

PLAYBOY

HEMINGWAY

# THE UNCOMMON MAN

To censor or not to censor

by Ray Shankman

I do not know to what degree **Playboy** succumbs to censorship. At first glance I think that Hemingway, if he were alive, would refuse to be published here. But the spotlight is upon him. They are all showmen, the magazine editor, the writers, the advertisers.

Look at the consumer products! If you have money, you can buy. And you are "hip" in your consumption. If you do not have money, you envy. You have an increased ambition and maybe this is what Hemingway means when he says:

"Ambition is the original of vices, the mother of hypocrisy, the parent of envy, the engineer of deceit."

A certain type of ambition can breed hypocrisy, can be the progenitor of envy, and in so doing propagate deceit. And if this is so, one is not true to himself, at least, not in the Hemingway or **Playboy** sense of being true. But lack of ambition? Cannot the same traits prevail? Maybe, there is less chance, but then one does not try. He fears to try. He has a fear that he will not succeed, and then there is the fear, once one is on top, to stay on top.

In general, Hemingway's comments seem quite good; but as his article is vague, somewhat pretentious, (seemingly geared to impress), I wonder about him, about his own failure and his own ambitions. He could not produce, he had lost his optimism (maybe he never had it). So he put the shotgun to his mouth and, with one last gulp of life, he disappeared. He was, in the end, a coward. He believed in the intrinsic worth of man and searched for it. But why? Is it because he had doubts about himself? He could only fall back on himself. And when his "self" ceased to exist creatively, life was not worth living. Even his death smacks of the Hemingway hero — a weakness which is full of impact and impression. Hemingway in his life, in his death, and in his words tells the **Playboy** story and he is, to a great extent, the playboy that everyone emulates. He is the epitome, a living example, in his static condition, of a moving force which moves toward the inevitable end — death. But it moves. The force moves. It moves with purpose!

I first read the Hemingway article with avid enjoyment. But after I had finished, I felt a sense of insincerity that counteracted his claims of sincerity, honesty and truth. It appears that he should not write down what he believes, as it makes me doubt his avowed sincerity. The above quoted lines on ambition, "the original of vices," seem hollow, void of all concrete meaning. It is as if he had it all planned. Before he would snuff out his creative force, he would write some "quotable quotes" for posterity, (for the "out of context" quoters).

This article is too patent, too quotable, too perfect. It strikes me as being incomplete. It needs explaining, and possibly, Hemingway, if he were alive, could explain it. The answer lies in the word **ambition**. What does he mean by it? He uses abstract words, 'ambition', 'hypocrisy', 'envy', and 'deceit' and sums it up in three lines. It would be extremely difficult to get any concrete meaning from this. We can only surmise. And maybe this is proof of Hemingway's art. It is subtle. It leaves a lot to the imagination. He is a great writer. I firmly believe this. He says things that some of us think but cannot put into words.

"The great days are not gone; the great days are here, and greater days are coming."

His great conciseness and facility to say it all in a few lines shows careful planning.

"For though solitude may be the nurse of great spirits, it is the torment of small ones."

He shows an inherent wisdom and a joy of living. Yet, he committed suicide. Is he a phoney? **Playboy** shows it; but behind it all, there is a true hero. He could not take his own existence. He was a man in name only. He sold his soul, traded on his name, and had nothing left, no inner reserve to keep on living. But in spite of this, he is a going concern, an institution that strives to communicate something for himself, but for an idolatrous public. Hemingway can not be ignored.



HUGH HEFNER  
... cult maker.

**Playboy** magazine, on the same token, is a business, a semi-articulated philosophy, an institution that strives to communicate some message. A message that certainly is very hard to ignore. It is a message that is deeply involved with modern living and to ignore it, would be to ignore life itself. Unfortunately, this message cannot be altered; especially, if it means a loss of revenue. Some mass-media have a more poignant message than others, and **Playboy** is one of them. It appeals to the "uncommon man." It appeals to a certain elite segment of society. Its credo is to discriminate, to be smooth, to be "upbeat", . . . to get with it. We must live and progress. We must strive to better ourselves. **Playboy** extols ambition. It does not create apathy or lethargy. It is a moving entity, a show piece, an economic success, a driving force of orgiastic revelry. It is vastly superior in content to all its "sophisticated male market" competitors. Its advertisements are high class, geared to appeal to the sophisticate. Yet, all this is superficial. It can reach man at one level, but it does not stay there. The reader may remain, fixed to the contours of the latest Playmate, but the magazine goes on. It goes further. It has, to my mind, an existentialist undercurrent with hedonistic overtones.

If you will look at **Playboy** once more, you will see a form of Religion, based on a better life, surrounded by possessions. **Playboy** is certainly not the Buddhist's dream for salvation. It is one of the few magazines that has depth.

It appeals to the "uncommon man"; it has no faith in the common man, because the common man is a conformist. He belongs to right-wing parties, goes to common movies and believes anything he reads. Yes, he even accepts **Playboy** as being the gospel truth. Sin exists. The common man sees it all. He sees it on his favorite television show. The common man is brain washed!

But **Playboy**! What about **Playboy**? **Playboy** is out to make money. And it does. But even with this disasteful task, it manages to put out a format that can be both scintillating and seriously provoking (if taken in small doses). The sophisticated writers, Mailer?, Saroyan?, Schulberg?, and Sahl?, and in next months issue — Frank Sinatra! "THE LEADER BARES HIS VIEWS ON FAITH, BIGOTRY, WOMEN and WAR in an EXCLUSIVE **PLAYBOY** INTERVIEW", are the livers, the life force of America, the entertainers, the showmen — living symbols of reincarnated Rome. Let's face it! The "common" man stagnates with his beady, forthy hour, sixty dollar per week eyes glued to his finger-printed TV set, sticky with the jam and the saliva of his five howling kids.

The "uncommon" man, the elite, the sophisticate, the man who really knows how to live

(and let live), lives while the other dies. He lives as the thirty-nine and a half hour per week executive with a colour television set and only three refined (hands are washed) children, in a mortgaged house in a not so common area in which his wife, supporting herself on credit cards, suffers, with great sophistication, the shacking-up ceremony of the "common" mistress back in the swinging town. Here, everyone is the "uncommon" man. Man! He really lives! He makes **more**, eats **more**, reads **more**, travels **more**, and owes **more**. He devours the "common" man. He needs the common man to live, for his own life force. They are "hip"; they move; they act. They do **more**, have **more** clothes and create **more** ideas on how to get **more**. They are in high gear, getting the most out of life and where there is no life, they create life.

Possibly, there is too much of a muchness. In any case, it is an exclusive **Playboy** life which is, if viewed from a distance, very shallow and pretentious; but on closer examination, this life immediately becomes pregnant with a deeper meaning. There is, obviously, **more** to them than there is to common man. Where are they going? Why, they are going up. Up Man! Up! Up! Up! Up! But soon they shed their clothes, if only to consummate their salacious seduction; to propel downward in a detumescent conflict of the soul. They must experience true feeling and have a true purpose. If not, all their motion is a futile motion. But then, maybe all motion is futile, as is the existence of the common man.

**Playboy** picks the lesser of the two evils (to their mind). In doing so, it reeks of some sort of depth that defies description. It is patriotic and involved with life. It is a progression, a superiority, a cultural attainment — the right girl, with the right drink, with the right guy, in the mast posh of boudoirs. Bars and Bermudas. A brainwashing? Of course! But of the other extreme. It is dressed up. Strip it of its upbeat conformity and you have a valid form of a new culture based on life, and not on death. It is based on the new, the young, the modern technological advancement and to hell with the common man. Rich or poor, it is good to have money.

Certainly, this magazine, cannot be derided, lynched, censored, tarred and feathered and driven out of town on a rail? For it does offer something! Even stripped. But strip the common man of his regular, habitual routine and you would not have any food to feed the starving bellies of the elite. You would have an edible vegetable, unable to grow, because it does not know how to.

**Playboy** lives. **Playboy** is life. Its name connotes a searching for pleasure. There is little stability. But a stability lies in the search itself. It advocates freedom of speech and is, to a degree, widely and sensuously free of "common man" conventions. It is the promoter, selling a new culture, a new way of life, of records, stereos, sportcars, book clubs, bunny clubs and haberdasheries. It succeeds in the big sale and in its frenzied, onanistic way. It introduces and guides the **Playboy** layman to the arts (Jazz, Modern Art, Drinking and Sex).

But the greatest virtue of **Playboy** is its controversy and its stimulation for the reader at more than one level of perception. It is, at once, superficial and deep, definitely subject to the varied interpretations of its readers.

Therefore, if it is not completely art, it certainly falls into some unmistakable aspects of it. We cannot close our eyes to the reality of **Playboy**; we cannot close our eyes to the reality of life. Sex exists! Women exist! The apple exists! We exist, and to sustain our existence we must, at least, be deluded by a positive concrete view of this.

**Playboy** should be read, even by the "common" man, so that he may judge, passionately, or dispassionately, for himself, and not be unduly influenced by the narrow, all too common bigots who blush at nudity, all the while receiving a vicarious thrill that compels them to be conscious of their own guilt and sin. For they see nothing! And if it is read, if there is this uncensored freedom, there is hope for the common man. He will be goaded into life and die when his time is due, saying, as did Hemingway, "I have enjoyed living".

Editor's Note: **Playboy** is still available in Nova Scotia through Her Majesty's Royal Mail.