



Hemingway: The Final Years

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Michael Reynolds discovered the truth about Hemingway's activities during the war years, which included running a counterintelligence operation in Havana. The postwar period was the most productive of Hemingway's writing life, when he authored the Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Old Man and the Sea* and received the Nobel Prize. Even as Hemingway graced the cover of *Life* magazine, his physical and mental health deteriorated while his public image as hunter and sportsman continued to demand the strenuous life. In 1961 he committed suicide, leaving behind the stuff of which American myths are made.

Hemingway: The Final Years Details

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Brett Brunmeier says

The Reynolds series is the definitive archive for Hemingway biography.

Tajma says

I love the way the writer treated his subject. I will go back and read more from this collection of Hemingway biographies.

Brian Willis says

The fifth and final volume in this still definitive study of the life and inspirations of Hemingway is the hardest to read. Not because the writing suffers as Hemingway's did in the final decade of his life, but rather because this section deals with the slow descent of Papa into premature senility, fragility, and madness. Beginning with the stunning success of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, the writer's life begins to take a deluded descending spiral as he convinces himself that he can help the World War II effort by patrolling Key West for U Boats (discovered by Reynolds for the first time). He follows his own self defeating cycle of leaving his wife for another woman but this time the cycle leads to diminishing results. Despite his success with *The Old Man and the Sea* and achieving the pinnacle successes of the Nobel and Pulitzer Prizes, Hemingway can only write intermittently and never self-contentedly. Coupled with a number of instances of his penchant for suffering significant injuries, Hemingway's brain pays the price. In the final years, he is a tragic shell of himself left with only one option, the only thing he still knows how to do well. Brilliant and essential for all literary history buffs and Hemingway enthusiasts.

Gale says

Enjoyed this series. Taught me much about the author and life itself.

cameron says

This is both for *The 1930's* and for *The Final Years*. I agree these are wonderfully researched and very good reads. I'm in the middle of a reassessment of Hemingway anyway and have gone back to re-read and read all his work. I never thought much of his style in the few books I read when I was young because I wasn't after straightforward, to the point prose but was more into sentences two paragraphs long and lyrical to boot. As I've gotten older I appreciate more the boiling down of prose to it's essence as few writers can do.

Among women, there is so much hostility towards Hemingway because of the way he treated women and people in general and for his obvious extreme machismo, which today seems so boorish.

These books explain better his cyclical mood swings and depression and near hysteria between books and these symptoms are more more understood today than 30 years ago. He only had extremes and those were either as a grandiose asshole or as the most fascinating and powerful personality ever. I decided to stick to his words.

The intensity and driven behavior towards writing which he displayed all his life leave me breathless. His writing was his life. His adventures and loves were fodder for his books. His writing made him and saved him and propelled him and overwhelmed him.

To be able to write *For Whom The Bell Tolls*, and *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms* puts him among other literary geniuses.

Carol Storm says

Incredible final volume of an epic saga -- Hemingway's tragic end told in lurid detail!

This is the final book in a series and it made me want to go right back and read the other four. Hemingway's adventures in China, in World War II, his last safaris in Africa, his epic drinking bouts, all are captured (if not celebrated) in lavish detail.

But Reynolds also shows the tragedy building up, and connects it to Hemingway's past. There are incredibly revealing passages about how he relates to his wives, and how much he was continuing to act out against his mother. And also descriptions of his odd behavior that are eerily connected to the instability of his father, "the Doctor," a strangely erratic man who also ended his life by suicide.

I knew the basic facts of Hemingway's decline and fall. The drinking, the plane crashes, the crumbling mental state. But Reynolds gives incredible detail, without ever diminishing the tragedy. I never had any idea how many medications Hemingway was on towards the end, or that he suffered through a horrific course of shock treatments. By the time you finish this tragic story, you will no longer be tempted to judge Hemingway for his choice to end his life in 1961.

"The wonder is, he hath endured so long"

Lynnette Woolery says

Reynolds has done a fantastic job of researching and writing about Hemingway's life. I have now read and studied his series of five books. I am particularly interested in what influenced Hemingway's writing, how he polished his craft, and how he fit writing into his life.

I've learned a lot from this series and highly recommend them.

Dara says

Impeccably researched, insightful, compassionate, and ultimately, of course, very very sad.

Michael Hemingwayhero says

Wonderful conclusion to this monumental work -from young “Jerry Salinger,” sent in 1945, when Salinger was in a German hospital recovering from “combat fatigue.” Salinger writes Hemingway that their talks a couple of years earlier were “the only hopeful minutes of the whole business.” Touchingly, he spells Hemingway’s self-ascribed nickname “Poppa.”

Reynolds who devoted his career to EH, is a master.

Deb Farrell says

I have read extensively about EH and this was a period of time that was not covered as completely in other bio's. Therefore I thoroughly enjoyed reading much more about his life with Martha and the final years of his life with Mary. Mary maybe wasn't a saint herself, but she gets extra points for staying with EH till the bitter end. A well written bio.

Kevin Ellerbrock says

“The Hemingway’s January to June 1957 liquor bill from Licores Manzarbeitia in Havana was \$1,550.49 for eighteen bottles of liquor and fifty-five cases of wine during a period where there were almost no Finca visitors.” That’s \$12,761 in today’s currency.

Sophvitakis says

Great revelations about a great writer

Graham Tennyson says

This is the last book in this five volume biog and I now know more about Hemingway than is healthy. It is an insightful collection of books, full of great analysis about Hem's writing process. I still have a love/hate relationship with Hemingway but these books examine where these conflicts come from and how I can put them in their proper perspective. EM was such an important writer for mid twentieth century readers (and writers) and he left his prints all over America and large parts of Europe. Looking past the macho bombast and all the blood he is such a 'true' writer.

Amanda McDougle says

Written by Professor and Associate Dean of North Carolina State University, Michael S. Reynolds takes readers on an independent journey of one of the great American literature's finest minds, Ernest Hemingway. Beginning in July 1940 and ending in 1961, Reynolds provides a thorough research of the game plans Hemingway executed both professionally and personally.

The beauty of womanhood will not be found in this book nor will Hemingway's relationships with his sons: Jack ("Mr. Bumby"), Patrick ("Mouse"), and Gregory ("Gigi"; the daughter). There is no mention of Hemingway's personal relationship with his two sisters. The desire to have a natural desire daughter was never fulfilled by his four wives. To fulfill this desire, Hemingway had numerous adulterous affairs with younger women. Three of the Hemingway wives did not play the unfair games of love. The fourth stayed the longest. One personal friend asked Mary Welsh Hemingway how she stood back and let her husband verbally abuse her, humiliate her in public, and turn the other cheek to the women.

This is not a sympathetic portrayal of Ernest Hemingway. Some parts are missing from an eye-gripping biography. For example, the years travel from when the sons are young to adulthood. Not much is written about their brotherhood/son bonding at Finca. Every time the sons visit for holidays and summers, groups of Hemingway's famous friends are invited. Was Hemingway really this shallow? Hemingway told his sons to write him twice a month. What was their relationship throughout the years? Without this information, there is no feeling of brotherhood bonding as reflected in Stephen Crane's short story, "The Open Boat."

The great Russian writer, Leo Tolstoy, is mentioned towards the end. This comparison impresses me. Towards the end of their lives, both men grew their white hair longer and lived in a dysfunctional way. Hemingway does not create his own religion. In fact, he mocks his mother's religion. For Hemingway, ECT treatments (electroshock) become a religion to his cure of bipolar. Tolstoy was not alive to undergo ECT. The result of ECT treatments in Hemingway ended in a tragic suicide with his favorite.

As a child, both Ernest Hemingway and his Father, Dr. Clarence Hemingway, traveled down the same path of being residents at St. Mary's Hospital in Rochester, New York. No evidence supports wither or not Dr. Hemingway underwent ECT. In the end, both men committed suicide. In a way, Hemingway went home to be with his Father on his own terms. Hemingway received his medals in literature and was able to have enough financial independence that would be able to provide for his family if he passed away. This worry of being able to provide for his family was heavy while serving his country.

I find the last three wives to be bonded by the profession of journalism. In later years, Mary Hemingway became a journalist/writer. The only wife who did not write was Hadley. Hadley seemed to be the ideal wife had Hemingway not cheated on her with Pauline. The link of the first three wives was their birth place of Saint Louis, Missouri. Ernest Hemingway's co-dependency on women made him a man. Without a woman in his life, Hemingway would probably have left the world long before 1961. When Hemingway married these women, his high expectations of the ideal wife seemed to be unreal. So, the women suffered in the end.

In closing, I was impressed with the extensive research Reynolds dug up for this biography. I find some areas of Hemingway's life to be vague. Maybe this information was not available at the time Reynolds wrote this biography. The great American writer and the man must be separated when reading. If not, a reader may be left disappointed. We must accept Hemingway the way he was and not what we wish him to have been.

Nicole G. says

The final installment of Michael Reynolds' biography of Hemingway is just as expansive as his previous volumes. What I like most about his biographical style is that Reynolds is sympathetic and yet avoids the descent into hero worship.

It's unfortunate that mental illness was so misunderstood then (not that we've made much progress today, unfortunately - the stigmas are still very much with us).

Hemingway is still an egotistical and blustery jackass, but over the years, I've come to recognize the genius of his prose (and I haven't yet gone through his entire oeuvre).
