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Unraveling the Ideal: The Great War's Suppression of American Authors

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the widespread effect of the Committee of Public Information, a governmental agency tasked with influencing public opinion on the war, and their World War I propaganda campaign on American authors. In particular, I focus on the propagated "soldier boy" trope and its contrast to the harsh realities of the war-front that authors such as Ellen La Motte, Ernest Hemingway, and F. Scott Fitzgerald addressed in their written work. I explore each of these authors' personal experience in the war and how their writing broke the conventions set in place by the CPI and continued to influence literary culture and marketplaces even after the CPI disbanded. Each of these authors was suppressed through different means, but they are connected in their divergence from the idealized image of the war. By comparing these authors, I highlight the CPI's influence in the silencing of these authors who strayed from the idealized version of the war, challenged gender roles, and openly addressed misunderstood mental health issues.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The impact of the First World War was not fully realized until far after its long-awaited end. A war that was initially expected to reach a swift conclusion at its beginning in August 1914 turned into a four-year-long conflict resulting in millions of deaths. While the Allied forces were the victors, little could be celebrated when looking back on the fighting's devastation. With the rapid rate of mechanical development in warfare came the ravaging climb in fatalities during the war. World War I's technology was created for the sole purpose of causing as much destruction to the enemy as possible in a way never experienced in any war prior. With the invention of the modern machine gun and rapid-fire artillery gun, the course of the war was drastically altered. First developed in the 1880s, by the time of the First World War the machine gun was capable of firing 600 bullets per minute, suited for maintaining a sustained rapid fire that could reach over 1,000 yards away from its position. The rapid-fire artillery gun proved to be devastating in its advancements over prior models, which would recoil and shift, needing to be repositioned after each firing. The newer model did not have such faults and was able to keep on target after each round was shot, allowing for continuous focus on an area (Britannica).

The impact of these technological advancements in warfare proved far deadlier than anyone could have anticipated. Trench warfare was exceptionally strong for defense against attacks by enemy personnel, but was far less effective in offensive assaults due to chemicals and machines of the defending side. It was clear: war had changed. With the introduction of total war on a mass scale, fighting was no longer exclusive to the battlefield, allowing for unrestricted devastation of civilian areas. Undoubtedly, this shift occurred partly because of

civilian supported war-efforts, blurring the lines of combatants and noncombatants. While World War I was certainly not the first war in history to adopt the style of "total war," when mixed with the compounding expansion in technology, the widespread impact of war was felt like never before.

As historian Paul Fussell describes in his influential study *The Great War and Modern Memory*, "what makes experience in the Great War unique and gives it a special freight of irony is the ridiculous proximity of the trenches to home. Just seventy miles from 'this stinking world of sticky trickling earth' was the rich plush of London theater seats and the perfume, alcohol, and cigar smoke of the Café Royal" (Fussell 64). It is impossible to fully estimate the psychological toll this proximity had upon those at the front, but it was also felt on the home front. People living in areas closer to the trenches could hear the echoed sounds of artillery; sometimes the flashes of light from missiles could be viewed out the windows of civilian homes. Although American soldiers were further from home than English soldiers, their proximity to residential areas made the switch between warfare and leisure difficult. It seemed that on either side—civilian or soldier— the looming presence of how close the war was served as a grim, inescapable reminder.

As the American war effort unfolded in Europe in early April 1917, an increasing focus was placed upon the role of home front in the United States. The need for a unified work force at home to support the war effort abroad was ever-growing as supplies were in high demand. While voluntary efforts were relied on initially, the U.S. government extended its control into all essential areas of the economy. "Railroads were nationalized; a war industries board established ironclad controls over industry; food and fuel were strictly rationed; an emergency-fleet corporation began construction of a vast merchant fleet; and a

war labor board used coercive measures to prevent strikes" (Britannica). Concerns regarding civilian morale led Woodrow Wilson's administration to begin an era of rigid censorship laws that policed what was deemed suitable to be said in public.

The first marker of this wave of suppression began with Congress's passing of the Espionage Act of 1917. This act aimed to limit dissenting opinions of the war for fear they would demoralize the public. Penalties were put in place as punishment for any written material that "urged treason" or otherwise encouraged the American people to disobey the draft or provoked overall insubordination. The Sedition Act of 1918 was later passed as an amendment to the Espionage act, further limiting the First Amendment's protection of free speech, religion, and press under the Wilson Administration. Following its passing, the Sedition Act established that any type of speech found to be disloyal to the American government was illegal. The passing of these acts profoundly affected pacifist and socialist individuals, setting a clear precedent that any disloyalty to the war effort was dangerous and would be prosecuted. The erasure of portions of the First Amendment allowed the government free rein to censor work through the threat of sizeable fines and possible jail time as punishment.

While censorship was tightening around Americans, the Committee on Public Information headed a massive propaganda campaign in support of the war under the leadership of George Creel. Known primarily for his work as a progressive journalist and investigative reporter, Creel was appointed as head of the CPI by President Woodrow Wilson in 1917 (Britannica). Under Creel's leadership, the CPI created a group of scholars, editors, journalists, artists, and press agents tasked with manipulating U.S. public opinion. James Mock and Cedric Larson's book, *The Words that Won the War: The Story of the Committee*

on Public Information, 1917-1919, compares the reach of this committee's work to a "gargantuan advertising agency the like of which the country had never known," adding that "the breathtaking scope of its activities was not to be equaled until the rise of totalitarian dictatorships after the war" (4). Mock and Larson's book was published in 1932, giving weight to their focus on the rise of dictatorships after the war. With growing fascism movements across Europe, especially in Germany and Italy, during this time, the relevance of Mock and Larson's analysis of public information as a mobilization tactic lies in their proximity to the CPI's disbandment.

The CPI mobilized its propaganda campaign through many avenues to ensure its work was received by those on the home front. This campaign to sway the American public's opinion about countless aspects of the war aimed not only to mobilize the country for war but to also lead to domestic reform (Wells). The domestic section of the CPI adopted three primary tactics to sway public opinion: the written word, the spoken word, and the motion picture (Creel). Each of these proved effective in reaching into almost every aspect of life for the general public. Most of the media produced, such as the especially effective illustrated posters, could be found in homes, workplaces, and schools and proved nearly impossible to avoid. Thus, the American people were steeped in propaganda, with purposeful misinformation included by the editors and scholars working for the CPI.

> But there was little expressed difference of opinion. It was illegal to express dissent of certain kinds, but for most people no law was necessary. The Committee on Public Information had done its work so well that there was a burning eagerness to believe, to conform, to feel the exaltation of joining in a great and selfless enterprise. (Mock and Larson, 6)

The CPI's success came primarily from utilizing the Americans' patriotism. In addition to the strict censorship laws, there were still many restrictions that were technically voluntary.

Yet, citizens imposed these on themselves and their communities, pressuring for conformity in support of the war.

The propaganda presented to the public cultivated clear representations of good and evil in their depictions of Allied soldiers and their enemies. German soldiers were often depicted as gorillas with teeth bared, evoking ideas of savageness.

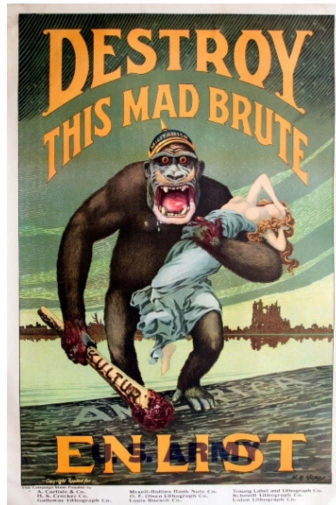

Figure 1. Harry Ryle Hoops, *Destroy This Mad Brute: Enlist*. 1917.

The effectiveness of this widespread propaganda campaign made participation in the war effort obligatory to the ideal of a productive citizen. For physically capable men, this meant joining the war effort as soldiers. For those at home, it meant contributing to a collective force focused on wartime production of goods, supporting those abroad, and rationing to allow for more resources for war-time needs.

The "soldier boy" was a primary trope in much of the propaganda found during this time: this image was a young, handsome boy maturing into a man through the transformative adventure of military service. Often these images of men fighting off the enemy in battle

were used to evoke sympathy and patriotism on the home front and to encourage the public to invest in war bonds.

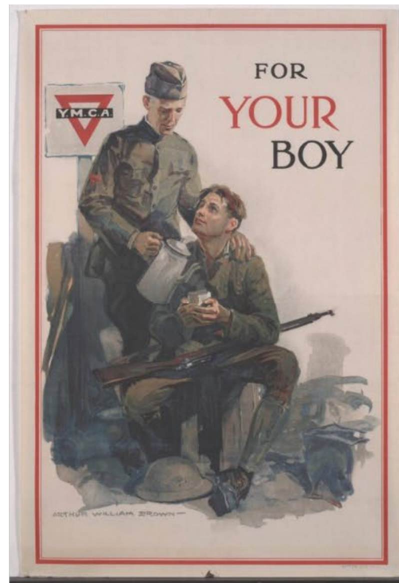

Figure 2. Arthur William Brown, *For Your Boy*. 1918

Though the idea of men fighting for their country has been an American ideal arguably since the Revolutionary War, the Wilson Administration evoked common patriotic ideas to mobilize the public. The war in Europe seemingly had very little to do with the well-being of the United States. Because of the divide in American opinion regarding the entry into war, Wilson established the Committee of Public Information to unify the country through propaganda and villainizing the enemies. In creating these caricatures of villainous Germans and sympathetic soldiers, the public was pushed to support the war with time. It could be considered especially effective as the primary component of the CPI campaign as so many civilians knew people serving. It created an almost martyr-like figure for the U.S. government to capitalize on and significantly dissuaded opposing parties from attempting to shatter this image.

The effect of the Committee on Public Information was so widespread and deep-rooted in the public that it seemed the hopes of reeducating the United States had succeeded. Though the CPI was swiftly halted following WWI's armistice and defunded by Congress in 1919, the long-term impact of the propaganda remained. "In the short term, the CPI was successful in unifying a nation at war and, in Creel's words, turning the American people into 'one white-hot mass…with fraternity, devotion, courage, and deathless determination.' But this national unity came with an extravagant price tag. Not only was truth often casually dismissed, but the repression of dissent and hatred of all things German were also casualties of American's propaganda campaign" (Wells). With such adverse reactions to anything considered a dissenting opinion, the government focused on how books represented the war. The strong influence of the CPI left a very biased audience in America, and authors were forced to conform to acceptable representations of the Great War if they wanted to avoid legal repercussions and obtain a wide readership.

Long after the CPI's abolishment in 1919, it remained influential as the catalyst for over two decades of ideology aimed to suppress 'un-American" ideals. Mock and Larson highlight this, stating that "uniformity of testimony is convincing" (8) that most Americans still expressed the CPI's view of war, morality, and politics—at least in public. Any differing opinions or portrayals of these ideals were considered dissent. Even if restrictions were no longer enforceable by law, authors still felt the effects of suppression through their publishing companies or the reception of their work by peers.

So how were authors to portray the war? In the case of many American authors, the rigid expectations of what was acceptable for U.S. audiences greatly influenced the way their works were received by critics. This atmosphere, originating with the Wilson

Administration's strict censorship laws and definition of demoralizing media, extended much further than the government. The societal expectations deriving from the CPI's propaganda campaigns created strong opinions in the public about the proper way to depict the Great War, although the experiences of those who served in it were often not as heroic or romantic as the public had been led to believe. Writers who served may have desired to relate their first-hand experiences, seeking validation through fiction, but the harsh criticism that came for those writers who were too autobiographical, emotional, or honest about the realities of war discouraged these narratives and created a gap in representation of the war. Because of the widespread propaganda that influenced the American public's opinion, authors were forced to confront the idealized image of the American soldier fighting in the Great War. In their attempt to account for what the war was truly like, authors such as Ellen La Motte, Ernest Hemingway, and F. Scott Fitzgerald were silenced or criticized for challenging this ideal as well as the status quo of gender norms and attitudes toward mental health.

Chapter 2

La Motte and Heroism

Long before the U.S. entry into the war, Ellen La Motte, was one of the first American nurses to join on the war front. Born in Louisville, Kentucky, La Motte came from a middle-class family with good connections. Like many girls with her upbringing, she was expected to primarily focus upon domestic affairs, family life, and civic causes (Williams). Despite her family's wishes, she instead applied to John Hopkins Training School for Nurses and quickly established herself within her profession. She moved to Paris in 1912, where she began writing her first book on Tuberculosis and formed a friendship with famous Modernist Gertrude Stein. When the war began in 1914, La Motte was one of the first American nurses to volunteer at the front (Watchell). During her long career, she became a key researcher in the study of tuberculosis, and many of her writings on the topic were ground breaking.

La Motte also aligned herself as a vocal and active member of the women's suffrage movement, garnering a reputation as "a rabid suffragist" according to Cynthia Wachtell's biography included in the 2019 edition of La Motte's book, *The Backwash of War*. This biography also states that privately La Motte strayed from her socialist façade and believed that she was truly a free anarchist (48). By the end of her life, Ellen La Motte garnered a reputation as a nurse, writer, and advocate.

During her time serving as a front-line nurse on the battlefield, La Motte produced a collection of war stories titled *The Backwash of War*. *The Backwash of War* did not soften its representations of what life at the front was like. La Motte's stories gave clinical accuracy to descriptions of the gruesome injuries of soldiers and offered no ideas of honor for the men in the hospital beds.

"Heroes" is one of the most gruesome of her stories, with the opening line detailing a soldier's suicide attempt:

> When he could stand it no longer, he fired a revolver up through the roof of his mouth, but he made a mess of it. The ball tore out his left eye, and then lodged somewhere under his skull, so they bundled him into an ambulance and carried him, cursing and screaming, to the nearest field hospital. (96)

The image of a revolver's bullet ripping through someone's skull is not something many readers would find appealing. "Heroes" and the deserter that it follows are not the vision of a loyal soldier that the U.S. government hoped to portray in their media and propaganda. Despite being a deserter, this character is still taken to the hospital, "He was a deserter, and discipline must be maintained. Since he had failed in the job, his life must be saved, he must be nursed back to health, until he was well enough to be stood up against a wall and shot" (96). This irony is not lost on La Motte. In her detailed descriptions of the other men at the hospital, no one is portrayed heroically. Rather, each of the men is shown in varying pitiful states that make the reader questions any ideals of valor that are usually attached to soldiers wounded in war or to those who nurse them.

> Was it not all a dead-end occupation, nursing back to health men to be patched up and returned to the trenches, or a man to be patched up, court-martialed and shot? The difference lay in the Ideal.
>
> One had no ideals. The others had ideals and fought for them. Yet had they? ...Could one cherish standards so noble, yet be himself so ignorable, so petty, so commonplace? (99)

La Motte raises a pointed question about ideals and the priorities of the military. While the soldiers fighting in the trenches have been indoctrinated with values of loyalty and duty, every man in the hospital strays from these concepts in varying degrees. The man who attempted suicide struggles against any attempt to heal his wounds, hoping to expedite his death. Alphonse, another patient drugged with morphia, refuses to share his food from a care

package he receives. Instead, he eats everything until he causes himself to vomit (99). Another man, Hippolyte, is excessively vulgar and makes filthy jokes constantly (99).

These men may have fought valiantly and been injured in battle, but there is little distinction between Alphonse and Hippolyte and the man who attempted suicide. The only difference is that the man is resolved to die more quickly than the men who will be sent back to the battle once they are healed. In La Motte's depictions, there is no differentiation between those who were injured in battle or from self-infliction. Her stance is primarily medical as she only sees them all as patients to be treated. None of them is better than the other; all of them are equally pitiful as they lash out in their own ways to their recovery.

The drastic difference between the CPI's idealized image of the soldier fighting abroad and Ellen La Motte's grizzly representations is astounding. *The Backwash of War* did not appeal to the American public's ideals of the war. Her uncomfortable portrayals offer glimpses into the experiences of the soldiers and nurses who healed them. La Motte consistently shifts the focus back onto the unappealing truth. The gore of this opening scene is La Motte's blunt realism at its most concentrated, and the story she tells challenges the suppression of what was widely known to those with first-hand experience: that the first World War was brutal and unrelenting.

La Mott's introduction to *The Backwash of War* highlights just how ugly the reality of the war-front was. Her tone is cynical when describing the Great War as "months of boredom, punctuated by moments of intense fright" in comparison to the months she spent in the military field hospital (v). A particularly poignant focus on her introduction is the wastefulness of the deaths, commenting on the phrase she took for her title, she describes as the "backwash of war."

> We are witnessing a phase in the evolution of humanity, a phase called War—and the slow, onward progress stirs up the slime in the shallows, and this is the Backwash of War. It is very ugly. There are many little lives foaming up in the backwash. They are loosened by the sweeping current, and float to the surface, detached from their environment, and one glimpses them, weak hideous, repellent. After the war, they will consolidate again into the condition called Peace. (vi)

Her anti-war sentiment is quite clear in this introduction and imprints on readers the hideousness that they will read about. The title of her book also reflects this sentiment as it is acknowledging the backwash that she argues is ugly and capable of sweeping many lives into it.

Upon publication of *The Backwash of War* in September 1916, before the United States entered the war, her book was widely accepted across the U.S. as an unflinching anthology of the war in Europe (Watchell), but it was promptly censored in England for criticism of the war effort. Although her book remained in circulation for many months after the passing Sedition Act of 1918, it was swiftly removed from circulation following its endorsement in *Masses*, a literary magazine in which several editors were charged for conspiring to obstruct military conscription (Wachtell). During the period when *The Backwash of War* was not officially censored, publications praising the book were withheld from release until they inked those sections out. As the book gained popularity, it received the attention of the postmaster general and was suppressed despite La Motte's protests that the stories were true. In fact, it was the realistic portrayals of war in her book that led to its censorship. In breaking the ideals of the soldier trope—especially in scenes including a soldier shooting himself— La Motte shattered the image the CPI aimed to curate for the general public.

When the war is framed as a transitional experience for men, such actions as suicide could not be accepted. Even worse, how could readers accept that the United States military

would want to use resources to rehabilitate a suicidal man only to execute him following his recovery? La Motte also subverts of the CPI's idea of the strong, heroic soldier. In her account, these men are being cared for by women, whom they consistently disrespect. These are not the heroes that widespread propaganda depicted; these soldiers are simply men with all of their faults surfacing as they sit in their hospital beds.

According to Margaret R. Higgonet, "La Motte's aim is to expose the dark side of war, showing the physical wreckage and the 'dirty sediment at the bottom of most souls'" (327). She viewed war as a gruesome experience most accurately seen from the side as a field nurse. Through giving these juxtaposing shifts of different scenes of war, she shows war that is not the heroic soldiers fighting of propaganda (Higonnet 328). Her stories have a deep sense of irony that infuses everything she writes. These nurses are able to see through the façade of heroics and see that each of these men is no better than the rest.

Combining the shattered image of heroism and the gruesome details of her work, the government considered *The Backwash of War* demoralizing following the U.S. entry into World War I. Her portrayal of war and the dismantling of propagated images of the noble, heroic soldier were likely the cause of her novel's suppression following U.S. entry into WWI.

Chapter 3

Hemingway Challenging Censorship and Gender Norms

Though Ernest Hemingway never faced the same level of governmental censorship as Ellen La Motte, his language was deemed vulgar by critics and his publishers in novels such as *A Farewell to Arms* and *The Sun Also Rises.* In 1917, Hemingway volunteered for the American Red Cross before the U.S. entry into the war to serve as an ambulance driver in Italy (Frenz). During this time, Hemingway was injured by a mortar shell, which killed the other two men near his position. Following this incident, Hemingway spent some time in the hospital, where he received the Italian medal of honor for his service.

These experiences during his service would greatly influence his later works, as aspects of his injury and ambulance would appear in his fiction. This is especially the case when considering his romance novel, *A Farewell to Arms*, that follows a man that receives a similar injury to Hemingway and falls in love with the nurse caring for him.

Farewell to Arms faced similar scrutiny for its language but was also deemed salacious for its sexual relationship outside of marriage.

> "[Hemingway's] discussions with Perkins and the editors of *Scribner's Magazine* about the magazine serialization of *A Farewell to Arms* were primarily focused on obscenity and sexual content; despite the fact that the editors removed many of the obvious references to Frederic and Catherine's sex life, the second installment was declared "salacious" in Boston and seized by the police." (Bruccoli 93-107).

Hemingway's reputation as an obscene writer affected how critics, such as H.L Mencken, viewed his work, going so far to label him as "naughty Ernest" for his use of certain words (Bruccoli 111). The artistic purpose of this vulgar language seemed more important to

Hemingway than these criticisms, as he continued to use them as a tool to create dialogue that seemed realistic to the characters he wrote. Following the publication of *A Farewell to Arms,* he seemed to anticipate future criticisms of his work which led to a letter to his publisher that defended his choice of language.

> The fundamental reason that I used certain words no longer a part of the usual written language is that they are very much a part of the vocabulary of the people I was writing about and there was no way I could about and there was no way I could avoid using them and still give anything like a complete feeling of what I was trying to convey to the reader. (Bruccoli 179-180)

Following this letter, Hemingway took the issue of dirty words public in his *Esquire* essay "Defense of Dirty Words" (Trogdon 9). Despite his firm stance on free use of language, Hemingway still understood the boundaries placed by the law and public standard. Knowing that material deemed obscene could lose its second-class mailing rate, Hemingway made revisions to certain portions of his books to ensure their profitability. "In *The Sun Also Rises (1926)*, he emended Mike Campbell's statement that 'the bulls have no balls' to 'the bulls have no horns' when Perkins objected to that 'particular adjunct'" (Bruccoli pp 42-44).

A Farewell to Arms seems to follow the general guidelines for what the CPI designated as good soldier. Though the CPI had been abolished many years prior, the impact of their soldier propaganda affected how portrayals were received by the public. On the surface level, Henry is quite good at compartmentalizing the setting that he has to work in. The main issue of the story aligning with the propagated image is when the romance with Catherine is introduced. While initially, the story can be seen as a romance of a man detached from the world due to his war experiences, it gradually shifts focus onto his reliance on Catherine and vice versa.

While this novel does contain a romance between the protagonist, Henry, and a nurse named Catherine, it does not provide many moments of intimate detail for the characters, rather suggesting their sexual acts through dialogue. Perhaps this is Hemingway's way of avoiding any explicit detail that would draw negative attention to is novel from a more puritan audience. Alternatively, this minimalism could simply be a reflection of Hemingway's well-known theory of omission that occurred frequently in his work.

A Farewell to Arms held no qualms with challenging marital expectations in light of the war that takes place in the story. Catherine, a woman who lost her fiancé to the war, seems disillusioned with the idea of marrying again, going as so far as to state her lack of desire to become married. Certainly, she expresses her reliance on Henry and a willingness to change to please him, but not an explicit desire to marry.

While *A Farewell at Arms* breaks from traditional views on marriage, with Catherine expressing little desire to get married (p. 116), perhaps a portion of its criticism also revolves around the unresolved ending. Societal norms were strong factors that dictated was and was not acceptable for American audiences. Having a character become pregnant outside of marriage would be enough of a taboo, but the pregnancy is also set with a background of constant death.

Considering *A Farewell to Arms*' themes in conjunction with the death of both the baby and the mother, the ending is undoubtedly grim and only serves to reconfirm the hopelessness that seems to linger throughout the story. Hemingway breaks a lot of common practices with this story. Henry serves to fulfill portions of the soldier trope, though slowly moves away from this through his relationship with Catherine. At the surface, Henry is stoic under pressure, but truly seems to not have proper coping skills to the trauma he faces in the

war. While Hemingway ties his personal experiences as an ambulance fighter into his writing, he still shows the fear and vulnerability of his characters, like in the case of Henry deserting the war to avoid death.

Not only does he create a female character entirely uninterested in the concept of marriage —something that Henry thought all women sought— but also writes about the gross disassembling of the construct of the familial unit as a whole. Neither Henry or Catherine seem to truly love one another in the beginning, but they still have intimate relations with one another out of their need to fill a void within them.

Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* also features a subversion of gender expectations as Brett, a beautiful woman who is the main love interest, is sexually liberated and free spirited in her love life. Brett is undeniably a feminist figure in this novel, as she subverts so many of the gender norms within the relationship she is in, especially in her sexual liberation that would have more typically been ascribed to more masculine characters. Yet, it also reveals the tragedy hidden behind Brett's initial appearance. As described by Debra Moddelmog in her book *Reading Desire: In Pursuit of Ernest Hemingway*, "Brett's alcoholism and inability to sustain a relationship might be indications not of nymphomania… but of a dissatisfaction with the stricture of the male and female relationship." (95).

While her promiscuity is a forefront characteristic in the novel, Brett notably surrounds herself in the company of men she cannot sleep with. At times, she is found drinking with homosexual men as they are safer to drink around (Hemingway 22). When considering the close bond she shares with Jake, it is possible that part of the reason she is able to feel so comfortable with him is their inability to be sexual with one another, complicating the gender dynamics of their relationship.

In his description of Brett Ashley, Hemingway plays with feminine and masculine ideals through Brett and Jake. Brett repeatedly refers to herself as a "chap" throughout the novel. Even the description of her physical appearance intermixes masculine and feminine qualities as her curves are immediately compared to a yacht.

> Brett was damned good-looking. She wore a slipover jersey sweater and a tweed skirt, and her hair was brushed back like a boy's. She started all that. She was built with curves like the hull of a racing yacht, and you missed none of it with that wool jersey. (Hemingway 27)

Despite these masculine descriptors, Brett is still framed to be a desirable partner that many of the men of Pamplona try to dance with. In contrast, Jake has been stripped of his masculine qualities entirely. The commentary of the male social state based on his physical ability to sexually perform is unsavory enough to the American public, but when considering that Jake's injury stemmed from his time serving during WWI, it shifts into another focus on the war's effect on personal and romantic relationships. Brett explains that Jake would be a good match for her, if not for his injury, which causes her to seek companionship in other men that seem to fit into her ideals of masculinity. In his essay, *Hemingway's Masochism, Sodomy, and the Dominant Woman*, Richard Fantina analyzes the subversive females in Hemingway's work and how they offer an alternative form of male sexuality. He argues that *The Sun Also Rises*' Jake Barnes serves as the emasculated anti-hero due to the depiction of his wounded masculinity (87).

The irony that being injured during battle would lead to a man's masculinity being diminished is certainly not lost upon Hemingway, as he attempts to present Brett as sort of castrating female figure, according to Wolfgang Rudat. He compares Brett to that of Homer's Circe, a figure that employs female charm and magic to influence the men of the story. "Ernest Hemingway often quietly arranges symbols to reinforce the meanings within his

fiction. The several hats in *The Sun Also Rises* form such a pattern; they become symbols of masculinity that, when they are worn by Brett Ashley, illustrate her unladylike desire to dominate men." (49).

While Rudat offers an interesting perspective on Brett Ashley, it should be noted that she has provoked a wide variety of readings that discuss her role as a feminist force within *The Sun Also Rises*. Moddelmog seems to suggest that Hemingway purposefully plays with the gender norms within the novel, though offsetting this dynamic partially with the focus on heterosexual relationships between the characters (92).

While it can be argued that Hemingway portrays Brett Ashley in an unfavorable light in the novel, framing her as impulsive and irresponsible, he still subverts the power dynamic between the sexes. Jake chases after Brett, but also watches—and is recruited to help Brett—as she pursues a relationship with Romero, going so far as to ask Jake to arrange the love affair. "Oh, darling, please stay by. Please stay by me and see me through this." (Hemingway 184). Their relationship is entirely nonsexual due to his injury, though there are hints that Brett wished that their relationship could have developed more toward the end of the story. "'Oh, Jake,' Brett said, 'we could have had such a damned good time together.' Ahead was a policeman in khaki directing traffic. He raised his baton. The car slowed suddenly pressing Brett against me. 'Yes,' I said. 'Isn't it pretty to think so?'" (247).

Both characters are left to think of the what-ifs of their relationship, wondering if they would have been able to be together if not for Jake's handicap. It seems that both are incapable of overlooking it, as Brett focuses a significant value in the sexual aspects of her relationship, and Jake feels inadequate as a man due to his injury he suffered. While it would

be ideal that these characters were able to see past these supposed flaws, they are forced apart because they are unable to accept them.

Hemingway subverts previous ideas of men coming home from war to see their sweethearts; Jake doesn't get that resolution. His service led to the injury that caused him to be isolated from the woman he is romantically interested in. Meanwhile, Brett values Jake but realizes that she has needs in which he cannot fulfill, thus seeking out other relationships in his presence. Brett too is a tragic figure in the abuse she faced from her husband and losing her first love in the war. The dynamic is tragic, but exemplifies that with war, the consequences can last a lifetime even if they seem minor. Though their trauma manifests differently, the pair shows that the trauma of the war transcends gender. Jake doesn't seem like he will ever pursue a romantic relationship beyond the capacity that has reached with Brett. He truly believes that he will never be able to fully meet the needs of any woman he loves.

In both *A Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms,* Hemingway focuses on the power dynamic of men and women who have served in the war. The women in these stories hold significant influence and power over these men. Catherine rejects the societal structure of marriage and has a child outside of wedlock. This in itself subverts norms, but she also serves as a catalyst for change in Henry. It is through Catherine that Henry slowly becomes less of the ideal stoic soldier, arguably a coping mechanism for his trauma, and instead learns to feel more. In *The Sun Also Rises* Brett also takes some of the power from Jake as she focuses on her desires and refuses to engage in a romantic relationship with Jake because of his impotence.

In both Brett and Catherine, these women take power from men through the prioritization of their wants and in the rejection of what is typically expected of women. There is also a layer of sexual liberation in these women that can be viewed as the makings of feminist characters within his novels. It is primarily through vulgarity and the sexual nature of portions of these novels that Hemingway was removed from circulation in some areas for his depictions of these men and women.

While he never faced governmental silencing like La Motte, Hemingway felt increasing pressure to self-censor his work to be able to make profit from his novels. Unlike his novels before *Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940) Hemingway and his editor Perkins had no discussions about dirty words (Trogdon p 10). In fact, his first manuscript shows Hemingway's uncertainty with the presentation of offensive language. While this change in his writing seems drastic, the developments in Hemingway's personal life, especially his marriage, offer better insight into his self-censorship.

"The composition of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* coincides with the end of Hemingway's marriage to Pauline Pfeiffer, his second wife, and his developing relationship with Martha Gellhorn, the woman he would marry in November 1940." (Trogdon p 11). If Hemingway hoped to divorce his current wife, whose family offered a great deal of financial support to the couple, he had to ensure he wrote a best-selling novel to make profit. Hemingway maintained an expensive lifestyle that not even his book royalties could cover. His marriage's disintegration meant that he would lose many of his current assets in the divorce.

"In order to gain the needed money, Hemingway hoped to sell the serial and book club rights to his new novel. In writing *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, therefore, he was careful not to include material that could be considered obscene by any postmaster." (Trogdon p 13).

Although *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is focused on the Spanish Civil War, the influence on Hemingway's writing of it stems back to the criticisms he received from his previous novels. In order to receive financial success for this novel, he had to ensure that it would not be controversial or salacious in any way. Thus, he was pushed to censor portions of his writing.

> Although Hemingway probably wrote the novel in the manner he did to gain Book-of-the-Month Club acceptance, this does not diminish it as a work of art. *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is a fine novel, and whether the lack of obscene words in English weakens the work is a matter for each reader's judgement. What an awareness fo the pressures surrounding the composition of the novel does show is how Hemingway surrounding the composition of the art and commerce. Although he was first and foremost a literary artist, Hemingway was also a professional. Accepting the fact that he wrote for money gives us a more complete view of Hemingway… (17)

As Trogdon highlights, Hemingway understood the necessary steps he had to take to gain financial success with *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and focused on composing his novel with miniscule vulgar language.

Through this subversion of American ideas of gender norms, Hemingway produces strong works that give readers important representations of the war and its possible effects on personal relationships. The blurring of these lines directly challenges the reeducation that the CPI sought for the American public, most notably in how *A Farewell to Arms* and *The Sun Also Rises* strays from the romantic soldier trope.

Chapter 4

Fitzgerald Confronting Mental Health Taboos

Societal norms regarding mental health were strong in the twentieth century. The impact of "shell shock," now understood to be symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, was not well understood in the aftermath of World War I. This was not for a lack of trying, as many of the countries involved in the war focused efforts in understanding the strange phenomenon occurring throughout portions of veteran populations. Often, those who served were left to grapple with their experiences on their own terms with little to no support at all. In the case of soldiers, many came home having witnessed severe violence first-hand without the tools to properly cope or relate their experiences to other. Though medical professionals were slowly beginning to collect research on the ever-growing number of cases of shell shock, dubbing it one of the "many tragedies of war," there was still a great deal of apathy surrounding the issue (Smith p xiv). This was the situation that faced Elliot Smith, the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Professor of Anatomy in the University of Manchester, who published a book focused upon acknowledging shell shock.

In Smith's 1917 dissection of the illness, he explains that while each individual is found to rationally sound, the chief problem lay in their emotions. "In a word, it is not the intellectual but in the *emotional* sphere that we must look for terms to describe these conditions. These disturbances are characterized by instability and exaggeration of emotion rather than by ineffective or impaired reason." (3). He firmly tries cement the assessment that these men afflicted with mental illness were no less rational than their peers, rather that their emotions were aggravated to the point that influenced the individual to feel intense emotion.

Smith's argument points to the larger issue of how these emotional disturbances were treated by both medical professionals and the public as a whole. He pushes against typical treatments of leaving these men isolated while telling them to "cheer up" and regards the prejudice shell-shocked men face as a failure on the parts of the people around them. While Smith has a very nuanced understanding of the nature of war upon the psyche, it is clear in his book that this is not the case among most medical professionals or military personnel. "The suppression of fear and other emotions is not demanded only of men in the trenches. It is constantly expected in ordinary society." (8).

Smith's determination to uncover the nature of shell-shock also gives insight into the general reaction that many men affected with it faced. Men who returned to the front after experiencing shell shock were dubbed "neuropathic" by the other soldiers, meaning that they were afflicted with a disease of the nerves (88). Generally, neuropathic men were considered weaklings or "were descended from mentally afflicted or nervous parents." (89). While Smith contested the idea of neuropathic men as weak, he reveals a glaring problem found at the root of the American ideal of the "good soldier."

The norms established that men were expected to remain unaffected by the war and conceal their trauma to avoid the perception that they were lesser than the other soldiers. The ties to the family unit also play a major role in how these biases were presented. If a man were to show too much emotion, it was a poor reflection on his family and their genes. Smith compares the reactions of these men to those of animals who, when pushed to extreme stress, will exhibit similar behaviors. From a scientific argument this is understandable and exemplifies that the phenomenon can be found in nature. Yet, American propaganda associated animal-like characteristics to that of the images of the savage German gorilla man. These behaviors may

have occurred in nature, but the research could not unpack the negative biases of animalistic associations. The norms set in place, unfortunately, led to a mass feeling of isolation for soldiers grappling to cope with their experiences and highlighted a general problem with how the U.S. viewed mental health in men.

In the case of F. Scott Fitzgerald, these overarching norms led to the severe criticism his series of essays titled "The Crack-Up." This series of essays, which ran in three issues of *Esquire* during 1936, detailed Fitzgerald's postwar struggle as he described the world around him seemingly falling apart. Unlike La Motte and Hemingway's direct experiences of WWI, Fitzgerald never shipped out to fight in Europe following his enlistment as a second lieutenant in the Army. Yet, he still felt the influence of the war upon American culture, especially the implications of mental health taboos as he faced his own internal crisis. This breakdown is addressed early in "The Crack-Up" where he laments on the realization that his life will never return to what it once was.

> Of course all life is a process of breaking down, but the blows that do the dramatic side of the work—the big sudden blows that come, or seem to come, from outside—the ones you remember and blame things on and, in moments of weakness, tell your friends about, don't show their effect all at once. There is another sort of blow that comes from within—that you don't feel until it's too late to do anything about it, until you realize with finality that in some regard you will never be as good a man again. The first sort of breakage seems to happen quick—the second kind of happens almost without your knowing it but is realized suddenly indeed. (99)

These articles came at a profoundly depressed episode of Fitzgerald's life as the growing realization that he was a has-been writer overcast his worries that he had wasted his talent (Donaldson 176). At this time, his wife, Zelda, was also increasingly unwell and was likely never going to recover from her mental illnesses, at the time understood as schizophrenia, that found her in and out of mental institutions. While Fitzgerald was initially receptive to the psychiatric treatment of his wife, he grew dismayed that her condition was

not temporary (West III 60). These personal struggles are directly echoed in the opening paragraph of his first essay, remarking upon the blows that come from outside and within. These outside blows are likely referencing the financial and marital trouble that Fitzgerald faced, while the type that comes within is his realization that he has wasted himself by becoming more reliant on alcohol to cope with his problems.

The articles are very open in what Fitzgerald struggles with, as he details how he "cracked like an old plate" when realizing he had been spending money that he did not have, meaning that his pride and independence were shattered. "Now a man can crack in many ways—can crack in the head, in which case the power of decision is taken from you by others; or in the body, when one can but submit to the white hospital world; or in the nerves." This diary-like style he writes in seems cathartic, which in part is why "The Crack Up" received varying criticism.

This is not to imply that all of the responses to Fitzgerald's articles were negative. In fact, there were plenty of people that wrote to him expressing sympathy and offered potential solutions that could resolve some of his troubles, such as religion or AA meetings. While these letters seemed to be well-intentioned, they only proved ignorance in their understanding of how to best help someone in a mental health crisis.

It seemed that Fitzgerald grew increasingly agitated by these types of letters, as he wrote to Max Perkins asking him to write him. "Please write me… you are about the only friend who does not see fit to incorporate a moral lesson, especially since the *Crack Up* stuff." (Donaldson 172). Fitzgerald appeared desperate for any type of support, obviously tired from the constant advice he received in response to his essays.

Others found that these articles were honest and self-aware pieces that deserved positive criticism, such as Andrews Wanning, who described Fitzgerald's work as "a desperate effort at self-disclosure" following its 1945 book release (Donaldson 178). Yet this was certainly not the opinion held by everyone; there was plenty of criticism that found Fitzgerald too emotional in his writing. *The New Yorker* made special mention of his work in their "Talk of the Town" in which they mock him for "how sad he feels in middle life." This was similarly the case in *The San Francisco Chronicle,* which claimed Fitzgerald felt too sorry for himself (Donaldson 172).

While the newspapers picked up on "The Crack Up," so did many of the authors in his social circle, though the reactions were much the same. John Dos Passos sent a letter stating the following:

> Christ, man, how do you find time in the middle of the general conflagration to worry about all that stuff?... We're living in one of the damnedest tragic moments in history—if you want to go to pieces I think it's absolutely O.K. but I think you ought to write a first-rate novel about I (and you probably will) instead of spilling in little pieces for Arnold Gingrich— (Donaldson 174).

Dos Passos, like many of Fitzgerald's literary friends, believed that these emotions were an opportunity for him to continue his work instead of falling into irrelevancy. This technique of channeling experiences into works of literature was often used by Fitzgerald's contemporaries as a means to relate to their audiences while still having some separation from the stories and personal experiences they drew from. To many it seemed that Fitzgerald's biggest mistakes was airing these emotions so blatantly to the public without the filtration of putting these emotions into a work of fiction.

Yet, these responses seem to lack any empathy regarding the actual emotional well-being of their supposed friend. "The Crack-Up" is arguably a cry for help from Fitzgerald, as he discusses the heavy toll his troubled mental health has taken on his life. He seems hopeless and desperate for any sort of intervention. Despite this, it seems that the primary focus of his friends was how to properly utilize this emotion and monetize it to stay relevant as an author. Perhaps these reactions were well-intentioned and sought the best interest of their friend, but when considering modern understandings of mental health, these responses did little but to isolate him further.

The response that Fitzgerald received from Hemingway certainly echoes this sentiment, with the suggestion that he should use that hurt to write since they were only writers, "The hell you've been through isn't wasted. All you have to do, ever, is to forget everything and turn that terrible, clear white light you possess on the minds and emotions of the people it stirs you to write about." (Donaldson 174). Though he offered advice to Fitzgerald, Hemingway seemed quite disgusted by the way "The Crack Up" was written, going so far as to mock his friend's sensitivity in his story *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*, though he later edited his name out of the story.

> He remembered poor Scott Fitzgerald and his romantic awe of them and how he had started a story one that began, 'The very rich are different from you and me.' And how someone had said to Scott, Yes they have more money. But that was not humorous to Scott. He thought they were a special glamourous race and when he found they weren't it wrecked him just as much as any other thing that wrecked him.

This passage references one of Fitzgerald's previous works, "The Rich Boy," in which he romantically describes how the rich are different in how they experience life. Hemingway mocks this rose-tinted view and the way Fitzgerald cracks upon realizing they

were not only glitz and glamour, much like his admitted crack in his series of articles. Yet, Fitzgerald was not the only author who included autobiographical elements in his work, so what made "The Crack Up" so controversial amongst his audience?

Part of the critical reception lies in the fact that while other authors used their personal experiences during the war to add realism to their work, Fitzgerald presented his articles as autobiographical. Hemingway, who notably includes elements of himself in his characters, is often more reserved and draws upon his experience as an ambulance driver on the front to develop various characters of his. This allows for the author to relate to audiences that have had experience in the war, while not feeling too imposed upon by the author.

While comparing Hemingway's fictional depictions of mental distress to Fitzgerald's real-life breakdown appears seemingly unrelated, it provides important insight into what genres were deemed appropriate to discuss these issues. Fitzgerald's confessional style was far too close to his personal life, painting him as weak and emotional for discussing his struggles with cracking from reprieve. Considering Fitzgerald did not serve in WWI, it is also possible that the public perceived his struggles as lesser in the greater context of the war. Fitzgerald touched upon not serving in WWI as one of his two major regrets in his youth:

> As the Twenties passed, with my own twenties marching a little ahead of them, my two juvenile regrets—at not being big enough (or good enough) to play football in college, and at not getting overseas during the war—resolved themselves into childish waking dreams of imaginary heroism that were good enough to go to sleep on in restless nights. The big problems of life seemed to solve themselves, and if the business of fixing them was difficult, it made one too tired to think of more general problems

It seems that even Fitzgerald realized that in not serving in the war, he missed the opportunity to achieve a heroism that he believes may help him feel more whole. This, of course, is a retrospective view of how he perceives his life, placing heavy weight on the idea of heroism as a means to remedy some part of his life. It also touches upon the perception that serving in the war granted greater rights to grief than people with perceived "lesser" problems. As with Smith's book, it is clear that even serious instances of shell-shock were taboo, though more understandable or justified due to the experiences of the people suffering it. In contrast, Fitzgerald generally avoids talking about the specifics of what is causing his distress, focusing on the general emotions caused by his predicament.

Much of the criticism that Fitzgerald faced also involved his "over-emotional behavior," which is primarily due to ideas of masculinity during the time following WWI as well as the lack of understanding surrounding mental health. "The Crack Up" openly describes the mental anguish of its author, as Fitzgerald himself describes breaking like a plate under the immense pressure he felt. Yet, times were tough for many people during the Great Depression of the 1930s, and the American idea of "picking yourself up by the boot straps" was ever prevalent following the war. Literary audiences did not want to read a man's breakdown on paper, no matter how highly regarded he had been as an author. Masculinity was meant to be stoicism in the face of difficulty, which *The Crack Up* did not adhere to.

While Hemingway criticized Fitzgerald for his representations of his own mental health, he, too, includes representations of mental illness and shell-shock—but in his fictional characters. It was well-known that the soldiers of WWI faced severe mental trauma, but little was known about treatment. As the number of soldiers that experienced symptoms of shell shock grew to affect both upper and lower ranks, the military began to research the

condition (Church). Yet, the widespread nature of shell-shock did not prevent negative assumptions about those afflicted. Rather, it was often implied that men were mentally weak and those that consider suicide did not have strong will-power to control their impulses (Church).

The Sun Also Rises offers Hemingway's representation of a wounded war veteran, Jake Barnes, who still struggles with his self-image due to an injury during the war that caused damage to his penis and rendered him "impotent." Jake Barnes is not a standard war hero, as the entirety of his story is shown well after the end of the war. though he is framed as a level-headed and responsible man in contrast to the more reckless Brett, a woman who is very free-spirited and represents a lot of the repressed desires of romance within Jake.

Mental illness is something that often hinders Jake as he notes, "I had a feeling as in a nightmare of it all being something repeated, something I had been through and that now I must go through again" (Hemingway 72). It is quite apparent that Jake has both physical and mental wounds from the Great War, but how is this representation any different from that of Fitzgerald? The answer mainly lies in the fact that while Jake does suffer mental illness, it is not a topic that is directly thrust to the reader by Hemingway. It creates an obvious hierarchy to what is considered acceptable depictions of mental illness, with suppressed accounts being favorable to ones that directly confront these feeling.

Hemingway will hint at the injuries of Jake Barnes, but never states them outright. There is valued placed on accepting the wounds of the war for what they are, as Jake accepts that his injury has make him impotent, while Fitzgerald continues to struggle very openly with his psychological injury. While the book was never censored or heavily criticized for its

portrayal of mental health, *The Sun Also Rises* was criticized for his obscenity, with Hemingway editing his manuscripts to contain less "vulgar" language (Karolides et al 532).

Where Jake Barnes arguably struggles with his emotions, Frederic Henry in *A Farewell to Arm*s is the opposite in that he seems removed from any empathy toward human life. Additionally, the retrospective point of view of the novel allows for distance between the narrators experiences and how they are described. This seems to be a manifestation of trauma due to the death he is surrounded by as he remarks very casually about "only seven thousand" men dying from cholera caused by the constant rain (2). His overall demeanor indicates he is overly stoic, perhaps as a mechanism to cope. As Smith discusses the idea of shell-shock, emotional suppression is considered to be one of the most exhaustive signs of mental illness (p 9). When considering this context, Henry's stoicism can instead be viewed as dissociation from the trauma he has faced as a soldier. Through his relationship with Catherine he slowly begins to empathize more with humanity and appears to truly grow to love Catherine.

It is only after Catherine's death that Henry reverts back to his former reserved self as he cannot fathom the loss of his newborn child and the woman he grew to love. This only further proves that Henry's general apathy to life is directly a response to the deaths he faces. By loving Catherine, he had broken this cycle of trauma briefly and allowed for himself to grow attached to the idea of hope. Quite literally, the pregnancy of these characters is the bringing of new life amidst the death and chaos they have steeped in for so long. Yet, Catherine and the baby's death prove that this hope was ill-placed and only serve to compound on the existing trauma Henry faces. The end is extremely condensed and resembles that of a psychotic break due to trauma.

> But after I had got them out and shut the door and turned off the light it wasn't any good. It was like saying good-by to a statue. After a while I went out and left the hospital and walked back to the hotel in the rain. (332).

Henry simply remarks that even though he turned off the lights to try and pretend Catherine was still alive, he no longer felt connected to her. Instead, she felt cold and stiff like that of a statue. The very act of holding Catherine's body seems to be his final attempt to rationalize his emotions. He looks for any familiarity that he once had to ground him, but is only met with the coldness of her corpse.

Henry never expands upon the time in which he spent in the dark room alone with her before leaving, only stating that he left and walked home in the rain. The ending is an anti-ending that, while proving that Henry was capable of loving Catherine, also show the set back of his character arch as he falls back into his previous manners of becoming withdrawn when faced with intense emotions.

In both of the cases of Fitzgerald and Hemingway there is a clear distinction in the way they handle their portrayal of mental health in their writing. While, yes, Jake Barnes is a character that struggles with the effects of the war, he does so very privately. This private approach seems favorable in discussing these struggles as a man, considering the prejudices against emotional trauma responses discussed by Elliot Smith. Fitzgerald is regarded instead a former rich boy that has spiraled into a "neuropath" that cannot properly cope with his emotions. Those close to him struggled to support him during this, seemingly viewing him as weak for publicly displaying these unseemly emotions.

The main difference then lies less in the emotions that these men must have felt but rather the way in which they portrayed such emotion. Hemingway's tight-laced portrayals of the male characters he writes still maintain some semblance of manliness. In the case of

Hemingway, there is a slight romanticizing of the apathy that this man generally feels, allowing him to survive on the battlefield. Hemingway uses his experiences, but filters them though his work in a fashion that still maintains some distance from the truth that he dealt with.

Fitzgerald's depictions were viewed as far too autobiographical and cathartic, causing the perception of it to be read as a diary and subsequently dismissed. Certainly, the downward spiral that could be read through *The Crack Up* was undeniable, but it seems that the public's discomfort with these essays mostly relied on the fact that Fitzgerald was a man showing too many emotions. Fitzgerald's documentation of his personal depression was far too ahead of its time. There was minimal understanding of mental health during these times, causing Fitzgerald's essays to read as self-pitying to the public. It also allowed for many people to look down on him, as was the case of many of his peers that told him to collect himself and stop acting in such a manner for the public to see.

When considering Hemingway and Fitzgerald's discussion of mental health in their writing, the clearest difference is genre. Their choices of fiction or confessional essay directly affected the way in which readers interreacted with their work. Hemingway's success in discussing these topics lies mainly in the distance he provides readers with through fiction. His personal experience as an ambulance driver in the war is still incorporated into his plot of many of his stories, but they are not a direct account of his emotions. In opting for such a personal format, Fitzgerald was viewed as over emotional, tapping into many of the taboos that Americans felt about mental health issues at the time of publication. The response from his friends Dos Passos and Hemingway prove that there was an acceptable way to discuss these topics, but in choosing to air his personal sorrows he

missed the opportunity to channel it into novels that they believed would have brought him back from irrelevancy.

The focus on minimizing one's mental health issues to avoid being deemed neuropathic undoubtedly influenced the way these works were received. When considering in terms of the image of the soldier abroad, propaganda ideals left no room for the trauma that these men would face in the battle. The expectations of maintaining the façade of normalcy during a mental health crisis constrained the valid feelings of those suffering. American norms of what it meant to be a man suppressed any opportunity for people to come forward with honest descriptions of how the war and the world it left broken affected them.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The Committee of Public Information's influence of the American public's perception of media was never before seen. At a time when warfare had changed beyond any realm of recognition, countless people needed to be able to relate their experiences in some way. Often these people did not have resources to receive help, especially considering the taboo of discussing mental health directly following World War I when the legacy of the Wilson administration's campaign of propaganda and censorship stigmatized and silenced accounts of the war's effect on individuals.

The widespread effect of the CPI's propaganda campaign had on Americans left many expectations of what was deemed unfit for readership. They often silenced the most accurate accounts of what happened during this time. The goal of the Committee of Public Information was short-sighted, not fully realizing the damage it would cause in isolating veterans from sharing their experiences. In case of Ellen La Motte, her accounts were silenced in favor of keeping the American people optimistic about the war following U.S. entry. Meanwhile, La Motte only aimed to offer the unfiltered truth of what warfare caused in terms of devastations to life, which she was praised for before her censorship.

Hemingway's self-suppression, focused on the financial success of his novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls* stemmed from the previous criticism he experienced from his novels that challenged typical gender norms. Though all of his novels offer complex portraits of the characters he discusses, his portrayals of WWI's affect on people is especially poignant in confronting the propagated ideals of the solider boy that were established.

The mental health taboos that Fitzgerald faced during his release of “The Crack Up” also served to confront the gender norms surrounding manliness and mental health. With the little that was known at the time about shell-shock and other related mental illnesses, Fitzgerald was deemed lesser and pitiful for airing his personal struggles so openly. Yet, in doing so, he also revealed the perceptions of how authors were meant to incorporate their personal trauma’s through filtered storytelling.

The uncomfortable truths that these authors confronted were not exaggerated accounts aimed to sway public opinion with misinformation. Rather, they presented honest representations of how war could affect a person. If those depictions were unseemly, it because the Great War itself was devastating and gruesome. The rapid advancements in warfare tactics proved to be devastating and the literature that followed the conclusion of the war reflected such experiences.

The general lack of understanding of how widespread the devastation of the war was allowed for the American public to dismiss opinions that they found unpatriotic. Even as medical professionals sought to aid soldiers experiencing shell-shock, rigid social norms and expectations still pushed those affected into standards of how to act in their own trauma. Ideas of manliness and the image of the perfect soldier only served to hide the real, unsavory truths of what these people had to experience.

There is an argument to be made here that the CPI’s propaganda damaged the American people as much as it aided them in war time. The heroic image of these soldiers being shipped overseas to fight proved to be hollow and left little room for truthful depictions of how gruesome and devastating the Great War truly was. Perhaps this, along

with other global factors, is why the world did not allow the Great War to be the end of all wars.

The CPI's reeducation of the American public lingered long after its abolishment, allowing its ideals to remain the standard for many decades. Only looking back is it possible to recognize the misplaced value in these propagated ideas, allowing for merit to be found in the honest retellings of the war. The authors who aimed to confront these images were wrongfully silenced and criticized, only further proving the need for more narratives like them. Through their detailed accounts readers are able to relate to and understand the impact that the Great War had on Americans. While La Motte, Hemingway, and Fitzgerald never served as soldiers in battle, their experiences serve to show that the profound effects of war extend far beyond the battlefield. Without voices such as these, the American public was isolated from the true nature of the Great War and its personal and social consequences.

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Experience

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Marketing & PR Chair

State College Area School District October 2017- May 2018
German Tutor

Delta Phi Epsilon, Delta Pi Chapter January 2020- January 2021
Risk Management

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Awards and Honors

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