

June 5, 1967

Dear Marjorie:

A long time, I'm afraid, and forgive me please; It's a fatal flaw in me, I'm afraid, and has nothing to do with you. I like all your letters. Some are more informative than others, some have to do with nothing but friendship, but all are very good sounding and I didn't even mind that one in which you were a little vexed with me for pressing too hard on the Hemingway front. The letter wasn't harsh in any way, but a little sad, and anyway, your touch is so light that when your spirit dips slightly, I mean very slightly, or when it flinches a tiny bit from the gentle norm, the zag is discernible to me. I hereby apologize, but may I make this disclaimer? The easy thing for me would be not to pursue the Hemingway line, since our relationship is comfortable enough to stand on its own feet, but I think just sailing along, having a good time, reacting, enjoying is not exactly right and that every once in a while a fellow should hue. Hemingway was the original name of the game, and a very good name too I insist, and it is a fact that we view this gentleman from two points of view: You are an expert on the life, the early life, and that's your only criterion. I am interested in the early life, on the other hand, only as it relates to the early literature, at least that was my only original reason. The man's literature is what flagged me and still does. Now when people ask me to defend his life, some ridiculous thing he did, I pass and ask what that has to do with his body of work or his quality as an artist. Of course you have drawn me over the line a bit, and it is a slightly fuzzy line to begin with, especially in a man such as Hemingway who wrote art that seemed like life. That's just the point. Where did the life and the art depart? That's what got me interested in the first place, to see if the Marjorie bit was whole cloth, a total piece of art, in which case it would have been remarkable, or if it was a kind of journalistic extension a kind of crystallization of his terrific power of description from life. Well of course we have gone a long way since then and I know that Hem's stories didn't touch you very much because they weren't of you very much. Still there were a lot of facts Hem used or misused. I guess they all do this. Great writers, I mean the really convincing ones, do not seem capable of real fantasy. They are always writing about the life they know, a life seen through a certain discerning pair of eyes. The reason Hem's work stuck out over the others, I think, is not because it was truer to life, particularly, but because he wrote so damn well that it seemed like journalism; it is the only time in history, to my knowledge, that this trick has been pulled off. It is what I personally call the enlarged truth, the techniques used by an artist to restore three-dimensional life to three dimensions even when working through the two dimensions of writing. I hope to do a piece on this some day. Another reason that I claim forgiveness is that my mind and heart are not so efficient that they can produce the right words at any given time, I mean like computers which would take into consideration everything that has been said by a girl named Marjorie. But I am overdoing this. I know that I am forgiven if there is some forgiving to do and that I will be forgiven that certain next time, as for instance when I say that I knew all along in my own mind that it was G.E. and she is dead. But somehow I think it doesn't matter. If the friendship was damageable it was already on the way to destruction, and what happened was grand. Love,