

Feb. 16, 1967

Dear Marjorie:

Thanks for your latest (lifting the embargo so to speak) but I will try not to overdo it, although I do have a large wedge of questions saved up for you. It has been fearfully cold here, averaging 60-70 degrees below freezing (not zero) but today it is 40 above with the suggestion of a faint drizzle. However, the snow is so hard and glazed it is not melting away by any means. In my research (including the literary analysts who restrict themselves to the writing only, coming up with interpretations rather than hard new material) I find that Hem seemed inordinately depressed by rain and that this sad circumstance produced some of his most tragically poetic writing (vide, the last scene in Farewell, and also the first one to a lesser meteorological extent, although it is absolutely my favorite Hem passage); and I cannot help wondering out loud to you if this tendency of Hem's manifested itself in your winter together, and perhaps at other times. (Dear teacher, please excuse the aforesaid by Donald; he didn't set out to ask that question). I wanted to comment on your remark that Mrs. Barker thought you were contradictory in your impressions of Hemingway. Let me say first she seems a true friend not to agree with you on everything. I have found that most females are really quite phony to one another and lie outrageously about how things look, seem, etc., so much so that when a husband tells them the truth about something it comes as too stunning a surprise. I have come to take that for granted. But I gather Mrs. Barker can be candid and that is a sure test that the friendship is not a tenuous thing depending upon superficial matters. Having said that I now proceed to something that may sound critical of her opinion and such is not intended, absolutely not; it is just a different reaction. I wondered when you said what you did why I had not made a similar conclusion. Lord knows I have had the best opportunity to go over the material and I had sensed several inconsistencies, in fact I referred to them, at least obliquely in my questionnaire. If this and this, how come that and that. But now I realize why I didn't. Inconsistency in one's attitude is par for the course. If your opinion was pure creamy homogenized oneness, it would be very unnatural and more intellectual than emotional and therefore insincere. It has been said that consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds and I believe that. Only by non-swerving, by not moving into new territory can one be consistent. If one is consistent one is chained to an outdated past. To put this another way: I have a basic philosophy in any case that we are all several creatures vying for attention. Certainly we are at least two. And it is perfectly natural to have seemingly contradictory opinions about important people and events at different times. In fact I'm reasonably certain that I could reconcile diverging views of this kind if I were asked to do so. This fight and then the expunging and the hate upon the applied answers, etc. as if a man knew.

All for now.

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All for now.