# Introduction

The 2020s are seeing the centenaries of Ernest Hemingway's early story collections and novels. His ground-breaking collection, *In Our Time*, appeared in 1925. His first novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, followed in 1926, and by decade's end he had published another collection (*Men Without Women*) and another novel (*A Farewell to Arms*). (His short novel parodying Sherwood Anderson, *The Torrents of Spring*, also came out in the mid-1920s.) This moment offers a useful occasion for revisiting the career of this influential and important author. While his work commands neither the broad attention nor the deep respect that it once did (and it is important to note that not all the work commanded much respect even when it was first published), Hemingway remains a writer to reckon with, one who, more than most others, was able to capture in new forms and new rhetorical styles the wrenching dislocations of modernity and the cultural and moral wreckage wrought by modern warfare. He was also one of the first writers to take full advantage of emergent cultures of print and literary celebrity in the twentieth century, rising to a level of worldwide visibility that few writers before or since have attained.

As such a popular and recognized author both during his lifetime and during the first decades after his death (especially as posthumous publications kept him in the pages of literary reviews), Hemingway has been the subject of a vast scholarly industry, and his work has not lacked introductory texts about it. Overviews of his career began to appear ten years before he died in 1961, and many have been published in the decades since then. Each new generation of readers and scholars, though, has found in Hemingway's work new grounds for engagement, and his work continues to benefit both from detailed scholarly reading and from introductory texts that take into account the insights gained by that reading. This introduction sets out to do that useful work, surveying the career and reminding readers of what many have often found in the stories, novels, and nonfiction books while also indicating some of the new ways that changing methods of analysis and new critical questions have reopened even the most familiar of these texts. The chapters that follow

treat Hemingway's most highly regarded and oft-read work in greater detail while providing introductions to all of the work that he published. The discussions are connected by a few overarching themes that are worth noting from the start. First and foremost, Hemingway is treated here as what he most fundamentally was: a restlessly experimental writer, one driven to supersede not only the traditions he inherited but also his own earlier work. No one can claim that he was always (or even usually) a successful experimenter, but even some of his flawed or failed work is useful to read for its attempts at achieving what he called the higher dimensions that were possible for literary writing. One area his experiments were focused on was the representation in literary fiction and nonfiction of an ever-greater range of human experience and expression. Hemingway pushed constantly and irritably (perhaps also irritatingly) against the boundaries of readers' taste and tolerance, risking (and receiving) censorship both informal and formal as he did so. An unfortunate corollary to this focus is the appearance in his work of social attitudes that were part of the total reality he sought to represent; it is simply the case that misogyny, racism, anti-Semitism, and homophobia recur throughout his work. At the same time, Hemingway sought to understand and give expression to a range of desires and possible sexual selves that his society made no visible space for. Finally, as a writer who had experienced both physical and psychological wounds in the First World War and as a person who lived afterward with both visible and invisible disabilities, Hemingway explored, often without seeming to realize that he was doing so, the ways of being in the world specifically available to people who are disabled. More than most have done to date, this introduction attends to this important aspect of Hemingway's work.

Chapter 1

# Life

In 1889, the famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright moved to 428 Forest Avenue, in Oak Park, Illinois. His home and studio there exemplified the clean lines, visible structure, subtle ornamentation, and open interior plan that came to be known as Prairie School architecture. Ten years later, Grace Hall Hemingway, a popular local music teacher, and her husband, Clarence Hemingway, a doctor, welcomed their second child, a son they named Ernest, into their home at 339 Oak Park Avenue, less than half a mile from Wright's house. For the first six years of his life, Ernest Hemingway lived within such a distance not only of Wright's own home but also of three other houses the architect had designed. In addition to the "broad lawns and narrow minds" the writer would later joke about, he grew up alongside this modern architecture. Passing Wright's buildings every day, he might well have internalized that architecture's key virtues, influenced by a modern style that emphasized the organic relationship of the built and natural environments and eschewed the heavy burdens of tradition characteristic of Victorian architecture. Hemingway also grew up at Windemere, a cottage in the woods of northern Michigan, where the family spent each summer. Around Walloon Lake and Petoskey, Hemingway accompanied his father and, later, his friend Bill Smith throughout long days of hunting and fishing. Here, he often encountered not only the wilderness but also the roughness of rural settlements and the local indigenous community. Here, too, he engaged in and enjoyed a vigorous and active life characterized by the physical exertion Theodore Roosevelt thought essential for American manhood.

Biographers and critics have examined many elements of Hemingway's early upbringing in their attempts to trace his work back to events and patterns in his life. Some have pointed to the tense relationship between his parents or the way his mother dressed young Ernest identically to his older sister, Marcelline, blurring from his first years the typical boundary between the genders. Others have noted the depression and alcoholism that seem to have plagued the family, noting the suicide of Hemingway's father as a tragic precursor to the writer's own death. There is something to be said for each of

these, among others, but the alternating proximity of Wright's clean linearity and the adventurous months on the Upper Peninsula, the prominence of the architect as a rebuke and alternative to the broadly "Victorian" character of dominant American culture, and the lingering availability of untamed frontiers allegedly tamed by that dominant culture seem to account for much that is most interesting and influential in Hemingway's writing. In Michigan, the young Hemingway would also encounter the racialized other in the area's native Anishinaabe people, internalizing the dominant white assumptions about such others. (Of course, these explanatory accounts overlap; in Wright, Hemingway might have seen aesthetic opposition to his mother's music, while in Michigan he might have witnessed not only outdoors vigor but also the enervation from which it offered respite.) Significantly, both Prairie School architecture and the strenuous life assumed a conventionally "normal" and able body.

By the time he attended Oak Park High School (1913–1917), Hemingway was pulling his varied influences and interests together through the writing that would quickly become his vocation.[1] With his older sister, he played in the school's orchestra even as he excelled in sports (football, track, water polo, and boxing). In articles for the school's newspaper (the *Trapeze*), Hemingway mimicked the voice of contemporary sportswriters to bring a modern, often ironic, tone to his accounts of high school activities. In April of his senior year, the United States entered the war that had been raging in Europe for two and a half years. Like many of his contemporaries, Hemingway was tempted to enlist and join the war effort. His parents opposed this course and appealed to Hemingway's uncle, Alfred Tyler Hemingway, to help the graduate find a job in journalism instead. Rather than going on to study at a university, and rather than going immediately to war, Hemingway set out for Kansas City in the summer of 1918 to take a job his uncle had helped him to get at the Kansas City *Star*, a highly regarded newspaper.

Though he wrote for the *Star* for just six months, Hemingway's experience covering the 15th Street police station, the Union railroad station, and the city's General Hospital powerfully influenced both his early literary subjects and his emergent style. Hemingway wrote articles on crime and poverty, developing an interest in the darker side of the pre-Prohibition city's life. And those articles were shaped by the paper's famous style guide, which required brevity and concrete language, vivid verbs, and clarity of action and agency. Though he did not return to the city until the late 1920s, his

[1] This account of Hemingway's youth draws on several biographies; see especially Baker, Lynn, Meyers, Reynolds, and Kale.

writing in the early 1920s, first for the Toronto *Star* and then in the fiction he began to publish, constituted a figurative return to Kansas City as he took up both the topics and the way of writing he had engaged in this early journalistic apprenticeship (Paul 4–11).

By the spring of 1918, Hemingway's interest in the European war had overcome his interest in the criminal underworld of Kansas City, but he was frustrated by perceived disability. He had tried to enlist in the US Army at the end of 1917, but had been rejected due to his poor eyesight. Swayed by a recruitment campaign for the International Red Cross, he signed up as an ambulance driver and was sent, via New York and Paris, to the Italian front. Arriving in Milan in June, Hemingway was among those assigned to treat the wounded and collect the dead after a disastrous explosion at a munitions factory. This experience had a powerful impact on Hemingway; it was a scene to which he returned repeatedly in his later writing (in fiction such as "A Way You'll Never Be" and in nonfiction such as the "Natural History of the Dead" chapter in *Death in the Afternoon*). Soon after his arrival, Hemingway was stationed at Fossalta di Piave, a location soon to be a very active and embattled area as Italian and Austro-Hungarian troops fought along the Piave River and in the nearby mountains north of Venice. The Piave was the site of a major battle in mid-June 1918, a weeklong fight in which Italian troops repelled an Austro-Hungarian advance and in which each side suffered heavy casualties. Sporadic mortar attacks and machine gun skirmishes continued for two months after the battle, and in one such attack, on July 8, Hemingway was wounded. While two Italian soldiers standing with him were killed, Hemingway was knocked unconscious (suffering a concussion) as shell fragments penetrated his legs. After five days in a field hospital, he was moved to Milan, where he spent six months recovering in a Red Cross hospital.

Two relationships formed during his recovery would be important to Hemingway as he began to fashion his wartime experience into fiction a few years later. First, while in the hospital Hemingway met Agnes von Kurowsky, an American nurse seven years his senior. The two fell in love (or at least Hemingway fell in love with von Kurowsky), and when Hemingway returned to the United States in January 1919, he understood that they had planned to marry. In March, however, von Kurowsky wrote to tell Hemingway that she had become engaged to an officer in the Italian Army. The end of this relationship devastated Hemingway, but the affair and its end provoked him to process it through fiction, first in the sour treatment of "A Very Short Story" (1924) and later, more sympathetically, in *A Farewell to Arms*, where Catherine Barkley is clearly modeled in part on von Kurowsky. Perhaps even more important to his later work was the friendship

Hemingway struck up with Eric Edward ("Chink") Dorman-Smith, an Anglo-Irish officer in the British Army who was serving as Commandant of British Troops in Milan in 1918. Hemingway met Dorman-Smith that November, as he recuperated in the hospital. The two shared stories of their experiences under fire (Dorman-Smith had fought at Ypres and elsewhere on the Western Front before being posted to the Piave Front late in 1917), and their conversations helped Hemingway to interpret and understand his own experience. Two of Dorman-Smith's anecdotes would become prose vignettes in Hemingway's 1924 collection, *in our time*, which would also be dedicated in part to him. In his fictional treatments of both wartime romance and combat, Hemingway developed literary analogues for Frank Lloyd Wright's clean lines and legible structures, working to impose order on the chaos of experience, but in ways that refused the easy prettiness of nineteenth-century ornament. His commitment to portraying unadorned realities in unadorned language would, from time to time throughout his career, run up against the decorous tastes of editors, readers, and even government censors.

The chaos of combat, as well as his physical injuries, left Hemingway emotionally and psychologically shaken, perhaps (though biographers disagree on this) with what might now be diagnosed as post-traumatic stress disorder. Unable to return to the front, Hemingway returned to Oak Park, living with his parents and sister there and, when summer came, at Windemere. Hemingway was determined now to write, spending his mornings working on stories that he sent to magazines with no success. Through contacts he met in Michigan, he was invited to Toronto, Canada, where he was introduced to editors at the *Star*, one of the city's newspapers. Having covered crime and urban violence in Kansas City before the war, Hemingway now found himself writing articles about a circulating art arrangement among upper-class Torontonians and the harrowing experience of free shaves and haircuts at a barber college (*Dateline: Toronto* 3–7).

While relations with his family were tense, Hemingway discovered satisfying and important relationships outside his family during these years. Wanting to live in the United States, unable to continue living with his parents as his relationship with his mother became ever more bitter, Hemingway eventually settled on Chicago, moving in with friends. Among those with whom he spent time in both Michigan and Chicago was Katy Smith, sister of his friend Bill Smith (she would later go on to marry the writer John Dos Passos). Through Katy, Hemingway met Hadley Richardson, a woman eight years older than he, with whom the young would-be writer had much in common. Hadley had grown up in a household dominated by a musically gifted mother. Her depressive father had committed suicide when

she was twelve; Hemingway's father, too, suffered from depression. Hadley had left Bryn Mawr College after one year, having suffered an emotional collapse, and had devoted herself to music (she was a talented pianist). Her mother had recently died and Katy Smith had invited Hadley to leave her native St. Louis and spend a few weeks with her in Chicago. Upon first meeting Hadley, Hemingway felt that she was the woman he would marry. The two spent days together throughout Hadley's visit, and by the time she returned to St. Louis they had determined to continue their relationship. Their courtship would develop over the long distance. During this time, Hemingway also met and got to know Sherwood Anderson, an older writer who worked in advertising in Chicago. Anderson had published novels, poetry, and a powerful collection of short stories, *Winesburg, Ohio*. Appearing in 1919, the book consisted of ten stories set in the title's fictional community. Influenced by the realism and naturalism of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American fiction and by his own experience of alienation in small-town Ohio (culminating, finally, in an episode of mental illness), Anderson explored what the collection's first story identifies as the key quality of the "grotesque." Characters are damaged by their pasts and by the prejudiced, narrow-minded scrutiny of their fellow citizens, all set out by Anderson in matter-of-fact prose. All of these – the attention to unsavory incidents and characters, the unornamented prose, and the use of a repeating character to hold varied stories together – would serve as important models for Hemingway in his early fiction.

After visiting Hadley in St. Louis and welcoming her again to Chicago, Hemingway married her in Bay Township, Michigan, in September 1921. They settled for what would turn out to be a short period in Chicago. Hemingway had been writing for a local trade publication as he worked on fiction but found no success in publishing his stories. Anderson had encouraged him to move to Paris, where an exciting community of artists and writers had grown after the conclusion of the war. Anderson knew some of the American writers who lived as expatriates in Paris and he offered to introduce Hemingway to them. Having written as a stringer for the paper for over a year, Hemingway got himself hired by the Toronto *Star* as a foreign correspondent. With this job in place, with Anderson's introductions in hand, and with the help of Hadley's inheritances from her mother and an uncle who had recently died, the couple were ready to leave the United States.

Paris offered a transformative experience for Hemingway. He settled with Hadley in a small apartment on rue du Cardinal Lemoine on the Left Bank of the Seine and worked hard at both his journalism and his fiction. At Shakespeare and Company, an English-language bookshop on the Left

Bank run by a young English woman named Sylvia Beach, Hemingway met the Irish writer James Joyce and read his *Ulysses* when Beach published it in March 1922. Armed with letters of introduction from Anderson, Hemingway met the American avant-garde writer and arts patron Gertrude Stein, whose apartment on rue du Fleurus in the Montparnasse quarter served as something of a salon. At Stein's apartment, Hemingway was able both to see and to discuss the work of such post-Impressionist painters as Paul Cezanne and the more recent experimental work of Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, work that also sought to analyze scenes and subjects into their constituent simple forms. He also met the American poet Ezra Pound, fourteen years older than Hemingway and already a self-appointed European talent scout for several American literary magazines. Both writers helped Hemingway to move away from the conventional plot and sentence structures of the stories he had been working on and to craft a new prose style all his own, a style that, like the Prairie School buildings he knew from Oak Park, eschewed ornament and sought simplicity.

All of these literary and artistic influences shaped Hemingway's writing at this crucial moment in his career. While his job kept him focused on reporting the facts of postwar nationalist violence and peace conferences, and while his literary ambitions lay in the mass-circulation magazines and mainstream publishers that dominated the American scene, he wrote stories that followed Anderson's lead, with naïve narrators reporting without comment on the adult corruption they witness, and he crafted very short vignettes that distilled wartime experience or moments of violence he had seen as a reporter or in the bullring on his first visits to Spain. His language in these vignettes deployed both Steinian repetition and the Poundian image, the sentences, as he would later say, added one after another as he had come to understand Cezanne's building up of the planes in a picture one brushstroke at a time. Married and with an infant son, Jack (nicknamed Bumby), Hemingway worked hard to capture what he understood as truths in his fiction even as he continued to write the journalism necessary to pay the (fortunately low) rent. According to Hemingway's later account and his early biographers, many of his early stories were lost when Hadley, bringing them along as she traveled to meet Hemingway for a ski holiday, misplaced the suitcase in which she was carrying them (see, for example, Reynolds *Paris* 3–4). It is unclear whether the lost stories were like those he had been failing to place in magazines or were like those he was about to begin publishing. At any rate, angry as he might have been at the loss of his work, Hemingway finally began to have some success with his fiction. In April 1923, he published six of his short pieces in the *Little Review*, an American magazine

edited by Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap. His career as a writer at the border where the avant-garde and the mainstream met had begun.

Hemingway's early success came in the world of little magazines and small-press publishing so central to modernist literature. He was quite active in that world, contributing stories and helping to edit some of the era's short-lived but influential little magazines. In Paris and in the world of avant-garde literature, he reconnected with John Dos Passos and the two became close friends, and he met F. Scott Fitzgerald, who would become an important critical reader of his work. On the basis of the six vignettes he published as "In Our Time" (and also in light of his friendship), Pound invited Hemingway to produce a volume for a series of books that he was publishing with Three Mountains Press in Paris. At the same time, Robert McAlmon, an American writer whom Hemingway had come to know in Paris and who ran another small press, Contact Editions, agreed to publish a small collection of Hemingway's poems if he could also include some of his stories. *in our time*, the book Hemingway published with Three Mountains Press, collected eighteen prose vignettes, including and expanding on the six he had published with the *Little Review*. Contact's *Three Stories and Ten Poems* finally put three of Hemingway's more standard-length short stories into print. These included "Up in Michigan," which Stein had deemed unpublishable because of its forthright treatment of sexual assault, and "My Old Man," a story at once strongly influenced by and working to free itself from the work of Sherwood Anderson. Both Three Mountains and Contact produced small print runs. *in our time* had a run of 150 copies, and *Three Stories and Ten Poems* was not much larger. But these books began to open the door to broader publication for Hemingway's work. "My Old Man" had also caught the attention of Edward O'Brien, an American editor whom Hemingway had met while traveling. Their acquaintanceship led O'Brien to include the story in his annual *Best Short Stories* volume for 1923. Indeed, O'Brien liked both the story and its author so much that he not only reprinted the story but also dedicated the book to Hemingway (though he misspelled the author's name). At the same time, Hemingway sent a copy of *in our time* to Edmund Wilson, the influential book critic for the *New Republic* and a major arbiter of American literary value in the 1920s (and beyond). Wilson reviewed the book positively, if briefly.

In 1925, the attention Hemingway's stories had received led to the publication of his first book with a mainstream publisher. Boni & Liveright was an American firm that had found its early success in republishing classics in the "Modern Library of the World's Best Books." The company committed to bringing new and innovative writing to the wide readership of the American

middle class. Pound was among the writers Boni & Liveright published, and it was through Pound that Hemingway came to the attention of Horace Liveright, who offered Hemingway a contract for *In Our Time*. In this book, Hemingway alternated the short vignettes he had published the year before with longer stories (some of them still quite short), borrowing from Anderson the use of a recurrent character (Nick Adams) and juxtaposing stories focused on unhappy romantic and filial relationships with the vignettes' distillations of wartime violence, bullfighting, and execution. Boni & Liveright published *In Our Time* in a way that literally surrounded Hemingway's work with praise: Around the all-caps announcement of the title and the author's name on the dust jacket are quotations from Sherwood Anderson, Donald Ogden Stewart, Waldo Frank, Ford Madox Ford, and Gilbert Seldes, who all extol Hemingway's work. All focus on Hemingway's ability to represent realities characteristic of the present moment that the writer and these readers share. They introduce Hemingway to the larger audience he had hoped to reach from the moment he began to write.

Even as he worked to bring *In Our Time* through the press and into the public, Hemingway continued to travel and explore Europe, and his explorations, especially in the company of friends, informed his fiction. In July 1925, he traveled with several friends (American writers Harold Loeb and William Ogden Stewart, an English woman named Duff Twysden, and her fiancé, Pat Guthrie) to Pamplona, Spain, Hemingway's third visit for the annual festival of San Fermín. In the hothouse atmosphere of the fiesta, which involved a great amount of drinking as well as daily attendance at the bullring, tensions developed among the group and strained their relationships. Hemingway found the provocation for his first novel in the moral problems that arose from the group's dynamics against the backdrop of the festival. He began writing the novel that would become *The Sun Also Rises* almost immediately.

Wounded or disabled protagonists feature repeatedly in Hemingway's early work. The war injury sustained by Jake Barnes drives the plot of *The Sun Also Rises*, frustrating the love between Jake and Brett Ashley and powerfully characterizing Jake. Nick Adams, the recurrent character in several stories in *In Our Time* and later collections, bears both physical and psychological wounds from his combat experience. In all of this work, Hemingway explores the peculiarities of disability as an identifying feature. His protagonists struggle to measure up to the societal ideal of the "normal," able-bodied man and to bring themselves into conformity with that ideal. Their efforts crucially involve self-control; the plot of "Big Two-Hearted River" hinges on Nick's careful focus of attention in order to control his mind and keep it from