Oliver considers most helpful.

More directly connected to the present study, Frank Ryan's (1980) *The Initial Critical Reception of Ernest Hemingway* is a useful starting point for investigating ways reviewers responded to Hemingway's works as they were published. Susan Beegel's (1996) exceptionally informative and insightful review of Hemingway's critical reputation in *The Cambridge Companion to Hemingway* is distinguished by her ability to identify, describe, and critique major trends in Hemingway criticism over seven decades. I hope my more extensive analysis will complement and extend her work and be as useful to scholars as hers has been to me. Robert Evans's (2010) survey of Hemingway's reputation in *Ernest Hemingway: Critical Insights* is useful for its judgments about his enduring value but too brief to explain the complexities of the critical debate that has raged at least since the 1930s. In *The Critical Reception of Hemingway's "The Sun Also Rises,"* Peter Hays (2011) does for Hemingway's most widely read novel what I attempt to do on a broader scale: examine what the critical tradition can tell us not only about Hemingway's fiction, but about our presuppositions and expectations as we approach it. One can also get a good sense of critical trends by consulting the four volumes of Henry Claridge's (2012) *Ernest Hemingway*, part of Routledge's Critical Assessments of Major Writers series. More than a hundred essays provide a representative sampling of biographical and historical accounts, reception and reputation studies, commentary on the major novels, and general assessments of Hemingway's achievement.

The Critics and Hemingway explores the dialogue among critics to see how it has shaped subsequent views of Hemingway and the future of "Hemingway studies." While others have reviewed the way Hemingway was treated by reviewers during the years he was alive, I believe it is important to summarize those assessments because they are an important complement to my central interest, the development of Hemingway studies, the academic critique of his work. I have tried to incorporate comments from sources not commonly cited, mostly reviews in newspapers outside New York, Chicago, and Boston. While reviewers publishing in cities like New Orleans or Richmond may not have had the same influence on readership as those writing for the *New York Times* or the *Atlantic Monthly*, their comments certainly played a role in enhancing or deflating Hemingway's reputation among readers of local papers.

Some might object that this approach gives undeserved credence to local reviewers and columnists who may not have undergone rigorous academic training that qualifies one to make informed judgments about literature. I would reply that my focus is on studying Hemingway not simply as a writer but as a cultural phenomenon. The current interest among literary scholars in "cultural studies" suggests to me that a broader look at how Hemingway and his writings have survived for nearly a century will be of interest to scholars and students alike.

Of course, the sheer volume of Hemingway criticism makes it imperative that I be selective in what I cover. Not only does this mean limiting comments on individual books and articles to assessments of how they helped shape Hemingway's reputation; it also means forgoing discussion of the many handbooks and guides available to help students and scholars alike navigate Hemingway's deceptively simple prose. Even though millions of Americans and others around the world have come to know Hemingway from the movies and television shows based on his fiction, I have also chosen not to deal extensively with film adaptations of Hemingway's work. The topic is covered ably in Frank Laurence's (1981) *Hemingway and the Movies*, Charles Oliver's (1989) *A Moving Picture Feast: The Filmgoer's Hemingway*, and Candace Grissom's (2014) *Fitzgerald and Hemingway on Film: A Critical Study of the Adaptations, 1924–2013.*

This book is not intended as an annotated bibliography of Hemingway criticism. Rather, it is an examination of how a reputation was built over a century by a combination of popular and academic commentary. That approach has influenced the methodology used to select and report on the materials I have chosen to highlight. On occasion I devote a page or more to discussing a single work that is seminal or otherwise important in the development of Hemingway studies. My hope is that my brief summaries of selected criticism are representative of what

was written at a given time. With rare exception, I have refrained from providing my own analyses of individual commentaries; instead, I try to quote from these so my readers can get a sense of the tone as well as the substance of what was written about Hemingway. Where appropriate, I have offered observations on how critical practice at a given time influenced judgments about his work.

If I seem to have given more weight to negative judgments, I offer as justification only that I find the tribe of Hemingway critics much like Tolstoy's families: the happy ones are all alike, but unhappy critics seem to employ a wide variety of methods to explain what is often a visceral reaction against Hemingway's work. My approach is generally chronological, though at times I have grouped criticism by category (e.g., feminist, new historicist, etc.). One advantage of a chronological review is that it permits one to see how a later critic responds to claims made by an earlier one. Using this approach also helps explain how the reputation of some works shifts over time, rising and falling as new critical methodologies discover the value of a novel or story that might have been hitherto overlooked, or point out faults that earlier critics failed to discern. As a result of my attempt to examine fluctuations in Hemingway's reputation, however, I may be accused of underrepresenting scholarship published in what is certainly the most important single source of Hemingway criticism extant: the *Hemingway Review.* My rationale for what might be perceived as a slight to the community of dedicated Hemingway scholars is that, while work in the *Review* is first-rate, much of it reinforces the high regard for Hemingway held by the impressive line-up of scholars who have chosen to publish in it. Most of them are represented by other works on which I comment at some length.

I am not part of the community of Hemingway scholars that has devoted its professional life to studying and writing about him, though I have on occasion written critiques of individual short stories and novels. I hope that bringing an outsider's perspective to a study of Hemingway's reputation will allow me to record fairly and comment disinterestedly on the sometimes hyperbolic claims for Hemingway's achievements and the equally vitriolic diatribes against him. My hope is that readers of *The Critics and Hemingway* will come away with an understanding of why Hemingway has generated such strong reaction and why, despite serious and often justifiable criticism of his writing, he remains an icon of American literature.

Notes

[1] Hadley Richardson, Hemingway's first wife, wrote no book about their marriage, but did record a series of tapes that were the basis of a book about her, Gioia Diliberto's (1992) *Hadley.* Hemingway's second wife, Pauline Pfeiffer, also wrote

no memoir. However, the story of her relationship with Hemingway is recounted in Ruth A. Hawkins's (2012) *Unbelievable Happiness and Final Sorrow*.

[2] In a harsh review, Philip Young (1966b) called Hotchner's book more fiction than fact. Hotchner fired back at Young in a postscript to the 1983 edition of his book, explaining how Hemingway despised the young academic. For an account of this dispute and a none-too-flattering analysis of Young's work, see Holcombe (1986).