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The Sound of Silence : The Curious Lack of Music in the Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway

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As the son of a professional-level musician and music teacher, Ernest Miller Hemingway came of age in a house vibrant with music. When the Hemingway family moved from the writer's birth home to a larger residence in the same neighborhood of Oak Park, Illinois—the new home was designed to incorporate sufficient space for the pursuit of the respective professions of Doctor Clarence and musician Grace Hall Hemingway, parents of the writer. A patient examination and receiving room was included for the good doctor, and a music conservatory was built for Grace to conduct music lessons, exposing the young Hemingway to the strains of music far above what would be found in the average American Midwest household. Despite his formative years being saturated with echoes of music through his boyhood households, why is there such a minimal mention of music in the short stories of Hemingway? As a writer, Hemingway takes considerable pains to craft his stories with a plethora of descriptions of sights, sounds, smells, and colors—but many demonstrate a curious lack of musical reference. Story after story, Hemingway's characters indulge in all manner of day and night life through cafés, hotels, bars, and lunchrooms across the continents and radios play no music, street musicians are silent, and the band does not play or rarely exists. On the craft of writing, Hemingway touted the necessity of paring prose to the bare bones to enhance the art form of his work, and on this brevity of action Carlos Baker notes :

Outwardly, at least, nothing much happens, even though several kinds of burning emotion are implied and at intervals may erupt into the briefest

violence of language. Otherwise there is seldom more movement than such as is necessary to raise a glass to the lips, row a boat across an inlet, cast a fly into a trout stream, or ski down a snowy slope into the true center of a story.

At café tables, in quiet rooms, or in the compartments of trains, men and women talk together with a concentrated diffidence which almost conceals the intensity of their feelings. (141~142)

Hemingway makes sure that his characters in the depths of their *burning emotions* and *concentrated diffidence* are not interrupted by music, not even in the background, and through the bulk Hemingway's short stories resides bare mention of any type of music despite detailed narrative of locales, weather, vistas, flora and denizens of many exotic settings. Hemingway's minimalist efforts to keep his prose lean would require the writer to make choices as to what descriptive details be excised—often music got the axe. In the short story “The Sea Change”, Hemingway offers considerable description of the bar attendees but not a single note of music floats on the air :

“It was the end of the summer and they were both tanned, so they looked out of place in Paris. The girl wore a tweed suit, her skin was a smooth golden brown, her blonde hair was cut short and grew beautifully away from her forehead.... she had very fine hands and the man looked at them. They were slim and brown and very beautiful.... the barman was at the far end of the bar. His face was white and so was his jacket.” (Finca 302-303)

The couple engage in an intense conversation over a lesbian affair that is breaking up their relationship, but rather than backdrop the conversation with quiet music, Hemingway opts for the murmur of saloon talk as other patrons order drinks and discuss the barman's weight. Likewise in the tale “God Rest You Merry Gentlemen” set during Christmas, the narrator walks the streets of Kansas City from Woolf Brothers' Saloon to the city hospital. During the

walk, he likens the city to Constantinople while viewing the dust, snow, and lighted windows of car dealers. In lieu of the fact the title of the story is one of the oldest and well-known of English Christmas hymns—not a strain of music nor the sound of joyous carolers ring out on this festive day. As the narrator enters the hospital, the resident surgeons, one brilliant and one incompetent, enquire as to the activity at the Saloon : “Much Yuletide cheer?” To which the narrator responds with a dismal : “Not much” (299). The remainder of the story devotes itself to discussion of the surgical misadventures of a confused young man who desires to show his piety to Christ on the birthday day celebration of the Christian Savior by exorcising what he views as the root of sin and temptation with a straight razor. Misunderstanding the meaning of ‘castration,’ he mistakenly slices off the wrong body part and receives emergency medical attention from the inept physician who consults a medical guide “bound in limp leather” for all of his cases (298). The mutilated young man is as confused about the teachings of the Bible—often bound in leather—as the incompetent doctor is confused about understanding the treatments promulgated in the *limp-leather* medical guide.

Sitting in the shade of a bar next to a train station, an American man and a girl whose nationality is not established, wait for the express train to Barcelona in the story “Hills like White Elephants”. From the start of the short story, Hemingway devotes considerable description to the long white hills, a beaded curtain, felt coasters, the dry conditions, the lack of trees, and beer glasses while the characters work their way through the stress of the difficult decision of undergoing an abortion or facing a drastic change to their carefree lives with the birth of a child. As they banter back and forth over beer and spirits, they fail to come to agreement and reach an impasse. The conversation tests the bonds of their relationship, but they are not distracted by any extra-curricular noise such as the waitress humming a melody or a radio playing a tune in an adjacent room. Moreover, near the end of the story, Hemingway repeats the description of the distant view across the valley, which opened the story, and adds more detail : “Across, on the other side, were fields of grain and trees along the banks of the Ebro. Far away, beyond the river, were mountains.

The shadow of a cloud moved across the field of grain and she saw the river through the trees” (213). With no mention of *hills like white elephants*, but rather *mountains*, the girl now sees her life changing and that the shadow of the *cloud* portends an ominous future. Her musings remain intact and suffer no rude intrusion of a bird singing overhead or child whistling in the station waiting room. While the reiteration of the landscape view seems to violate Hemingway’s writing tenet of brevity as outlined by Baker, the inclusion performs the literary function of highlighting the contrastive emotions playing through the girl’s mind.

An examination of two Hemingway friends as well as literary contemporaries, F. Scott Fitzgerald and John Dos Passos, reveals how they handled music in selected works. The semi-autobiographical story of “Babylon Revisited” by Fitzgerald finds the character Charlie Wales strolling the streets of Paris to see the “... night with clearer and more judicious eyes than those of other days” (247). Now sober and restricting himself to one drink per day, Charlie reminisces about the earlier times of wild abandonment and alcoholic dissipation before the monstrous economic crash of 1929 left the revelers destitute. Wandering by the cabarets coming to explosive life in the twilight, he “... passed a lighted door from which issued music ... he found another ancient rendezvous and incautiously put his head inside. Immediately an eager orchestra burst into sound” (247). Armed with his sober view, Charlie muses that it would now require considerable drunkenness to enter such a venue and laments the fortune he threw away on exaggerated gratuities to persuade the bandleader to play a single number or a doorman to hail a cab. In a previous scene, Charlie motors down the Avenue de l’Opéra to visit his daughter at the home of his brother-in-law, and he comes to “... imagine that the cab horns, playing endlessly the first few bars of *Le Plusque Lent*, were the trumpets of the Second Empire” (245). Hemingway offers a comparable scene when the dying writer Harry in “The Snows of the Kilimanjaro” revisits his past experiences living in Paris in an extended flashback. Hemingway expends over a full page of fine print to detail the neighborhood where Harry lived in Paris, and offers only an oblique mention to music is the name of a dance hall The Bal

Musette. Harry reminisces through a long stream of consciousness over the drunks, the whores, the children, the smells, the stains, the colors and so forth ; however, no music gushes forth from the windows or doors—only a bucket of water to silence a “moaning and groaning” drunk lying prostrate in the street below (51~52). Further contrasting Hemingway’s lack of music employed in narration, Fitzgerald opens Chapter Three of *The Great Gatsby* with the sentence : “There was music from my neighbor’s house through the summer nights” (39). As the events play out in the chapter concerned with the first meeting between Nick Carraway and Jay Gatsby during a raucous party, Fitzgerald puts forth considerable effort in describing the diverse instruments employed by the orchestra as “... a whole pitful of oboes and trombones and saxophones and viols and cornets and piccolos, and low and high drums.” And later in the scene : “... the orchestra is playing yellow cocktail music, and the opera of voices pitches a key higher” (40). More references to music continue through out the chapter, and the rhythms become a melodic chronometer to gauge the passing of time as when two intoxicated wives berate their sober husbands for wishing to leave the party so early :

“Whenever he sees I’m having a good time he wants to go home.”

“Never heard anything so selfish in my life.”

“We’re always the first ones to leave.”

“So are we.”

“Well, we’re almost the last tonight,” said one of the men sheepishly.

“The orchestra left half an hour ago.” (52)

With the late hour signaled by the departure of the orchestra, the husbands finally lose patience with their indignant wives and “... the dispute ended in a short struggle, and both wives were lifted, kicking, into the night” (53). In paperback format, through the twenty-one pages of Chapter Three, which could stand alone as its own short story, Fitzgerald references music fifty-four times, using descriptive musical terms, names of instruments, types of songs and singers.

Manhattan Transfer by John Dos Passos incorporates a series of vignettes or snapshots, and each chapter starts with no transitioning from the previous chapter or narrator tying scenes together—creating a limited intertextuality between chapters and an episodic structure that connects by subtext a representational cross-section of life in New York City ; hence, nearly every part of the novel is a short story in its own right. *Manhattan Transfer* opens with the description of various passengers on a ferry, and “... an old man playing the violin. He had a monkey’s face puckered up in one corner and kept time with the toe of a cracked patent-leather shoe” (3). One can only speculate how Hemingway would have written this scene, but biographer A.E. Hotchner recalls an encounter with a street musician : “Ernest stopped to listen respectfully to an old man who was playing a rasping violin with fingers barely moveable in the cold ; Ernest thanked him and put a thousand-franc note in his cap. We resumed walking” (51). Hotchner adds no more detail of this event or what motivated Hemingway to tender the charity of the thousand-franc note ; or whether Hemingway was paying the old man for stalwart bravery in facing the cold, or for the *rasping* music. If Hemingway had written the opening chapter of *Manhattan Transfer*, perhaps he would have walked away from the *monkey-faced* violinist as well and focused on other shipboard intricacies.

With increasing levels of technological advancement and radios becoming nearly ubiquitous in American automobiles, Jeffrey Meyers notes that Hemingway made numerous cross-country trips by car during the 1930s with his valet and chauffeur Toby Bruce : “They had no car radio and did not talk much on the long trips, remaining silent for three or four hours at a time. Hemingway carefully observed the landscape, watched the wildlife, and sometimes noted down his thoughts” (235). These long drives parallel the posthumously released Hemingway story “The Strange Land”, where honeymoon couple Roger and Helena Hancock make a long drive from the Florida Keys to New Orleans in a car *equipped* with a radio, but only use it in a sporadic fashion : “They caught the news broadcast on the radio, switching it off through the soap operas of the forenoon and on at each hour” (*Finca* 629). It seems that their only interest in the radio is for the reception of news stories. Previously, af-

ter Roger checks the newspapers, Helena enquires : “Is there anything we didn’t get on the radio?” To which Roger replies : “Not much. But it doesn’t look so good” (627). Their overriding concern is for reports on the Spanish Civil War as Roger wrestles with the decision to join the international brigades fighting in Spain. Later as Helena curls up on the seat and sleeps during the drive, Roger “... reached forward and turned on the radio and tuned it. Helena did not wake so he left it on and let it blur in with his thinking and his driving” (633~634). The couple have driven a great number of miles—nearly the length of the long state of Florida—and only now turn on the radio with one passenger asleep and the other taking the broadcast as a *blur* in his mind. No mention of any music played. Roger drives deep in thought much like Hemingway in his cross-country trips in a car unequipped with radio, staring at the scenery. Subsequently, Roger and Helena Hancock arrive at their destination and celebrate the nightlife of New Orleans by finding and enjoying a bottle of absinthe that is the real wormwood liquor that is nearly impossible to find in America as it is prohibited from import—the liquor that reportedly induced hallucinations in the great poets of Europe. As they drink their way through the bottle, they converse on banal topics while Roger resolves himself to control bad personality traits that habitually arise when he drinks the potent liquor. Eventually the narrative settles on the terrible time as a young writer when his first wife lost all of his unpublished manuscripts including the carbon copies at a train station. This long tale mirrors the true story that befell young Hemingway when wife Hadley Richardson lost everything that Hemingway had yet to publish. When Helena questions her husband why he did not re-write the stories, Roger responds—as did Hemingway—that it is in his compositional nature to forget stories once written, stating : “Because I had worked on newspapers since I was very young I could never remember anything once I had written it down ; as each day you wiped your memory clear with writing as you might wipe a blackboard clear with a sponge or a wet rag ; and I still had that evil habit and now it had caught up with me” (649). During the long discussion of early-married life and literary loss, not the tiniest whisper of music floats over the honeymoon table in one of most musical

venues of America that is New Orleans.

Hemingway does not eschew external noise in his narration, and the writer does express various sounds as his stories progress. For example, in the story "My Old Man", Hemingway describes the sound of a boxer training with the jump rope : "... cloppetty, cloppetty, clop, clop, clop ..." (152). Or the sound of lions and big African hunting rifles in "The Short and Happy Life of Francis Macomber". Furthermore, occasionally Hemingway uses the vocabulary of music to describe action as in the story "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife" where workers arrive with their tools : "Eddy carrying the long cross-cut saw. It flopped over his shoulder and made a musical sound as he walked" (73). In "Cross-Country Snow", skis are heard "hissing" in the snow, and horses "... made an occasional sharp jangle of bells as they tossed their heads" (144~145). However, in this story, as Nick Adams and George enter the inn after their skiing excursion, they hear a girl singing in the next room which stops abruptly when she enters the dining area to take their orders. Nick asks her what she was singing, and the girl answers : "'Opera, German Opera.' She did not care to discuss the subject" (145).

When Hemingway deigns to mention music, it is usually a brief reference that he abandons quickly for dialogue and action as evidenced in the previous scene where opera is used to expose the girl's insecurity with being German in a non-German part of Switzerland as well as being pregnant and out-of-wedlock. It is similar in other stories. The music either stops, moves to a distant place, switched off, ignored, or exists as an unwanted intruder into the theater of speech or thought. As the bullfighters enter the arena in "The Un-defeated", they march in "Heads, up, swinging with the music, their right arms swinging free, ..." (192). Hemingway does not offer what types of instruments were playing or any description of the music itself in regards to whether it is loud, shrill, brassy, tinny, or any mention of notes or scale. Hemingway is only interested in the soldiers marching in to face their foe—not the accompanying music. In a story where Hemingway makes another mention of music "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place", it ultimately becomes a statement of rejection as a waiter ponders insomnia and the need for a light in order to sleep for him-

self and a regular patron of a café : “It is the light of course but it is necessary that the place be clean and pleasant. You do not want music. Certainly you do not want music” (291). Ironically, the lone insomniac patron that triggers the sole searching of the waiter contemplating the necessity of a café being well-lighted—suffers deafness and music would not have intruded upon his solitary quest for light.

“The Denunciation” is a short story set in Chicote’s Bar in Madrid, featuring one of Hemingway’s favorite literary venues. The central theme of the story functions as an exposé of the Stalinist political-purge apparatus as it ensnares an innocent victim during the Spanish Civil War. Opening with a comparison of the various drinking establishments still doing business in the besieged town, it is revealed that the narrator enjoys this particular bar because “Chicote’s in the old days in Madrid was a place sort of like The Stork, without the music and the debutantes, ... ” (420). The first sentence reveals that narrator patronizes the bar for its lack of music. In the brilliant story “The Butterfly and the Tank”, the narrator again finds himself in Chicote’s bar. But the demeanor of the venue has changed. The narrator enters a room filled with smoke and is overwhelmed by singing soldiers in wet leather coats, and he observes that “You couldn’t hear yourself talk for the singing ... ” (429). This is nearly the exact expression Hemingway uses in “Under the Ridge” where the narrator is filming a failed tank battle that ends in retreat also during the Civil War : “The tanks were all coming back now and you could hardly hear yourself talk for the noise” (468). For the narrators in these two stories, external noise—whether from drunken song or clanking tanks—intrudes upon conversation. In later scenes in “The Butterfly and the Tank”, music again is looked upon with disdain by the narrator as he thinks about the disagreeable personality of one of his table companions, a gossipy German who “... lived under the delusion that he could play the piano, but if you kept him away from pianos he was all right unless he was exposed to liquor...” (430). In this scene, Hemingway juxtaposes music with a disagreeable person, and in the subsequent action equates music to both unwanted intrusion and dullness : “Just then the singing really started in again, and you cannot gossip very well

shouting, so it looked like a dull afternoon at Chicote's and I decided to leave ...” (431).

Of all Hemingway's short stories, “The Gambler, The Nun, and the Radio” offers the most musical references and is set in a hospital in Montana State where the protagonist Mr. Frazer recovers from a broken leg. Frazer, who is a writer, becomes intricately involved with other denizens of the institution, both patients and staff with the Gambler, the Nun, and the Radio becoming the trinity of his hospital existence. In the story, music comes from two sources : the radio used by Frazer, and the Mexican musicians who come to cheer up a wounded compatriot. The radio gets two longish paragraphs of discussion on its reception of various stations from Canada and the United States, depending on time of day and atmospheric conditions. In one of the paragraphs, Frazer becomes familiar with a distant station and in sustained stream of consciousness describes their morning programming routine :

And at six o'clock you could get the morning revellers in Minneapolis. That was on account of the difference in time, too, and Mr. Frazer used to think of the morning revellers arriving at the studio and picture how they would look getting off a street-car before daylight in the morning carrying their instruments. Maybe that was wrong and they kept their instruments at the place they revelled, but he always pictured them with their instruments. (358)

The reader receives no description of the type of instruments or any information as to what style of songs the musicians would transmit over the airwaves. Subsequently, when Frazer does go over more musical detail, he muses over the song titles and the ones he has become fond of, but ultimately his mind takes a prurient twist with the lyrics : “‘Betty Co-ed’ was a good tune too, but the parody of the words which came unavoidably into Mr. Frazer's mind, grew so steadily and increasingly obscene that there being no one to appreciate it, he finally abandoned it and let the song go back to football” (359). It seems in the world of the radio, Frazer retreats from music to sports. Later, Frazer

closes the story with the observation that "... you could play the radio so that you could hardly hear it" (368). Aside from radio broadcasts, the Mexican visitors of the hospital supply live music, which stimulates political and philosophical ramblings in Frazer's mind. During the first meeting with the Mexicans who have come to visit the wounded Gambler by orders of the police, Frazer ironically discovers that the best guitarist to offer music to cheer up the hospitalized Gambler is the very person who shot the wounded patient and now has fled (362). Although music has been exiled from town, the reader discovers that Frazer likes music. Upon drinking much of Frazer's beer the Mexican contingent takes their leave and promises to bring music on their next visit. But on the following visit "The Mexicans came and brought beer but it was not good beer" (363). Not only did they fail to bring quality beer, they also failed to bring the music. The wounded Gambler tells Frazer that he also thought the beer was bad and that "'Tonight, sent by the police, they come to serenade me.'" He laughed, then tapped his stomach. "I cannot laugh yet. As musicians they are fatal'" (365). Now music has not only been exiled—it is now fatal. Finally, when the music arrives, it leaves much to be desired :

The last time they played Mr. Frazer lay in his room with the door open and listened to the noisy, bad music and he could not keep from thinking.... they wanted to know what he wished played, he asked for the Cucaracha, which has the sinister lightness and deftness of so many tunes men have gone to die to. (367)

In the short story that gives the most attention to music, Hemingway collocates it with the obscene, exiles it, calls it bad, turns it down, makes it *sinister*, and finally identifies it as rousing method to send men with *lightness and deftness* to death.

Of course a strong argument could be made that a number of Hemingway stories are set in tableaux where readers would not expect to encounter music such as the wee hours of morning, far out to sea, on the track of a lion, on a

trout stream, or in the solitude of the deep forest. Despite these non-musical locations in such lonely and distant areas, would not at some point a character whistle or hum a little tune for amusement or companionship? Would wealthy people on African safari like Francis Macomber and writer Harry on well-equipped African safaris forget the gramophone? But still one is left with the knowledge that when the author makes reference to music, at best it is only mentioned in passing and is usually remote and tied to unpleasantness. Did Hemingway have some interior distrust or ambivalence to music that played out in the schema of his stories?

The stormy relations that raged between Hemingway and his musician mother Grace Hall has been well documented by numerous biographers, and Meyers notes that the young Ernest was forced into music lessons very early : "Another source of conflict was Grace's insistence that Ernest take cello lessons and join the family chamber orchestra. Hemingway, who believed he had no talent for the instrument and could not have become a cellist if he played for a hundred years" (11). Hemingway's rocky relationship with music arises in the biographies of other writers, and Andrew Turnbull quotes F. Scott Fitzgerald stating that : "Hemingway was still rebelling against having been made to take cello lessons when growing up in Oak Park" (311). Apparently the young Ernest not only resented forced musical activities but indulged in sabotage as well by the intentional breakage of a string on his cello during a high school music session "to cause a commotion" as recalled by a fellow student at Oak Park High School (Schleden 23). The young Hemingway did not restrict his sabotage to school grounds and viewed his mother's music hall as a prime target : "Well, as for that fifty-thousand-dollar music salon, I got a small return on my inheritance by putting up a punching bag in the middle of it and working out there every afternoon until I left Oak Park (Hotchner 116). Hemingway also went on to claim that "My mother was a music nut, a frustrated singer ... When I was in high school she forced me to play the cello even though I had absolutely no talent and could not carry a tune.... I wanted to be playing football out in the fresh air and she had me chained to that knee-box" (116). Hemingway's rejection of music and turning to sports anticipates the

scene where the hospitalized Mr. Frazer turns his radio from music to football. Michael Reynolds writes that : “When Hemingway invented Nick Adams, he did not give him the vested choir or the cello lessons” (5). Hemingway’s anger at his mother continued all the way to the grave, and Meyers reports “Hemingway, who kept a safe distance from Grace and Oak Park, had not seen her for twenty years.... Grace died at the age of seventy-one on June 28, 1951, and Hemingway did not attend her funeral. He probably felt more relief than remorse, and was glad that he no longer had to support the old lady” (478~479).

The world of visual art may offer insight into Hemingway’s relationship with music. One of Hemingway’s favorite paintings was by Madrid master Juan Gris titled *The Guitar Player* (1926), and the modernist painting hung in the Finca Vigia house in Cuba for many years. Perhaps Hemingway was attracted to that particular painting as it may have captured his own inner-feelings of the reluctant and awkward musician since the canvas portrays a hulking figure—that could be mistaken for Hemingway at a distance—playing a warped guitar with large, blockish hands.

The conflict between Ernest and his mother peaked just after the writer’s twenty-first birthday at the vacation home on Lake Walloon in northern Michigan when he was accused of being instrumental in leading his younger siblings astray by chaperoning a secret midnight campfire party. As punishment, young Ernest was exiled from the lake cabin, and Hemingway said “that he was literally homeless—kicked out permanently for no good reason” (Baker 72). Similar to Mother Krebs in “Soldier’s Home”, Grace Hall was incapable of understanding the psychological torment that her young veteran son brought back from the Italian front of World War I. She seemed to fail to grasp that the short amount of time that he spent at the front was not the issue. The real issue was the tremendous concussive wound to his brain caused by a large shell that exploded very close to his position. Added to the years that he played high school football with the poor helmets available at the time plus his eager pursuit of boxing from a young age, the writer had already started down the road of mental ruination that would culminate in suicide when he became

incapable of writing a single coherent sentence. In the recent publication, *Hemingway's Brain*, Dr. Andrew Farah performs a detailed forensic analysis of the writer and shows that :

The illness began with specific inherited vulnerabilities, genes from both sides of his family, was developing as the young ambulance driver lay unconscious in the mud of the Italian front during World War I, and continued to germinate with the slow poison of thousands of cocktails. His pathology was the result of the coalescing of genetic codes with trauma, untreated hypertension, diabetes and numerous lifestyle choices. (2)

Dr. Farah explains forcefully that it was not only the nine serious brain concussions the writer suffered in youth and middle-age, but the other mitigating factors of genes and alcohol and high-blood pressure and the misdiagnosis by his doctors that aggravated his dementia pugilistica (punch drunk syndrome) which is now medically identified as CTE, Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy. However, Dr. Farah makes no mention in his mental assessment of Hemingway displaying any symptoms centering on aversion to sounds or music. Hotchner refers to Hemingway music habits, and writes “He did not like theater, opera or ballet although he liked to listen to music, he rarely, to my knowledge, attended a concert or any other musical presentation, longhair or jazz” (29). Likewise, Hilary K. Justice’s survey of the acoustic system and collection at the Finca Vigia home states that “... during his years there, Hemingway—or perhaps one of his wives—had the house wired for sound.... There are no speakers in the bedroom that the staff identify as Hemingway’s” (97). This bedroom was Hemingway’s favored writing space, equipped with bookshelves, desk, and typewriter, and apparently he did not wish to be disturbed by music while working or sleeping. Justice further notes that “The phonodiscs in the collection reflect the musical tastes of at least two individuals : Ernest and Mary Hemingway...” (98). Moreover, Justice recognizes that one of the cabinets used to shelve record discs probably contained the music favored by Ernest as it was “... located higher than Hemingway’s fourth wife,

Mary, could easily have reached” (98). Despite wife Mary’s short stature, these record discs may have been those that were no longer popular with the Hemingways and stored in the higher cabinet to keep them out of the way. Meyers notes that Hemingway once wrote a self-assessment of his life : “I am naturally a happy guy so I have a good time and I love my wife and the ocean and my kids and writing and reading and all good painting along with bar life and whores and responsibility and paying my bills and other mixed pleasures” (238). It can only be assumed that Hemingway included music in *other mixed pleasures* which rates after *paying my bills*—an onerous task that few people would say that they enjoy.

Something else was going on with Hemingway’s complicated psyche that created the ambivalence in the writing of his short stories towards music that cannot be explained by a Freudian deep-seated resentment towards his mother’s musical enthusiasm or to his organic mental disease. Meyers mentions that : “Through out his life Hemingway associated, art and culture with the aesthetes of the 1890s, with homosexuals and with the sissified music pupils of his mother” (17). Was something rooted in Hemingway’s personality in his constant desire to dominate social situations, be the center of attention, and not have anything distract his gathered entourage from his grandiose pontifications and tall tales. He demanded the spotlight. As a person who may have disliked music in the same room as a distraction in his own court, the writer Hemingway may have transposed that concept into the scenes of a number of his stories. Meyers notes an incident that occurred during the courtship of Hadley Richardson at a friend’s apartment in Chicago that exemplifies Hemingway’s demand to be the center of attention : “While listening to Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Scheherazade* in Kenley’s apartment, Ernest pulled Hadley over beside him on the sofa and announced, posing majestically, that they were prince and princess. Hadley was embarrassed nearly to tears by this childish display and was appalled at Ernest’s enjoyment of it” (60). Although Hemingway’s boorish faux pas left his fiancé completely mortified, he was not going to let a Russian tale of the *Arabian Nights* steal his thunder. In preparation for her husband’s sixtieth birthday party in Spain in 1959, wife Mary organized a huge

party that required two floors of the Pez Espada beach hotel in Torremolinos. Party participant A.E. Hotchener recalls that “When the orchestra, which played on the upper veranda, struck up the fiesta music of Pamplona, Antonio and Ernest led all the guests in a *rian-riau* that snaked all over the grounds” (218). Apparently in placing the orchestra above the party, wife Mary was well-aware that her husband would move his entourage of courtiers to assemble in the courtyard below and keep distance from the music as they paraded in a traditional dance of the San Fermin festival that Hemingway made internationally famous in his novel the *Sun Also Rises*.

With Ernest Hemingway’s precipitous mental decline in his fifties and relatively premature death in his early sixties, no comprehensive, well-contemplated memoir for this dynamic writer exists to offer insights to the limited mention of musical reference in his short stories. As Hemingway created a minimalist style in his short works, was it simply too cliché for a Hemingway character to stand before the tavern door and narrate the sound of music issuing forth—a narrative road traversed by too many writers and far too pedestrian? Did Hemingway seek the road less-travelled? Did his attempts at creating avant-garde literature—a new style—beg that he not follow other writers and their descriptions of music? Hemingway once likened his writing to “the movement of an iceberg” and insisted that a good story like a huge chunk of ice adrift in the sea kept reserved the bulk of itself submerged, out-of-sight, and supporting the tiny tip that emerges from the waters of understanding (Baker 117). The unseen parts support the story and offer subtle and complex symbols that the readers come to understand through the meaning implied by the deep undertones. Reportedly, after the ship *Titanic* careened into a gargantuan mountain of ice in the North Atlantic—hitting the submerged parts and beginning to sink—several stalwart members of the ill-fated liner’s musical ensemble played on deck despite the frigid cold to calm the fears of the frightened passengers escaping the doomed vessel. Had Hemingway wrote the story, he would have admired the musicians’ brave demeanor in the face of cataclysmic destruction, but the band would not have played on—they would not have played at all. Or he would have taken liter-

ary license to analyze their emotional response to their untimely fate while sinking mute through the silent waters of eternity.

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