

The Blind Leading the Blind: Hemingway and Fitzgerald in *A Moveable Feast*

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Abstract:

My paper aims at identifying the images and episodes – in the texts Hemingway dedicated to Scott Fitzgerald in *A Moveable Feast* – that reveal the interplay between *memories* and *forgiving oneself*, and therefore underlining the therapeutic value of those particular texts for the author. While tracing back the events in the Paris of the 1920s, he exposes the vulnerability not only of his individual self, but of Fitzgerald's as well. Less obvious because of Hemingway's compulsion to dominate, but even striking due to Fitzgerald's "complementary need to be dominated", (their) vulnerability hints at various degrees of self-destructive behavior. Hemingway's late awareness of all these and his attempts at protecting Fitzgerald, both physically and textually, raise the issue of who speaks, who listens and who responds, or of the critical trust in individual testimony, of a "hermeneutics of suspicion", as Ricoeur once formulated when referring to psychoanalysis. Is the goal of Hemingway's narrative, in this respect, one of a pacified, happy memory? Or not?

The Rabelaisian chronotope of growth, as designed by Bakhtin, is also employed when analyzing Hemingway and Fitzgerald's whereabouts across the playground provided by Paris in the 1920s. Does everything that is "good" – food, drink, sex, beauty, the craft of writing, etc – really grow in those sections of *A Moveable Feast*? And does "the bad" thin out and perish as the writer moves on with his stories of remembering? And do his readers move along with the flow? The Rabelaisian series at work in the stories – of the human body, food series, drink and drunkenness, sexual series, death series, etc – intersect one another and speak forth of the complexity of a text that is far from being a light touch on some youth existential experiences.

Keywords: Fitzgerald, vulnerability, pacified memory, Rabelaisian chronotope

1. Introduction or a little bit of poietics

1.1. Memory and the devoted wife

In an article published in *The New York Times Book Review*, in 1964, Mary Hemingway remembered the facts and the stages pertaining to the process of elaborating *A Moveable Feast*, her husband's wonderful book of parisian *memoirs*, which had reached the reading

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public three years after his death. She started with the funny episode of the Hemingways' staying at the Ritz in November 1956. After "two gay and easy months" spent in Spain, they had arrived in Paris and were welcomed by the baggage men of the famous hotel, where they had been assigned "suite 56, which had a tiny sitting room and a large bedroom with a fireplace that smoked incurably" (in Trogdon, 2002: 331) Despite having been over-tipped, the *bagagistes* of the Ritz cornered the living legend and let him know that "his trunks of the earlier days [i.e. the 1920s in the capital of France] were falling apart in the hotel's basement" (*Ibidem*), so a decision should be made, otherwise they would take no responsibility for the trunks, which might end in "the Paris garbage-burning plant" (*Ibidem*). Hemingway ordered his prewar stuff to be brought into the suite, where it added to the "high head-load of bags" – never less than 30 pieces, according to Mary –, which had made the sitting room almost impassable. At first glance, no shock discovery, just some "blue-and-yellow-covered penciled notebooks", newspaper cuttings, water colours, and "some musty sweatshirts and withered sandals" (*Ibidem*). Nevertheless, the writer decided to "invest a month's income in bags" so that the old materials be transferred into the *new* trunks acquired at the luggage shop of Louis Vuitton from Champs Elysées.

The Hemingways left Paris for New York at the end of January 1957, but switched to Cuba where they spent the rest of the year. At Finca Vigia, they resumed their routine of going fishing three days a week, swimming, reading and walking. On nonfishing days, Ernest would typewrite and Mary housekept and gardened. Eventually, Ernest let her know that "he was going to do something about Paris in the early days" (Trogdon, 2002: 332) She helped him to retype, and while correcting spelling and punctuation, she expressed her disappointment with the future book for not being an autobiography. The writer took the book with him when they went to Idaho for the autumn bird shooting, and he also carried along some chapters when they went to Spain in the spring of 1959. He seemed to be attracted by the sketch format, and he remembered the editors' reluctance towards it in the good old days. Still, he felt like writing more small books rather than large ones, "too heavy to hold comfortably while reading in bed" (*Ibidem*).

After Ernest's death, Mary found the typescript of *A Moveable Feast* in a blue box in his room in their house in Idaho. The title had been check marked against, like several titles of what the writer considered in fact to be genuine short-stories, and that may say something about the relation between fiction and non-fiction in the book. For it was not just what he remembered, but what he had chosen to remember and represent. On the other hand, Mary Hemingway confessed of having been a hard-headed editor, just the way she used to

be with all of her husband's remaining manuscripts. Urged by Ernest's longtime friend, the critic Malcolm Cowley, to publish *A Moveable Feast*, Mary not only did the spelling check, but also intervened on syntagms she felt out of place, and together with the Scribner's editor she even modified the order of texts in order to ensure continuity. Moreover, she flew to Paris to retrace "all the steps Ernest wrote he took" (Trogon, 2002: 334), as she was not happy with the report by a friend of hers who had followed the itineraries. All these were meant in fact to restore her husband's image, which she believed to have been deeply affected by the gossip following his suicide. The last two sentences of the article are more than eloquent in this respect: "Ernest had made [only] two mistakes in the spelling of street names. Otherwise his memory had been perfect" (*Ibidem*).

1.2. Memory and the devoted friend

Memory, according to scholars, is highly selective, its capacity being affected by "neural and cultural constraints, such as focus and bias." (Assmann, in Erll & Ansgar, 2008: 97) Psychological pressures also have an impact, especially on unpleasant memories, with the result of hiding, displacing, overwriting and even, in the most unfortunate cases, effacing them. And with the death of the owner, one can be certain that some memories are definitely gone. Still, what the readers ultimately perceive when reading or re-reading *A Moveable Feast* is the joy of remembering, the glowing patina of Europe's Golden Age, the infinite nostalgia. Readers, as beneficiaries of what can be labeled as cultural memory, cannot properly assess the extent of what is remembered vs. what is irretrievably lost due to various reasons.

Forgetting – one of the two components of cultural memory –, is necessary and constructive, unless *intentional* acts are directed against images and representations of the past. Unlike some fortunate scholars, the average readers cannot point to what Ernest Hemingway truly wanted to leave out and not include in the manuscript he had prepared for publishing. Nor can they guess the interventions performed by the hard-headed editor, i.e. Mary Hemingway, who apparently did not seem to feel comfortable with the references to Ernest's second wife, Pauline Pfeiffer. And that compelled Seán Hemingway, who never knew his grandfather, to initiate and publish an extensively reworked edition in 2009, meant to recuperate his grandmother's image, i.e. Pauline's, and to create "a truer representation of the book my grandfather intended to publish" (Hotchner, 2009) When commenting on the edition, Aaron Hotchner, another of Ernest's longtime friends, expressed his worries with regard to the publisher's [i.e. Scribner] "involvement with this

bowdlerized version” (*Ibidem*) since that might have endangered Hemingway’s literary heritage.

Hotchner also mentioned Nita, Hemingway’s „sometime secretary”, as being the person in Cuba who really typed the texts. And he came up with a completely different story concerning the Louis Vuitton trunk(s) episode. According to Hotchner, it was Charles Ritz, the hotel’s chairman, who asked Ernest whether he remembered about storing a trunk, to which the writer said that “he did recall that in the 1920s Louis Vuitton had made a special trunk for him” (*Ibidem*). At the very bottom of it, when brought to Charles’ office, the two stacks of lined notebooks “elicited a joyful reaction” from the writer. Hotchner also claimed that Mary Hemingway, as a result of being too busy with Ernest’s estate “had little involvement with the book” (*Ibidem*). And that it was him to whom Ernest had entrusted the manuscript, together with the manuscript of *The Dangerous Summer*, following the summer of 1959 spent in Spain. Hotchner actually suggested the title of the Paris book at Mary’s request, but he wouldn’t have his name mentioned, preferring instead to be referred to as *a friend*: “‘If you are lucky enough to have lived in Paris as a young man, then wherever you go for the rest of your life, it stays with you, for Paris is a moveable feast.’ *Ernest Hemingway to a friend, 1950*” (Hemingway, 1973: 6).

Indeed, in order not to be forgotten, a text must sometimes overcome the obstacles of the more passive, *non-intentional* acts, such as *losing* or being destroyed, which fortunately was not the case with *A Moveable Feast*. Anyway, it did face *dispersing* and *neglecting*, almost *abandoning*, if we were to corroborate the different narratives of the same event. Both scholars and average readers may be puzzled by such differences, once they get to know about them, but the end-product is what ultimately counts. And in this respect, beyond being initially neglected by its author or fiercely/lightly edited by family & friends, Hemingway’s book remains a constant source of delight for all categories of readers, open to multiple reading choices, as Gerry Brenner tried to prove in his *Comprehensive Companion to Hemingway’s A Moveable Feast*:

either sequentially or simultaneously, as a “memoir,” a “case study,” or a “quasi-fiction.” Read as “memoir,” [...] *A Moveable Feast* will lead to “subtexts latent in the manifest content,” divulging its dreamlike quality and its therapeutic value for the writer (x). Read as “case study,” the text will reveal “Hemingway’s injustices to fellow artists silenced by death” (x). Finally, read as “quasi-fiction,” the text will divulge “irregularities and discontinuities that continually destabilize its narrative integrity, at times so abruptly blurring allegedly factual episodes that they take on the life of fictive vignettes”(xii). (Nakjavani on Brenner, in *HR*, 157)

2. “It’s not much about you” or reading between the lines

2.1. The *fictive vignette*: Scott Fitzgerald

“It’s not much about you’, I once objected”, wrote Mary Hemingway in the already cited article (Trogdon, 2002: 332). In which, of course, she never mentioned A. E. Hotchner and the role the latter pretended to have played in editing the book. Somehow she was striving for a perfect image of Ernest, and that may account for superimposing her perspective in the way she recollected the process of producing *A Moveable Feast*. A perfect and *dominating* image that would shun other people’s actions, profiles or “fictive vignettes”, as they came to limelight from the notebooks which “Ernest had filled with his careful handwriting while sitting in his favorite café, nursing a café crème” (Hotchner, 2009).

Among the vignettes, Scott Fitzgerald’s seems to have been a privileged one, comparable to Gertrude Stein’s, for instance, as he was also the object of scrutiny in three sections of the book. We prefer *sections* to short-stories or sketches because of the various length of the texts. Anyway, they may all be labeled as *memoirs* for their incredible flavor of the 1920s, let alone the narrative and stylistic qualities. An entire gallery of magical portraits comes to the surface, although “for reasons sufficient to the writer, many places, people, observations and impressions have been left out of this book” (Hemingway, 1973: 8). But not Scott Fitzgerald, for whom Ernest had deep and ambiguous feelings, something that triggered mixed reactions from their contemporaries and also from our contemporary scholars. With an established literary career and already famous by the time of their first meeting, Fitzgerald was remembered, many years after, through the progressive lens of admiration, sympathy, irony, anger and eventually understanding.

After a superb assessment of Scott Fitzgerald’s writing in the opening paragraph of the first section dedicated to him, a physical description is provided, with a focus on the mouth that is already augmenting the intended characterization – “The mouth worried you until you knew him and then it worried you more.” (Hemingway, 1973: 107) More references follow, this time to Fitzgerald’s clothes – “he wore a white shirt with a buttoned-down collar and a Guards’ tie” (*Ibidem*) –, at the place of their first meeting, the infamous Dingo Bar, a gathering place for Americans in Paris; clothing references are accompanied by a comment with malicious intent on some inadequacy – “It turned out later that he bought the tie in Rome.” (*ibid*) Then the focus shifts again to Scott’s physical appearance and to their momentarily condition, engendered by alcohol consumption – “We had finished the first bottle of champagne and started on the second and the speech was beginning to run down” (*Ibidem*: 108). At a later moment, Scott takes

Ernest by surprise when approaching a delicate subject, i.e. sexual relations before marriage.

While trying to deal with the uncomfortable question, Hemingway resumes his portrayal but gets shocked by a strange and unexpected incident – “As he sat there at the bar holding the glass of champagne the skin seemed to tighten over his face until all the puffiness was gone and it drew tighter until the face was like a death’s head” (*Ibidem*: 110). Apparently, Scott had experienced a kind of seizure, and when they met again, a few days later, at the famous Closerie des Lilas, Hemingway felt embarrassed about reminding Fitzgerald their encounter. Surprisingly, the latter came up with a total denial, not being able to remember even the clothes he was wearing – ““Why should they have been rude about my tie? I was wearing a plain black knitted tie with a white polo shirt”” (*Ibidem*: 111). They comforted themselves with two whisky-and-sodas each and decided to embark on the endeavour of recuperating the car Scott had been compelled to abandon in Lyon. Actually, their true adventure was about to begin.

2.2. Suggested reading: Mikhail Bakhtin and the Rabelaisian chronotope

The reason we have provided this more or less summarized account of the first six pages from the 17th text of *A Moveable Feast* is that while re-reading the *memoir*, the sequencing of the events rang, in an intriguing way, a remote bell in our memory, i.e. the manner in which Mikhail Bakhtin approached the modalities in which Rabelais had organized his fictional world in *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. In the French writer’s allegorical novel, “everything of value”, believes Bakhtin, “must achieve its full potential in temporal and spatial terms”, whereas “everything evaluated negatively [...] must be destroyed” (Bakhtin, 1981: 167–168). This extraordinary faith in earthly space and time is typical not only of Rabelais, but also, according to the Russian theorist, of Shakespeare and Cervantes. So the good question for both scholars and average readers, if following Bakhtin’s pattern of interpretation, would be what exactly is, in a text, of such significant value as to “be provided with the power to expand spatially and temporally” (*Ibidem*).

Bakhtin identified, in Rabelais’ world, a number of series that intersect one another, each having its own dominants: a) the *human body* series b) the *human clothing* series c) the *food* series d) the *drink and drunkenness* series e) the *sexual* series e) the *death* series, and even f) a *defecation* series. Therefore by “constructing and intersecting them, Rabelais is able to put together or take apart anything that he finds necessary” (*Ibidem*: 170). And he did that in order to ensure the victory of Renaissance ideals, among them *joie de vivre*, over the teachings of

the old mediaeval world, according to which everything on this earth is “vain, transitory, sinful” (*Ibidem*: 168).

If we take one of these categories, for instance the *human body* series, readers will notice the different stages in the way it is introduced to them: first they are given the anatomical and physiological aspect; then the clownish and cynical one follows; after that comes the fantastic and grotesque allegorization; and finally the peculiarly folkloric aspect is brought to the front. A striking example is that of Gargantua’s birth, where the writer sprinkled with a clownish cynicism anatomical and physiological details, intersecting the birth series with the defecation one. In fact, the essence of Rabelais’ method resides in “in the destruction of all ordinary ties, of all the *habitual matrices* of things and ideas, and the creation of unexpected matrices” (Bakhtin, 1981: 169).

The *drink* series is built through various episodes and images that converge into symbolizing *drunkenness*: Gargantua’s genealogy, for example, is “uncovered in a crypt, amid nine wine flasks under a goblet”; some ships that set sail are decorated with heraldic devices such as a bottle, a goblet, a pitcher, a cup, a wine basket, etc; the motif of drunken creativity is repeated in the author’s prologue of the third book, where Aeschylus, Plutarch and Cato are counted along Homer and Ennius, “writers who composed while drunk” (*Ibidem*: 178). There may be grotesque exaggeration in Rabelais’ *drink* series, but there is also an affirmative view of the French culture of drinking and its significance. “Pantagruelism,” says Bakhtin, “means the ability to be cheerful, wise and kind” (*Ibidem*: 186). Unless sanctioned by witty words and thoughts, drinking could only take the form of drunkenness.

2.3. Re-reading the vignette

If we attempt to apply Bakhtin’s reading grid to Hemingway’s portrayal of Fitzgerald’s in *A Moveable Feast*, the results may be both surprising and encouraging. We will notice how a *human body* series is about to develop: first we are given *anatomical details* – “like a boy with a face between handsome and pretty”, then “very fair wavy hair, a high forehead, excited and friendly eyes”; and after that the mouth and the chin, which was “well built”. Scott also “had good ears and a handsome, almost beautiful, unmarked nose” (Hemingway, 1973: 107). The mouth is given special attention, as it makes room for cynical comments – “delicate long-lipped Irish mouth that, on a girl, would have been the mouth of a beauty” (*Ibidem*) –, a mouth that would engender worries because of displaying, yet in an attractive way, Fitzgerald’s femininity, apparently read as vulnerability.

New items are added, with the *human body* series intersecting with the *human clothing* series, with a slightly grotesque touch – “He was

lightly built and did not look in awfully good shape, his face being faintly puffy. His Brooks Brothers clothes fitted him well..." (*Ibidem*: 108). The *human body* series sustains its propensity for the grotesque, as the "well-shaped, capable-looking hands, not too small..." are contrasted with the very short legs – "With normal legs he would have been perhaps two inches taller" (*Ibidem*). At this point, the readers are flowed into the *drink and drunkenness* series, as the protagonists had started their second bottle of champagne, ordered by Scott and drunk in the company of "some of the worthless characters" (*Ibidem*) present in the bar. It is against this background that Fitzgerald, who was accompanied by a famous baseball pitcher from his Princeton years, asks Hemingway intrusive questions whether he and his wife had sex before marriage.

The *human body* series gives way to the *drink and drunkenness* series, and they both dominate the pages relating Hemingway and Fitzgerald's first encounter. Gradually, a third series takes a share of the stage – "The eyes sank and began to look dead and the lips were drawn tight and the colour left the face so that it was the colour of used candle-wax" (*Ibidem*: 110). It is the *death* series, which, being given a lot of space yet not as much, later in the text, as the *drink and drunkenness* series, attains a peculiar significance due to its function in the *memoir*. Either as scholars or as average readers, we are aware that this is a posthumous text by a writer about another writer who had been dead for almost two decades at the time of the production of the text. So, the elements of the *death* series will speak forth about "subtexts latent in the manifest content", of *A Moveable Feast*, therefore uncovering "its dreamlike quality and its therapeutic value for the writer (x)" (Nakjavani on Brenner, in *HR*, 157).

We can even imagine Ernest *lying* down on a shrink's couch while trying to remember how things really happened, when reading fragments like this one: "This was not my imagination. His face became a true death's head, or death mask, in front of my eyes" (Hemingway, 1973: 110). Looking back on Fitzgerald's strange behavior when they met again, Hemingway was not sure about the consistency of the previous episode, as Scott's "charm and his seeming good sense made the other night at the Dingo seem like an unpleasant dream" (*Ibidem*: 112). We know that dreams are always a compromise-structure, the compromise being between wishes emanating from the *id* and the censorship enacted by the *ego*. To what extent is *memoir* a compromise-structure, and especially Hemingway's, given its "dreamlike quality"? In a *memoir*, just like in a dream, censorship occurs, but wishes are expressed. But in order to better assess the therapeutic value of *A Moveable Feast* for its author we may try our hand with putting to work another principle stated by Bakhtin as central to his reading grid.

3. Growth or the other frontier

As already mentioned, according to Bakhtin, “everything that is valorized positively [...] must spread out as far and as wide as possible,” (Bakhtin 1981: 167) thus making the *growth* principle or category one of the fundamental categories in the world fictionally designed by Rabelais. In this respect, “everything that is good grows”, whereas the bad practically degenerates (*Ibidem*). For instance, even in the world beyond the grave, Rabelais extended the eating and drinking series, turning Demosthenes into a wine-dresser, Scipio Africanus into a trader in yeast, and with Hannibal performing the same *métier* in eggs (*Ibidem*: 182). And, of course, in order to sustain the growth, the intersection with another series is always at hand, this time with the *defecation* one, because “since he asked too much for it, François Villon pisses in his mustard tub, “as mustard-makers do in Paris”” (*Ibidem*).

In Hemingway’s first vignette of Scott Fitzgerald, in *A Moveable Feast*, the growth begins with the two writers agreeing on leaving Paris in order to recuperate Scott’s abandoned car – “We planned to get into Lyon, have that car checked and in good shape, have an excellent *dinner* and get an early-morning start back towards Paris” (Hemingway, 1973: 113). As readers can notice, the *eating* series is already present, then it is extended, incorporating the *drinking* one, since Hemingway, travelling alone because of Fitzgerald having missed the train, “had a good *lunch* in the dining-car and drank a *bottle* of St-Émilion...” (*Ibidem*: 115). After checking in at the best hotel in Lyon, he “went out to a *café* to have an *aperitif* and read the papers” (*Ibidem*) and it was there where he met a *fire-eater* whom he invited to join him for a *drink*, then for another one “to wash away the petrol taste of fire-eating” (*Ibidem*: 116) and also to *dinner*. Their Algerian *restaurant* experience proved to be satisfactory, both in terms of *food* and the *wine*. Such chance encounters and stops and the story-telling may actually be part of another paradigm, the picaresque chronotope, but our approach will stay with the rabelaisian one for the moment.

When Fitzgerald arrived, the next morning, one of the first topic of discussion was *breakfast*, which turned out to be a good American one “with ham and eggs”, and after a while Scott, before setting up for the expedition, wanted the hotel people to prepare a *picnic lunch* for them. The argument between the two writers revolved around the probability of getting a *bottle*, another bottle, of Macon and some *sandwiches* along the road. Yet in the end Scott’s proposal won, much to Ernest’s disappointment, who thought the picnic lunch was too expensive. Let us not forget that Scott, the best-selling author, could afford it, while Ernest was already spending the money he had saved for a family holiday in Spain. The topless Renault retrieved from the garage made it impossible

for them to continue the journey when the rain started. So they could do nothing but enjoy the picnic lunch, “an excellent *truffled roast chicken*, delicious *bread* and white Macon wine” (*Ibidem*: 119). Actually, at Macon Ernest “had bought *four more bottles* of excellent wine” (*Ibidem*: 120). One comment from Hemingway states the difference between the stylish yet eccentric Scott and the more down-to-earth Ernest, who noticed his companion’s enthusiasm for *drinking wine from a bottle* – “as a girl excited by going swimming for the first time without a bathing suit” (*Ibidem*).

A bizarre episode took place at the hotel at Châlon-sur-Saône, where Scott revealed his hypochondriac side. The *death* series shows up, but Hemingway treats the episode in a funny and ironical manner. Ernest had much trouble in persuading Scott that he was not going to die of lung congestion, while urging the waiter to buy or find a thermometer and a tube of aspirin. Still, he was aware that Scott “did have a point though”, as “Most drunkards in those days died of pneumonia,” (*Ibidem*: 123) an almost eliminated disease at the time of his writing the *memoir*. Again we get the *death* series intersecting with the *human body* series, as “Scott was lying with his eyes closed [...] and, with his waxy colour and his perfect features, he looked like a little dead crusader” (*Ibidem*: 122) thus quite the opposite of a knight in shining armour. To resuscitate him, *two double whiskies* with lemon were ordered, and Hemingway confessed of having tried, although without success, to order a *bottle*. He urged Fitzgerald to sip his whisky slowly, then the waiter “appeared with *two more double* whisky sours” (*Ibidem*: 128). Once standing on his feet again, Fitzgerald joined Hemingway for dinner, and despite his unsteady condition, he went for a true feast, an epitome of *growth* of the *food and drinking series*, of which Rabelais’ heroes, Gargantua and Pantagruel, would probably have taken much interest:

We had very good snails, with a carafe of Fleury to start with [...] I ate his snails finally, dipping up the butter, garlic and parsley sauce with broken bits of bread, and drank the carafe of Fleury. When he came back I said I would get him more snails, but he did not want any. He wanted something simple. He did not want a steak, nor liver, nor an omelette. He would take chicken. We had eaten very good cold chicken at noon but this was still famous chicken country, so we had *poulard de Bresse* and a bottle of Montagny, a light, pleasant white wine of the neighbourhood” (*Ibidem*: 130).

4. The Blind leading the Blind or instead of conclusion

Apparently, the fragment just quoted could be perceived as a symbol of harmony and togetherness, not at all unusual for Hemingway’s France in the 1920s. Hemingway’s Europe actually, it was a place where people wanted to forget the traumas of the Great War. In this respect, eating and drinking added to and augmented the general atmosphere – “In

Europe then we thought of wine as something as healthy and normal as food and also as a great giver of happiness and well-being and delight” (*Ibidem*: 123).

There is a doubling of *forgetting* vs. *remembering* in these texts, with the first layer belonging to the former volunteer on the Italian front, as displayed in some of the sections of the book, particularly in “Une Génération Perdue”. Then there is the layer of the author in his, unknowingly at the time, final years, giving his dream-like *memoirs* a secondary revision. And that means providing the verbal account, i.e. translating everything into language and narrative, and at the same time, through the policing and channeling strategy of the ego, making meaning and coherence in an act of relative censorship – “Drinking wine was not a snobbism nor a sign of sophistication” (*Ibidem*) What the artistic imagery of the Romantics and Symbolist had lost, i.e. “the encompassing whole of triumphant life” (Bakhtin, 1981: 199–200), some Modernists seem to have recovered – “I loved all wines except sweet or sweetish, wines and wines that were too heavy” (Hemingway, 1973: 123).

Still, when the author remembers the facts through turning them into fictional events, who can tell which latent elements are omitted, or how much of them arrive in the manifest content? We know that dreams are the most dramatic staging of the return of the repressed, but what about *memoirs*? “It had never occurred to me”, confessed Hemingway within the same context of expressing his love for all wines, “that sharing a few bottles of fairly light, dry, white Macon could cause chemical change in Scott that would turn him into a fool” (*Ibidem*).

Being plagued by remorse or by contradictory feelings? Before their Lyon adventure, when meeting for the second time and deciding upon the car rescue expedition, Hemingway noticed that “Scott had obviously been drinking before”; still “he looked as though he needed a drink” (*Ibidem*: 118). Fitzgerald even asked if Hemingway was a morning drinker and offered to keep him company in case he felt like having a drink. They were both very young, still under thirty, and Hemingway’s answer – “I told him it depended entirely on how I felt and what I had to do” (*Ibidem*) should be corroborated with a later meditation after what we have labeled as the epitome of *growth* for the *food* and *drinking* series, in what “was still famous chicken country” (*Ibidem*: 130). Thinking about Scott and his weird behavior, Ernest felt both concerned and guilty – “It was obvious he should not drink anything and I had not been taking good care of him” (*Ibidem*). Perhaps here we can read the text as “case study” so that will reveal “Hemingway’s injustices to fellow artists silenced by death” (Nakjavani on Brenner, in *HR*, 157).

Guilt did not relate only to his lack of responsibility towards Scott, whom he had never thought of as a drunkard before, but also to the breaking of his own work ethic – “My training was never to drink after dinner nor before I wrote nor while I was writing” (*Ibidem*). The entire story could be seen as a 20th century two-character written version of *The Blind Leading the Blind*, Peter Brueghel’s the Elder painting inspired by the biblical parable. A work ethic he managed to maintain up to his last days and to which, in spite of the rivalry or the envy he had been many times accused of, he wanted Fitzgerald to subscribe too. He truly believed the latter was selling himself for success and money, while spoiling his gift all along the very mercantile process. Unfortunately, in the end, it really did not matter “Who ever won the battle between Scott and Ernest for writer of his generation”, since “they both lost the war to alcoholism” (Donaldson, in Meredith, *HR*, 109). What readers can retain for a closure, although it is the very beginning of the text, and it can stand for a close-up, is the magnificent description of Fitzgerald’s *touch of the poet*:

His talent was as natural as the pattern that was made by the dust on a butterfly’s wings. At one time he understood it no more than the butterfly did and he did not know when it was brushed or marred. Later he became conscious of his damaged wings and of their construction and he learned to think and could not fly any more because the love of flight was gone and he could only remember when it had been effortless (Hemingway 1973: 107).

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