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The Hemingway Industry by David Faris (review)

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***The Hemingway Industry.* By David Faris. AuthorHouse, 2019. 154 pp. Hardcover \$23.99.**

An author in possession of an enormous mythos and an immense impact on literary history is going to elicit a robust and expansive critical conversation concerning their *oeuvre*. Given the presence of a long-running journal like *The Hemingway Review*, the popularity of films like Ken Burns and Lynn Novick's 2021 documentary series, and the prodigious number of texts produced about his work, there is clearly a thriving conversation about Ernest Hemingway. David Faris's book *The Hemingway Industry* engages with this idea: This vast Hemingway-focused discourse, what is being said within it, and its ability to thrive in the sixth decade following the author's death. Faris, a writer living in Claremont, California, focuses his gaze on this long-running critical discussion that occurs across the numerous scholarly texts concerned with Hemingway's writing and life. In *The Hemingway Industry*, Faris has written a useful and informative text for both novice and seasoned Hemingway scholars as he inserts this inquiry into that extended critical discussion.

Faris begins *The Hemingway Industry* with a definition of the term "industry." With that definition, we grasp what precisely Faris will be investigating in his book. In that introduction, Faris writes, "An industry is an organized productive activity in which labor and capital are brought to bear on raw materials to produce a desired output;" he goes on to state "literary criticism is an industry in which scholars apply their skills to the work of an author to produce books and articles that add to the overall understanding of the author's work" (1). Faris identifies the existence of this "industry" of literary criticism, that the nature of critical discourse mirrors other industries and that we should consider it as such. This book is about the specific industry consisting of "the work that Hemingway experts do in analyzing Hemingway's seventeen published books" (1). Faris's use of the term "industry" provides context regarding the purpose of this book as he brings to our attention the prolific amount of scholarship focused on Hemingway and his work, creating a kind of industry unto itself within the world of literary scholarship. Faris notes that "only Henry James and Melville" (5) elicit more scholarship than Hemingway, a testament to Hemingway's dominance of our idea of American literary history. Hemingway's continued place of prominence within the world of American literary history and criticism, which Faris notes, means there is a need and a space for a book like *The Hemingway Industry*.

The book is broken into three parts corresponding with the three eras of Hemingway's writing life—Paris, Key West, and Havana plus Idaho. Within those three sections are chapters devoted to each of Hemingway's published books (novels, nonfiction, and short story collections) as well as two chapters devoted solely to his more prominent short stories (“The Snows of Kilimanjaro” and “The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber”). Each chapter contains a brief recounting of Hemingway's writing the given text, a similarly brief summary of what one finds in each work, and then Faris moves to provide a summary of the work done by that “Hemingway industry” as he documents what has been said by the experts on that work. Faris does his best work when he engages with the history and discussion surrounding the major works of Hemingway's *oeuvre*. The chapters concerned with *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms* provide thorough recountings of the critical apparatus regarding those novels. While chapters on Hemingway's minor works are accordingly brief, Faris's chapters on those major works are extensive in covering the scholarly history focused on each text. One important aspect of Faris's work in *The Hemingway Industry* is making a clear distinction between the biographical scholarship on Hemingway and the literary criticism. For example, in his chapter on *The Sun Also Rises*, Faris distinguishes between more biographically concerned scholarship of those like Michael Reynolds and Carlos Baker and the criticism focused on the literary work itself. Faris highlights how with that novel “the biographers [...] concern themselves with analyzing how the people and places that Hemingway experienced during the Paris years compare with the contents of the novel” (25). Faris separates that work from the scholarship more concerned with the text itself, pieces that offer up explications and interpretations rather than insight into Hemingway's biography. When it comes to an author for whom the biographical and literary become intertwined to an inappropriate degree, making such distinctions is useful and Faris employs this construct in all the chapters focusing on Hemingway's fiction.

Faris also does excellent work highlighting the different critical approaches taken as well. In the chapter on *A Farewell to Arms*, Faris describes scholarship that emphasizes “literary theory” and “destabilize[d] traditional thinking” (52) around the novel while also calling attention to an article that “show[s] how the pragmatism of William James can be used to analyze [*A Farewell to Arms*]” (53). The prodigious work of this “Hemingway industry” has yielded many different tracts and approaches to Hemingway's work. In his attempt to provide this capsule history of the Hemingway-centric discourse, Faris makes a

point to highlight these different pathways and methodologies that have done so much to determine what is being said.

One does wish to see, in *The Hemingway Industry*, a bit more in the way of analysis of this “industry.” Providing a recounting of the literary criticism on Hemingway’s writing is a useful endeavor, one entailing taking more than fifty years of scholarship and condensing it into a single volume, but there were avenues left unexplored that would have taken Faris beyond that work. Hearing what Faris thinks about the nature of this “Hemingway industry” and its continued production or the trends within it and how they’ve shifted as time has progressed, would have all been interesting to consider. Yet Faris steers away from addressing such things in *The Hemingway Industry*, keeping it firmly in the realm of reference.

Even after acknowledging that, what stands out about *The Hemingway Industry* is how Faris has crafted a book that will be useful, particularly to certain subsets of Hemingway scholars. For scholar at the beginning of their career, the prospect of entering this discussion of Hemingway that has been occurring for multiple decades could seem a bit daunting. Trying to find one’s way into this vast and expansive critical discussion can seem like an impossible task. *The Hemingway Industry* provides those scholars a key or a foothold that could make navigating one’s way into the world of Hemingway scholarship a bit easier. *The Hemingway Industry* will also be of interest to professors who bring Hemingway into their classroom. For a teacher preparing to teach a class on one of Hemingway’s works, particularly when the class was also reckoning with the critical discussion about the work, having this opportunity to quickly review what had been said in the critical discussion would be a useful thing to have. To be certain, there are other uses for this text that one could identify but those audiences might be the most intrigued by *The Hemingway Industry* and find the greatest use for it

For a book that sets out to accomplish something quite challenging (to provide an encapsulation of the extensive critical discussion of Ernest Hemingway) David Faris’s *The Hemingway Industry* accomplishes that lofty goal. Though there is still room for exploration of this “industry” Faris identifies that one would have liked to see, *The Hemingway Industry* provides a clear window into the impressive history of Hemingway scholarship that will be particularly useful to burgeoning scholars and teachers of all levels and experience levels.

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