

Dec. 9, 1969

Dear Barge:

Your good letter of Dec. 5 received here Dec. 8. Pretty good, what. I wonder if my letters (for 18 cents) get there as fast as yours do here (for 20 cents). And I do enjoy your "going on" about that famous subject even though you may not set out to do so. By the way, what is that "sympathetic" book you and Georgie are reading now? I don't want to miss one. I have Philip Young's inventory of the Hemingway papers, lately issued, but I don't think you mean that one. And I don't think you would have laid out the money for the big fat one about Hemingway in Sun Valley. And I doubt you refer to a chummy little account by a professor friend of Hem's. So which one is it?

Here, surprisingly, I am up to my ears in Hemingwayana. I obtained quite a few goodies in London's great Charing Cross stores and have in addition been attacking the acquisition problem from two other fronts. I have advertized in the London Times (and gotten narry a bite) and I have been attending auctions at Sotheby's, that distinguished house which now owns our own Parke-Bernet. It is really a lovely experience, although the level of bidding is a bit rich for my blood, particularly since most of the competition are dealers. On this occasion, I purchased in advance a catalogue for two shillings (24 cents), compared what was available with my own bibliographies and then checked the items against recent price lists that I have accumulated. Thus, today, I was able to make two very good purchases; a 1936 issue of *THIS QUARTER*, published in Paris and containing Hem's great story, "THE UNDEFEATED". This was first publication in English. The other item consisted of three issues of *Exiles* edited by Ezra Pound and containing a Hem poem as well as work by J. Joyce and others. So I felt very good. The sale continues today. The auction is conducted as you might expect in the most dignified fashion, in a rather small room. The auctioneer was most deferential, asking our group if he might start with a pound or two pounds or five pounds and when he had to announce that a mailed in bid of 20 pounds was already in his hands he sounded very regretful indeed. The English crowd seemed most willing to pay for copies inscribed by their authors. There were some sales as low as one or two pounds but the average was 30 pounds, and one James Joyce item went for 550 pounds. The capital letters of this small edition (25 copies) had been colored in by Joyce's mad daughter Lucia. Some people I never heard of brought large sums, and Hemingway did not seem to be overly revered, for which I was grateful (and a little resentful).

For the record, *The End of Something*, appeared in *In Our Time*, ~~(1925)~~^{which} was dedicated to Hadley. His blockbuster of the next year, *THE SUN ALSO RISES*, was dedicated to Hadley and his son. Soon after, the profits were assigned from that book to Hadley in connection with his divorce of 1927. I believe I differ with you a little, Barge, in the question of Hem's motivation. I agree he used personal material, but never in any completely journalistic manner. In other words he did a lot of weaving. He often said you don't write from ~~memory~~ memory, you write from essence. Much went into the essence. It was Hem's great gift that he could make it all seem so real that one was inclined to ~~from~~ imagine oneself privy to a personal disclosure. This was a gift and also a curse of course. The truth is that if Hem had written completely from memory we would have wound up with a nostalgic bit or something but it would not have been the art that I think this particular story is. And it is this kind of thinking, the conviction that Hem wrote as an artist, that makes me discard the suggestion that Hem wrote from spite or revenge. If he had we would not have had art. People see through this sort of thing. No one can bring off spite as art. Hem started off with something real, for instance a setting, and, for instance, a girl, but then the weaving began and the memory faded. I knew Hem half admitted to you that the story was factual and maybe by that time he thought it was or couldn't face the complexity of explaining his craft. I liked Marge in the story before I ever knew you but I never dreamed she was as solid a person as you turned out to be -- and it may have given old Hem a jolt too. Remember what he said practically on his deathbed to the Macintire girl? All love to you and Georgie and Brock.

(cont)

Of course It is so fine and easy for me to talk in this wonderfully "wise" detached sort of way. I am dealing only in the intellect and the art and I seem to forget that in your case there is an added factor at work, namely emotion. You knew Hem as a man That is in your programming and it is not in mine and so the conclusions are bound to be different. In the case of an artist, the tendency is to have only one true love - the art - That is why the art is so true and so beautiful and that is why the artist winds up being such ~~much~~ a lonely man. He does after all live in a human body and he has to pay a human price. The only one who is truly happy is the reader. There is a ticket for everything I guess. When Emerson wrote about compensation he wasn't just whistling Dixie. It may be that Hem knew an artist was not for you. What a happy decision was finally made after all.