



Books

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LITERARY HORIZONS

The Novelist as Newspaperman

FOR SOME time now, it seems to me, I have been unable to comment on either books by or books about Ernest Hemingway without expressing rather serious misgivings concerning the man and his career. It is, therefore, a pleasure to report that *By-Line: Ernest Hemingway*, a selection of his journalistic writings edited by William White (Scribners, \$8.85), contains 478 pages that I have read, for the most part, with marked satisfaction.

White, a professor of journalism at Wayne State University, candidly repeats what Hemingway said around 1930 to a bibliographer: that the "newspaper stuff I have written . . . has nothing to do with the other writing which is entirely apart. . . . The first right that a man writing has is the choice of what he will publish. If you have made your living as a newspaperman, learning your trade, writing against deadlines, writing to make stuff timely rather than permanent, no one has any right to dig this stuff up and use it against the stuff you have written to write the best you can." But, White points out, Hemingway sometimes made use of this journalistic "stuff" in his serious books. What is more important, his journalism taken as journalism is almost always first-rate, and sometimes it is as truly literature as anything he ever wrote.

In the last essay included in this volume, published in *Look* magazine for September 4, 1956, Hemingway observed that journalism "is not whoring when done honestly with exact reporting." From 1920 to 1924 he supported himself by writing articles for the *Star Weekly* and the *Daily Star* of Toronto, and White has selected twenty-nine of the 154 pieces he wrote for these publications. They demonstrate that he was an honest reporter and an increasingly skillful one. Most of the time he wrote what used to be called "human interest stories," rather than analyses of international developments, though there is a prescient portrait of Mussolini in 1923. What he could do best was shown in his several dispatches about the evacuation

of the Greek refugees from Thrace, which are lit up again and again by brilliant descriptive flashes. There is an account of the first bullfight he witnessed, exhibiting a remarkable grasp of the techniques involved and foreshadowing *Death in the Afternoon*. A companion piece about the running of the bulls at Pamplona indicates the origin of a famous passage in *The Sun Also Rises*.

It is important to remember that while he was writing these dispatches Hemingway was working on the short stories that appeared in 1925 as *In Our Time*. Many of these stories, as Philip Young and others have demonstrated, reveal Hemingway's preoccupation with the most somber fears and doubts. Of course he was too sensible to parade his woes in the *Star*. He wrote about the things that interested and excited him, and he wrote about them with great gusto. In later years his gusto sometimes seemed forced, but here it is quite genuine. This gaiety was as much a part of Hemingway as the unhappiness that shows through the stories and the novels.

The second part of the volume is made up of so-called "letters" that Hemingway wrote for the newly founded *Esquire* magazine from 1933 to 1936. When he wrote his last article for the *Star* in 1924 Hemingway was completely unknown; when he wrote his first letter for *Esquire* in 1933 he was one of the most highly esteemed and most popular novelists in the United States. Arnold Gingrich, *Esquire's* editor, who was delighted to have Hemingway's name in the magazine, gave him a free hand. He wrote a good deal about catching big fish off Cuba and shooting big game in Africa—often very well but sometimes in rather tedious detail. He also wrote some completely serious articles about war. By 1935 he was convinced that there would be war in Europe, and he wanted the United States to stay out. ("We were fools to be sucked in once on a European war and we never should be sucked in again.") Occasionally the kind of nasty vindictiveness that spoiled *A Moveable Feast*

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crept into the *Esquire* pieces, but most of those White has selected are sound and rather better than I had remembered.

In spite of his disillusionment with war, Hemingway wanted to see any war that was going on, and he went to Spain as a reporter in 1937. (He soon became an ardent partisan, raising a large sum of money to buy ambulances for the Loyalists.) His articles about the Spanish Civil War, which were published in the *New York Times* and syndicated by the North American News Alliance, were made up entirely of personal impressions, with little attention to political issues and military strategies. They don't impress me now as much as they did when I read them in the *Times* with my tongue hanging out, but some, especially the account of the fall of Teruel, still seem very fine.

The articles that Hemingway wrote for *Collier's* in 1944 and 1945 are of the same personal kind; but earlier in World War II he showed that he had a remarkable grasp of broad international issues and strategy on the grand scale. Sent to China in early 1941 by *PM*, he produced an analysis of Japan's aims and probable policies that was soon to be proved essentially sound. As for the pieces from

France, the description of the landing on D-Day and the account of the entrance into Paris are splendid examples of what Hemingway could do while holding to his resolve to report nothing but what he had seen with his own eyes or heard with his own ears.

Of the few pieces written for magazines after the war, the only one of much interest is Hemingway's long account of his two nearly fatal airplane crashes in Africa. The method here is understatement of the most extreme sort, and there is a good deal of the kind of willfulness and sometimes waspishness that were to become more and more disturbing in the last decade of his life. Now and then he sounds like a bad boy, and we have to remind ourselves that the bad boy was in great pain and was trying to be stoical about it.

There are many newspaper articles, especially from the early years, that White has not included. I can't speak about them, of course, but most of the seventy-seven pieces that he has republished are good reading. This is a volume that could be enjoyed if the by-line were Joe Doakes, but it inevitably has a special interest for students of Hemingway and for all his admirers. Writing was probably the only thing in life that Hemingway was consistently serious about, and many witnesses have told us how hard he worked when he was trying to do his best. What this collection makes us realize is that he worked just as hard as conditions permitted when he was writing for newspapers and magazines. He need not have worried that this "stuff" might be used against him, for the volume can only enhance his reputation.

—GRANVILLE HICKS.

FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT No. 1242

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 1242 will be found in the next issue.

K ZKY VG XYJEY NM SCR PJZ-

WKYM CR JUTKYVLRG.

—KZNUJGR NVRUPR

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 1241

A host is like a general: it takes a mishap to reveal his genius.

—HORACE.

LETTERS TO THE Book Review Editor



Grotesque

MONICA STIRLING'S PORTRAIT of Jean-François Steiner [SR, May 13] is grotesque. To describe an ignorant man as "a devout student of the Talmud" (the most complex and most technical of all Jewish writings) and to attribute "dramatic" maturity to one whose childish misunderstanding of the reality of Treblinka is obvious, is to reveal as much about Monica Stirling's immaturity as anything possibly could. I was dismayed to see her piece on the same page as the review by Alexander Donat.

RABBI ALLEN RUTCHIK,

Director,

United Synagogue of America.

Coral Gables, Fla.

Adam's Sin

DAVID POLING SHOULD BE ASHAMED of himself [SR, Apr. 22] for accusing Adam Clayton Powell of pirating choice statements from the late, beloved Halford Luccock. Hal would have liked nothing better than to have his sharp, distinctive prose used by one of the Cloth. We who knew the finest pulpit man in America and loved him for his creative art have used him repeatedly. Adam's sin was that he didn't preface his words with rightful ownership.

SHERIDAN W. BELL,

Minister,

Grace Methodist Church.

Harrisburg, Pa.

Subconscious Let-Go

IN HIS LETTER [SR, May 13] DALE HARRAH blasted Dr. Donald B. Louria's comment on the use of LSD [SR, Apr. 22], stating that this showed "a total lack of respect for the thinking subscriber." To my mind, the thinking person cannot think too wisely when he only has one side of the story. I thank you for giving this reader a chance to think through both lines of argument.

Although ingestion of LSD may afford much apparent insight of the world to the individual, I do not believe that this necessarily brings the person closer to God. It may mean that the person's brain cells are functioning in an especially unique way rather than that the individual was brushed by the finger of God. It may be that this insight is composed of unconscious thought which, through the stimulation of psychomimetic drugs, becomes conscious, a sort of dreamlike state while relatively awake.

In any case, the fact remains that LSD is a dangerous drug which can produce violent temporary, and sometimes chronic, psychotic behavior. If the theory of released-subconscious-thought is true, this sudden unmasking of the subconscious may overwhelm the individual to the extent that he withdraws from all reality or continually over-reacts to this subconscious-let-go. On the other hand, the effect of LSD may be a purely physiological phenomenon, elicited

solely by altering the biochemical processes in the brain. Here again, the user may be changed permanently by the physical effect of the drug.

MICHAEL A. ROGOFF.

Ithaca, N.Y.

Buried Under Praise

ANY OF ALLAN NEVINS'S works would receive my careful attention, if not my total agreement. Therefore, I have no objection to Frank E. Vandiver stating that Nevins has provided a fine introduction to *Messages and Papers of Jefferson Davis and the Confederacy* [SR, May 6]. But if Professor Vandiver thought he should pay a gracious tribute to Nevins, did he find it necessary to do so at the expense of the book he was supposed to review? Anyone interested in buying a Civil War sourcebook, totaling 1,403 pages and priced at \$28.50, would like to have a fuller examination and discussion of the *Messages and Papers*. The review of the book has been buried under the praise for Professor Nevins.

ROY ROGERS.

Brooklyn, N.Y.

Testimony of Righteous Action

I WAS A BIT PERTURBED at Rabbi Bokser's comments in Letters to the Book Review Editor, Apr. 15. His defense is plausible—but I must disagree with him. To put this into the simplest terms possible, he asks for a policy of religious co-existence in which Jews refrain from converting Christians, and Christians refrain from converting Jews. But central to Christianity (as Rabbi Bokser himself complains in his book, "The Christian prayer . . . persists in claiming . . . that only through faith in Jesus can man attain salvation") is its mission of sharing its truth. Rabbi Bokser views Judaism as a nonmissionary religion, and then tries to force Christianity into that same structure. As I indicated in my review, there are liberal Protestant theologians who have sympathy with this point of view; but one cannot define all of Christianity on that basis! While Bokser lists Bultmann's arguments, he does not listen to him.

Is then the road to "the gate of righteous action" the cessation of missionary work by all religions? As a rabbi, I do not feel that Judaism can surrender its role of being God's witness in the world; and I disagree with Christianity's claims to uniqueness. But until Christians cease believing in Jesus as the Christ, I would expect them to speak to me concerning this central belief. Dialogue is not achieved by silencing conflicting views. It is achieved—and here Rabbi Bokser and I certainly are on common ground—by the testimony of righteous action which eschews force, subterfuge, and the appeal to prejudice.

ALBERT H. FRIEDLANDER.

London, England.