

# Earlsdon Literary Magazine 199

*The newsletter of the AVID Readers Group, based at Earlsdon Library*

**Next meeting:** Thursday 14 September 2017 at 8pm

**Venue:** Earlsdon Library

**Book for discussion:** *Bones are Forever* — Kathy Reichs

## Reflecting the age?

**Our August Book:** *Fiesta: The Sun Also Rises* — Ernest Hemingway

It seems that the anticipation of reading Hemingway is the point at which enjoyment peaks. His third novel, *Fiesta: The Sun Also Rises* is heralded as, “visually outstanding” on the blurb – a view that was not shared by AVID readers. The novel is split into two halves and follows the vacuous lives of wealthy American expatriates flitting around the bars of Paris and then a bullfighting fiesta in Spain in the 1920s.

Rather than capture the glamour and decadence of the twenties upper-middle classes, as F. Scott Fitzgerald did in *The Great Gatsby*, most members felt that Hemingway verged more towards desperate; depicting a life as soulless as the characters he created.

Or, was this the point? Good Reads describes the era as, “an age of moral bankruptcy, spiritual dissolution, unrealised love and vanishing illusions”. We would have to agree. Most members felt that the characters lacked depth and it would have been more interesting to have read about their adventures when travelling and partying. Instead, we read lists of bars and restaurants they visited

whilst constantly moving to the next location without ever pausing to enjoying the moment. One member was sure that if they had been in an Agatha Christie novel they would certainly have been murdered!

We concurred that if this novel was the work of a new author today it would be completely dismissed – but one cannot read this novel without acknowledging the importance of the historical context. Short sentences, endless direct dialogue, simplistic settings, brief description and a certain gritty realism that Hemingway drew from his career as a newspaper journalist are now regarded as hallmarks of his distinct prose but, back when the book was released, it was so different to the style of his contemporaries it established him as a credible writer who would go on to become one of the most important authors of the twentieth century. Indeed, we also agreed that the interests, views and lifestyle offered in the novel was shared by the audience he was writing for and echoed the reality of their own lives.

Some AVID members suggested that the character Jake could be semi-autobiographical. Hemingway had also moved to Paris and worked as a foreign correspondent for a Canadian newspaper and had travelled with other American expatriates to the bullfighting festivals in Spain. Certainly, Hemingway's (rather irritating) geographical knowledge of the streets, avenues and bars of Paris was given a generous word count.

One member felt that those of us who hadn't persevered long enough to start Part II had missed a real opportunity. They were impressed with the second half of the novel as Hemingway skilfully captured the forgotten world of the bullfighting festivals and revealed a complex and

interconnected underworld with the hotel owner as a central character.

In summary, most were surprised Hemingway went on to make a name for himself (although with four divorces, a Pulitzer Prize and Nobel Prize for literature he most certainly did!). For those who did finish the novel, they searched the back of the book for a missing ending ... surely someone had ripped a few pages out? The novel is considered by some to be an artful examination of the post-war disillusionment of his generation, but for most AVID members it was rather disappointing and a missed opportunity.

Karen

### Our next book is

*Girl in a Blue Dress* — Gaynor Arnold  
and we will discuss it on 12 October 2017

## Library update

*Thank you to Karen (again) who discovered the links and sent the document.*

The Earlsdon Library Friends (ELF!) who will be running the library from later this month, have set up a [blog](#) which includes more details of their plans. Key (for us) is the statement that:

*We intend that groups who meet in the library will still be able to do so although there may need to be some changes to days or times.*

However their vision statement (attached) does say that they expect the community space to provide income ...

Anyway, from 25 September the opening hours will be:

- Monday 10am – 5pm
- Tuesday 10am – 5pm
- Friday 1pm – 5pm
- Saturday 9am – 1pm
- Sunday 12pm – 4pm

If you have any thoughts about this news; reviews or recommendations; tales of literary events; or anything else you think other AVID readers would find interesting, please send them to:  
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