
Linda Wagner-Martin, ed. *A Historical Guide to Ernest Hemingway*. NY: Oxford University Press, 2000. 248p.

MIMI R. GLADSTEIN
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

The goal of the *Historical Guides* series is to place American authors in the context of what is called on the book jacket the “vibrant relationship between literature and society.” Most of the material in this volume accomplishes just that, reminding readers, both general and academic, of the contemporary issues, historical events, fashions, and reading materials that contributed to Hemingway’s formation as man and writer. Ably edited by Linda Wagner-Martin, whose credentials as both scholar and editor are everywhere evident, this anthology also achieves her stated aim of adding to the variety of critical perspectives for approaching Hemingway’s work and thereby providing the reader with “new ways of reading, seeing, and visualizing the art” (8). The chapters range from Jamie Barlow’s explication of Hemingway as “a valuable site” for studying the gendered social and historical forces that were at play in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, to Kelli Larson’s brief but provocative bibliographical essay subtitled “Lies, Damned Lies, and Hemingway Criticism.”

Two items that are part of the series format are a capsule biography and an illustrated chronology. Michael Reynolds’ “A Brief Biography” begins the volume and it is a model of its kind. Reynolds succinctly unfolds the key elements of a drama-filled life in a manner satisfactory to both scholars and the lay reader. He is ever informative and always clear. The illustrated chronology juxtaposes the events of Hemingway’s life with historical and/or literary events of the time. For example: 1905, the year Hemingway began the first grade is also the date of the publication of Edith Wharton’s *The House of Mirth*; 1927, the date of the first Hemingway divorce, the date that Sacco and Vanzetti were executed. The illustrations are everywhere interesting, though one does need a magnifying glass to see the faces in some of the reproduced photographs.

Susan Beegel’s “Eye and Heart: Hemingway’s Education as a Naturalist” launches the critical essay section of the book. Having co-edited a volume on *Steinbeck and the Environment*, she is well versed in eco-criticism. Beegel charts Hemingway’s boyhood experiences as he was taken into the field for nature study, concluding that it was where he “learned to describe the natural world with a scientist’s unwavering gaze, respect for truth, interests in detail and objective language” (54).

Two essays contribute to the ongoing critical attention to Hemingway's constructions of gender. Marilyn Elkins, in "The Fashion of Machismo," explicates the conscious creation of the Hemingway look, a look still visible in the J. Peterman catalogs and aisles of Banana Republic. Elkins theorizes that the clothing was part of a number of Hemingway's protective devices against the terror of loss, one that helped the man "retain maleness when women insist on invading the world of the Papa at almost every social, economic, and artistic site" (111). Hers is a provocative argument. Jamie Barlowe's essay on the author's gender training is detailed and instructive though she can occasionally overstate her case as when she asserts that it was Hemingway's need to prove to himself a set of ideas about gender that led to his self-destruction. Alcoholism and an inherited tendency to suicidal depression were more likely to have been the key factors. Given the number of suicides in the family by both the male and female Hemingways, it would seem that the source for self-destruction is other than gender conflicts, though Barlowe makes a good case for the harmful effects of those conflicts on the author's life.

The great themes of love, war, wilderness, and loss are the topic of Frederic J. Svoboda's contribution, a lot to cover in a short essay. Svoboda frames his rehearsal of these themes in Hemingway with a discussion of the Richard Attenborough film *In Love and War*, which he calls a pallid presentation in comparison with *The English Patient*, a movie that came out the same year. Both addressed similar themes. Svoboda speculates that the film, based on the Agnes von Kurowsky/Ernest Hemingway love story, achieved its popularity in some degree because of the seriousness and appeal of those subjects. In addition to her work as editor, Wagner-Martin is also the author of the last essay in the body of this anthology, "The Intertextual Hemingway." In it, she contributes to the destruction of the time-worn canard that reads all of Hemingway in autobiographical terms. This she does by tracing some of his borrowings and sources, be they thematic, parodic, or in character. Her discussion is particularly detailed in her explication of Hemingway's sources in the works of Henry James, Ford Maddox Ford, and Blasco Ibanez, all of whom are among the sources for Hemingway's intertextuality.

What follows is the illustrated chronology. Concluding the volume is a brief bibliographical essay by Kelli Larson, author of the most recent comprehensive annotated bibliography on the author. Particularly welcome to those who might venture out on critical limbs via elaborate interpretations based on some word, line, or character is Larson's brief discussion of the distortions, misrepresentations, and errors in Hemingway texts, many attributable to an editor's blue pencil. Her review of the problematic nature of the integrity of the posthumous work is another sound contribution to the scholarly dialogue.

Hemingway criticism is a burgeoning field and the quantity of publication can be daunting to the neophyte as well as the seasoned reader. He endures both as cultural icon and serious artist. Today, the Hemingway name sells everything from furniture to fishing equipment. *A Historical Guide to Ernest Hemingway* is a welcome contribution, one that both explores the nature of that phenomenon and provides new information and insights. ✨