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## LICENTIOUS SPLEEN TURNED INTO MELODRAMATIC TECHNICOLOR: A FILM VERSION OF *THE SUN ALSO RISES*

### **Abstract**

The paper discusses a paradigm shift in representing trauma in Modernist fiction, starting from the issue of a large-scale gender role reversal, where assertive women often dominate over passive, submissive men. It goes on to inquire into the possible reasons why *The Sun Also Rises* was not filmed until 1957: certain traits of behaviour in Hemingway's characters were far from suitable for the Motion Picture Production Code until its gradual loosening allowed many of the novel's moral features to be presented in theatres, although major changes still took place. They include: transforming the first-person narrative into a quasi-omniscient third-person perspective, toning down Jake Barnes's bitterness and disillusionment, focusing more prominently on the insatiable Brett Ashley and her lovers, and virtually eliminating the anti-Semitic bias against Robert Cohn.

**Key words:** Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises*, film adaptation, trauma, Motion Picture Production Code, gender role reversal, sexual behaviour.

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## 1. Introduction

The concept of *adaptation* in the narrative arts would hardly be possible were it not for the underlying Protean phenomenon of *intermediality*, which enables the transmission of a particular plot from fiction to the more complex appearance of the “same” storyline on the cinematic screen, coupled with the elements of the story world which the readers do not see (or actually hear) on the page, but can only supplement in their imagination. Despite the numerous structural differences between fiction and film, like the absence of (moving) images in novels, and the (frequent) absence of narratorial omniscience and descriptive passages in films, the two forms of art do share two essential properties: the unfolding of a series of modelled events and the framing dimension of time. These overlapping prerequisites make for substantially easier transitions of narrative scripts from one form of art to the other, setting both somewhat apart from the media which do not possess this pair of features. However, it should be pointed out that film production and theory owe a greater debt to theatrical practice and dramatic norms than they do to literary canons, but the relations of drama and film fall beyond the scope of this paper.

Taken in the Foucauldian sense of a *discursive formation*, both forms of art share the same system of abstract elements which establish a pattern of regularity defined in terms of order, correlation, position and function, and they include: objects, subject-positions, concepts and strategies (Macey 2001: 101). This four-element table may also be examined for productivity and accuracy when applied to an immense group of human activities and institutions such as school, hospitals, prisons and the military. The elements may be said to form an immanent paradigm the individual exponents of which function mutably, as they are subject to shifts in taste, technology, aesthetical reception, more recent scientific doctrines and the like. For example, the strategy of projecting films by means of analogue equipment has by now become largely obsolete, but the immanent element of strategy has kept its necessary function intact – the film must be projected to the viewers by *a* means, and the device needs to follow the dictum of function, while the opposite does not apply. Such transformations in the literary practice of Modernist fiction after World War I and in the course of Hollywood production history from the 1920s to the 1950s will be discussed in this paper to probe why the film adaptation of *The Sun Also Rises* at moments diverges from the original work so noticeably that it

raises important questions about the structural, generic and functional differences between the two.

## **2. *The Sun Also Rises* in the Context of a Changed Trauma Dominant**

In the year of this novel's publication (1926), Ph.D. candidates in American literature were still advised that they should be familiar with the production from 1607 to 1890, and American literature was taught in few colleges, usually as an elective course. The situation improved only after World War II, when large numbers of veterans returned from the frontlines, where they had read army-issued paperback Hemingway, which caused a surge in critical interest on this particular topic as the former soldiers furthered their education in college (Hays 2011: 12). On the other hand, the periodicals responded unhesitatingly to the emerging writer's publication of his first novel, and the reviewers approximately split into two general categories: those that expressed their displeasure, exasperation and even disgust at the display of indolent, vapid talk of idlers gathering at Montparnasse and spending their lives in a deluge of drink, and those that praised the fiction for lively sentences abounding in vibrant, colloquial speech, even complimenting the prose for being "athletic," with a compelling picture of character (Hays 2011: 9–10). *The Sun Also Rises* exhibited a sparse, even terse prose style, whose economy signalled a slight turn away from the standard ornate narrative modes that had been practised by the major authors of Modernism, most notably Joyce, Conrad, James and Woolf. Its fast-paced dialogues were often void of tag clauses, thus making additional demands on the reader to become virtually involved in the conversation. The verbal exchange itself suited the label that was given to the novel by a disappointed Allen Tate: "hard-boiled" (Tate 1926, cited in Meyers 1982: 70), so that the register, word choice and the field of reference could resonate much more readily with readers willing to taste a slice of the day-to-day life of American expatriates in Paris commonly known as the Lost Generation. In fact, the book went into its sixth printing before a year elapsed, showing that Hemingway was quite capable of striking a chord with a very large readership in his novelistic *début*.

The book's immediate popularity with the public may indicate the inevitability of aesthetic change in the course of any artistic practice, i.e. the necessary shifts in the dominant stylistic formations, which happen

on an unpredictable, non-linear basis, and are usually accompanied by economic, political and historical upheavals like wars, revolutions and extensive ideological transitions. In the case of Hemingway's formative period, the aftermath of World War I opened up a vast discursive expanse for the disillusionment of the innumerable traumatised veterans who bore the weight of the shattered world picture on their shoulders and sought largely unsuccessful ways of coping with the consequences of "the war to end all wars," often dousing their insomnia and shell-shock with copious amounts of alcohol and aimlessly wandering around the incapacitated cities of slowly recovering war-torn European nations. The new cultural sensibility stood in stark contrast to the decades-long official Victorian optimism propagated by political and literary establishments alike, and a post-apocalyptic chasm seemed to have gaped before the survivors of the bloodiest conflict in human history thus far. Jake Barnes's wound symbolises the injuries sustained by millions of young men, and does not only denote impotence as the somatic consequence of mechanical impairment, but suggests a more insidious and less palpable malaise: the powerlessness of the human spirit to avert the course of events that led the protagonists of *The Waste Land*, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, *Point Counter Point* and *The Sound and the Fury* to become representatives of the Fisher King type – pessimistic, disappointed, feelingless cripples amid the modern-day desert (Hays 2011: 11–12).

Another novelty in literary technique foregrounded in *The Sun Also Rises* stemmed directly from the historical occurrences of the age and a large-scale wartime practice of gender role reversal, as hundreds of thousands of shell-shocked men were delivered into the postoperative care of nurses in field hospitals and remote rehabilitation centres far away from the frontline, although the spatial distance could hardly have had an alleviating effect on their mental suffering. This massive turnabout within the social matrix exerted a pivotal influence on the contemporary understanding of male and female subjectivity and power, as Peter Childs notes:

In World War I, nursing, like shell-shock, both reinforced stereotypes and challenged them. From a traditional perspective, women were the carers, the mother-figures who looked after the men. However, on a larger scale than ever before, men were taking the position of children, establishing a role reversal in which women were active and in control, while men were supine, passive and

vulnerable. [...] According to Sandra Gilbert, for the nurses the role reversal brought about a release of female libidinal energies, as well as a liberation of female anger, which men usually found anxiety-inducing and women often found exhilarating (Childs 2002: 176).

The quoted passage exposes a pattern of behaviour which emerged in the extraliterary universe, and was very soon taken up as a dynamic motif in such novels as Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* (1916), predating *Mrs Dalloway* by almost a decade. It would be very difficult to find a female character in all of Modernist fiction who performs these functions with such relentless vigour as Lady Brett Ashley does in Hemingway's novel, not least due to his avoidance of complex narrative mediation in the representation of the storyworld at hand.

### **3. Shifts in Hollywood Censorship Norms**

As an incomparably more widespread medium, film was in a position to shape the moral sense of millions of cinema-goers, with an obnoxious side effect of exposing them to news of film stars' countless scandals, debauchery, drug addiction, infidelity and divorces, in a word, to reports of a modern-day Sodom in a very prosperous industrialised country. Aiming at a prevention of collective ethical corruption, the major Hollywood studios and production companies formed the association named the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) in 1922; in turn, their branch-office, the Studio Relations Committee produced in 1927 a list of several dozen sensitive topics that should either be avoided or taken meticulous care of in Hollywood film production before getting the official approval for further distribution and screening. The Committee codified the complaints of local censoring boards and informed producers of their views (Britannica: MPAA par. 1), which concerned eleven prohibited topics – profanity, nudity, the drug trade, prostitution, miscegenation – and twenty-five additional topics – the use of firearms, brutality, gruesomeness, hanging, rape and murder (Prince 2003: 20). Ironically enough, violent subjects were treated with more laxity than those without explicit elements of criminal acts like above, mostly due to the public outcry of religious groups demanding stricter moral fitness, propriety and decency. It was because of the appearance of sound film that the administration had to

expand the code and enforce firm rules on dialogue, but the 1930 Motion Picture Production Code was received with a great deal of scepticism, since many feature films continued to test the boundaries of good taste, using the vague formulation “spirit and letter of the Code” as a distribution loophole. After a serious public outcry in 1934 from a number of religious groups concerned about the congregations’ moral attitude, the Code was reinforced with noticeable moral constraints (Hulsether 2011: 120). Much as films generally followed the newly imposed strictures, voices of dissent were increasingly heard against the austerity of the Code as time passed; producer Walter Wanger complained in 1939: “Under the Production Code, it was – and is – almost impossible to face and deal with the modern world” (Leff 1998: 212). Rather than sporadic individual lamentation, it took a collective artistic action to present a challenge to the constraining legislative norms and a series of films defying the rules, like Howard Hughes’s *The Outlaw* (1943), together with Otto Preminger’s *The Moon Is Blue* (1953) and *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1956), to put the Code to a serious test by grossing large figures at the box office without the PCA Seal of Approval and proving that audiences could no longer be intimidated by the decree’s faltering authority. When the Supreme Court granted First Amendment protection to films in the landmark 1952 *Miracle* decision lifting a ban on Rossellini’s picture, the Code’s effective power indicated serious signs of obsolescence and it needed a thorough revision, which took place in 1956, including the permission to portray interracial marriage, narcotics use and prostitution (Meyerowitz 2014: 305).

With such a turbulent history of Hollywood censorship and its general loosening as it faced the audiences flocking to the allure of provocative prohibition, it is not strange at all that the trailer to the 1957 film opens with a seemingly immoderate qualification: “Twentieth Century Fox brings to the screen Ernest Hemingway’s boldest love story, that nobody dared film until now...” It had taken over three decades for the official moral standards in the American film industry to reach the desirably broad level of tolerance and include those modes of conduct that had hitherto been at least unsuitable, often even downright lecherous – the time was finally ripe for the worldwide screening of a story containing adultery, promiscuity, alcoholism, fistfights, elopement and the like, all performed and produced by Hollywood A-listers. It is only natural that the two discursive formations could not follow analogous sets of rules while modelling the original events and their ethical structure, as the censorship in the arts of the original and

of the adaptation branched off both horizontally and vertically: in 1926 nobody would have been allowed to make a film as audacious as the novel, and by 1957 literary censorship still maintained a lead over its motion picture counterpart by permitting even *On the Road* to get into print. The ensuing paragraphs will be devoted to the study of the most noticeable discrepancies between the novel and its film version, which will shed some light on the possible reasons why certain narrative parts were altogether omitted, why a number of dialogues were altered in tone, idiom or order, and try to offer explanations that apply to the cultural context of such intermediation.

#### **4. Some Structural and Ethical Differences and Similarities**

The first major shift that we notice in the film is the change in point of view from the homodiegetic narrator Jake Barnes to the cameratic third person, introduced by his voice-over in the opening minute of the film proper, right after the credits run their course. The transition in perspective is also simultaneous with a transition in hermeneutic aptitude, as the novel's immediate staging of the characters' personal histories could probably not be understood so easily by the 1950s cinema-goers as it was by the narrower circles of Hemingway's readers thirty years before. Barnes's lead-in to the film storyworld is superfluous to contemporary readers of the fiction, and it holds a simplified account of their general post-World War I context: "This is Paris of today... Our story deals with another Paris, the Paris of 1922, shortly after what used to be called the Great War. We were part of that spectacular Lost Generation of young people who continued to live as though they were about to die..." (Minute Mark 02:12–02:35) Jake's role as the audience's guide, supplying the most obvious coordinates should not extend for too long into the film after the third-person framework is established and the first-person view structurally eliminated. On the other hand, the disappearance of the pivotal device embodied in the homodiegetic narrator deprives the film version of the inherent personal bias, prejudices, opinions and honestly cynical introspection – no matter how bitter and poignantly straightforward they may have been – which contributed to Hemingway's faster rise to popularity as a relevant masculine voice of the generation in the first place. The film's diegesis begins with Barnes's chance encounter in front of his editorial office with a former US serviceman Harris

whom he had seen in Italy during the war, and the scene, non-existent in the novel, in all probability functions as a connective passage between the brief description of the setting and the genuine plot of the fictional work.

It is the following scene that heralds the frequent absence of the novel's segments from the film version, and it does not provide the viewers with Robert Cohn's background given by the first-person narrator with select details about his days at Princeton, boxing abilities, misadventures with women. In a word, a summary of ten years in the life of a major character does not occur at all on the screen, thus making both the perceiving and the perceived subjects flatter as constituents of the narrative. Barnes here is also a victim of Peter Viertel's simplified screenplay, since from the very outset of the novel he conveys an impression of an amateur outdoorsman and a struggling journalist with a defined taste in more facets of life (including the typically Hemingwayesque themes like bullfighting and a suggested travel to British East Africa), but the film version drastically curtails this dimension of his personality. It is also nearly impossible to witness any activity of Jake's consciousness while viewing the film, although we form most of our ethical picture about the novel through Jake's moral, phraseological and spatiotemporal points of view; the dynamics of his inner life remain permanently unrepresented in the verbal sense, as the filmmakers did not opt for any narratorial comment along film noir lines. One of the reasons for for this decision may lie in the general rule that A-category spectacles should avoid non-visual plot material as much as possible (especially when it does not propel the plot directly but functions as commentary), and that the audiences should consequently be treated to a more direct story experience without verbal explication.

When Jake meets a loose-moraled girl named Georgette in the novel, the entire event takes place on a café terrace during a warm spring night, with a specifically tinged point of view on his part: "...I sat at a table [...] watching it get dark and the electric signs come on, [...] and the crowd going by [...] and the *poules* going by, singly and in pairs, looking for the evening meal" (Hemingway 2004: 12, original italics). The film presents the encounter as occurring in broad daylight, and the characters set up a date in the evening; whereas they go dining in a relatively secluded room of the restaurant, such exhibitions of sudden intimacy do not appear in the movie version. However, the crucial replica which governs the course of Jake's acquaintance with Georgette is not missing, as he makes a frank admission in their conversation that he will not enter into more serious



relations with her: “I got hurt in the war” (Hemingway 2004: 14, MM 12:28–12:30). While riding in a taxi with Lady Brett Ashley a little later, Jake is thinking about his wound, a train of reflection triggered by the electrifying reaction he causes in Brett whenever he touches her, but it is not transparent to the viewer that the film character harbours the same sentiments which provoke so much anguish both to Jake and to Brett. If Jake does mention (and cogitate on) his war wound while in a cab with Brett, the suggestions about the wound being funny or jocular are nowhere to be found in the film scene, since foregrounding Jake’s consciousness of his impotence would hardly have been appetising to the masses of cinema-goers enjoying a lighthearted Technicolor distraction. The following episode is not featured in the film even by way of static third-person camera, much less in any form of introspective commentary, which in the novel occupies two pages of recollection uninterrupted by dialogue – Jake spends a lot of time fighting off insomnia, and the reader can sympathise with his state and feel the burden of stretched time as the emotions are being verbalised. He also undresses and looks at himself in the mirror, and we can suppose that he strips naked because the next action he performs is certainly retold without a shred of ambivalence: “I put on my pyjamas and got to bed” (Hemingway 2004: 26). In all likelihood, the image of a sexually incapacitated naked male shot from behind and reflected in the mirror would have been legislatively unacceptable even by the lowered moral standards of the Production Code, so this facet of Jake’s life, together with his long hours of chaotic thoughts after which he feels a cessation of the jumbled thoughts in “smooth waves” and starts to cry, was simply skipped over in the film screenplay. The film version consistently narrows the scope of Jake Barnes’s emotions and the depth of his observational ability to the effect that it creates an apparently much less sensitive personality whose mental activity does not get a chance to demonstrate a fraction of its reasoning potential.

If Jake loses some of his three-dimensionality in the intermediational process, so does Robert Cohn – the absence of his extradiegetic history and the removal of the analeptic summary given by Barnes do not leave the viewer much opportunity to learn that he had gone through a divorce before meeting Frances, and that she turns unbearably jealous at Jake’s mere mention of a female acquaintance living in Strasbourg in Chapter 1. The film version displaces this motif into the early scene where Cohn is sleeping on the sofa in Jake’s office, mumbling half-coherently in his

dream: “No, I can’t do it. I can’t, Frances, I can’t. The book... How do you expect me to me to write when you keep after me this way? Can’t you understand, Frances?” (MM 04:55–05:11) The original feature of the two men’s relatively overlapping literary comradeship disappears from the medium of film and eliminates one of their underlying properties, i.e. the artistic streak which the members of Hemingway’s circle generally shared. If the novel is conspicuously autobiographical, and Jake’s character built on the empirical author himself, it is only natural to conclude that the other characters in the novel should express the faithfully modelled traits of the real-life personages they were constructed after. In short, the film systematically dispenses with the characters’ literary aspirations as (at least) an introductory motif, and in so doing, fosters the reduction of the educated Bohemians to the functional level of an aimless, easy-going, intoxicated clique with very little else in mind except whiling away their time in the promiscuity of dancing clubs and travelling to mundane destinations. The excision of Cohn’s efforts in the literary field demanded a symmetrical move with the episode after his return from America, when he feels noticeably lower-spirited than at the beginning of his publishing endeavour, and he also suffers his wife’s harsh criticism for his decision to leave her in favour of Brett before a flabbergasted Jake, who observes: “I do not know how people could say such terrible things to Robert Cohn. There are people to whom you could not say insulting things. They give you a feeling that the world would be destroyed, would actually be destroyed before your eyes, if you said certain things. But here was Cohn taking it all” (Hemingway 2004: 43). Instead of the complicated love triangle, the film only makes a brief mention of Frances (with one minor appearance) and focuses on a variant of Robert who falls in love with Brett without eliciting the audience’s possible sympathy for the years under his wife’s domineering sway; he no longer looks like a man struggling with the prejudiced oppression of different institutions which had formed his character and inferiority complex: being a Jew at Princeton, as well as being taken in hand by both his sentimental partners in succession. Without almost any prior knowledge of Cohn’s prehistory, the viewers can now largely perceive a hopelessly infatuated misfit, and a person who more readily matches the offensive appellation of a “steer” attributed to him by Mike Campbell in the moments of heightened drunkenness and jealousy, ultimately caused by Brett’s profligate sexual manners. Another technical reason, albeit marginal, why the Frances scene was not included

in the film may be sought in the fact that, apart from her several minutes' caustic rant, she also mentions a detail that sounds strikingly pleonastic in cinematography: "You know Robert is going to get material for a new book. Aren't you, Robert? That's why he's leaving me. He's decided I don't film well" (Hemingway 2004: 44).

As many as three chapters (8, 9 and 10) were left out in the film narrative, during which a lot of entanglement takes place. After announcing to Jake that she is leaving for San Sebastian, Brett disappears until Jake and Bill Gorton see her riding in a Parisian taxi some days later. When Frances leaves for England, the secretive Cohn writes him that he will travel to the country for a while, not specifying his destination. Partly due to Lady Brett's refusal to offer Jake a chance to travel with her, partly due to his own business commitment and the plans he made with Bill, he does not realise that she in fact travelled to San Sebastian with Cohn – it takes her own frank admission so that Jake can fully comprehend the increasingly intricate web of relations whose weaving is now under way. When she puts forth an idea to travel to Pamplona hoping that Cohn is bound to turn it down, both she and Jake are surprised by the fact that he embraces the plan wholeheartedly, stating that he "can't wait to see me" (Hemingway 2004: 73). When Bill, Jake and Robert are waiting for the couple to arrive, Cohn demonstrates a perceptible dose of anxiety, further confusing his friends with his "superior knowledge" that they will not come that night, provoking Bill's wonder at the "inside stuff" coupled with the angry remark that Robert should not get "Jewish" for this prescience. Jake insists on following Cohn to the station for this reason: "I was enjoying Cohn's nervousness. I hoped Brett would be on the train. At the station the train was late, and we sat on a baggage-truck and waited outside in the dark. I have never seen a man in civil life as nervous as Robert Cohn – nor as eager. I was enjoying it. [...] Cohn had a wonderful quality of bringing out the worst in anybody" (Hemingway 2004: 86). These unnerving intrigues, which colour Brett, Jake and Robert in far more delicate shades of character, are missing from the section of the film that covers the group's journey from Paris to Pamplona and are neatly incorporated with the film's shallower staging of the events that happen with more speed and less psychological depth. In fact, Jake is truly surprised in the film at Brett's sudden absence from Paris, and even more startled at seeing her in the Spanish town, events which accord seamlessly with each other in a melodrama, but are not probable in first-category fiction with a permanently bitter defensive narrator. The complex story of

Jake and Brett's relationship seems void of temporal dynamism and of its numerous undercurrents with all the necessary differences that emerge in the unpredictable process, thus conforming to a series of Brett's loosely supported emotional outbursts and poorly motivated, almost mechanical flings with several men in the plot. The fiction furnishes a longer time span required for Brett to stare at Romero and show her insatiable sexual desire, while Jake is having a conversation with him and Spanish bullfighting aficionados at the next table. The film version has Brett and Jake sitting while Romero and his friends are talking at the table, Romero joining the expatriates almost at once, so the time she spends grazing on the youth's figure is incomparably shorter, perhaps for reasons of decency, like the limited kissing time in Hollywood then. Like many saturnine comments that come from the narrator, the knowledgeable explanations of the complex rituals of bullfighting were also excised from the film version, from the running of the bulls along the streets to the exact order in which they were driven, poked, held in check, to the procedure of killing them with style and dignity while maintaining the maximum exposure on behalf of the torero himself, and the audiences were deprived of a relevant aspect of Spanish cultural anthropology. All that we can see is a pageant of scenes from an awe-inspiring spectacle for the masses, similar rather to a close baseball game than to an elaborately planned ritualistic occasion.

Hollywood plotline clumsiness and episodic performances fit for the gallery perhaps come to the fore when the parallel frustrations of both Jake and Robert reach their culmination in Pamplona. Obviously, both of them function as "steers," each in his own way incapable of consummating his love for Brett, each of them required by Brett to fulfill some of her complementary desires – Jake as a suitable outing partner and Robert as a casual bedroom partner. Naturally, the two cannot clash openly because they do not encroach on each other's territory, but it takes just one spark for both of them to vent out their anger uncontrollably and bring about a tavern brawl worthy of classic Westerns. The novel presents a mounting tension between Mike and Cohn, as the former knows that the latter has meddled with his wife-to-be and drowns his outrage in alcohol, but the anger gets the better of him in the moments when he is flanked by two of Brett's love interests, Cohn and Romero, at dinner in the hotel; first he insults the torero stating twice that the bulls he killed in the corrida "have no balls" (Hemingway 2004: 153), which, to Mike's annoyance, Jake does not interpret to Pedro, who is wise enough to ignore the drunkard. Seeing

that his haughtiness misses the mark with Pedro, he turns to Robert and takes it out on him: “Do you think you amount to something, Cohn? Do you think you belong here among us? [...] Do you think Brett wants you here? [...] Why don’t you see when you are not wanted, Cohn? Go away. Go away, for God’s sake. Take that sad Jewish face away. Don’t you think I’m right?” (Hemingway 2004: 154) The fistfight with Cohn is only averted by Jake, who persuades Mike to go to a café and reduces the suspense temporarily. During the moments of privacy with Brett, Jake learns from her that she is “mad about the Romero boy,” an admission too improper for general audiences of 1950s America, followed by a series of even worse moral stumblings: “I’ve never felt such a bitch” (Hemingway 2004: 159–160). They find Pedro in a tavern, where Brett sheds her inhibitions instantly and engages intimately with the torero, while Jake hits the ethical bottom by pandering over Brett to the young man with an excuse:

“I must go and find our friends and bring them here.”

He looked at me. It was a final look to ask if it were understood.

It was understood all right (Hemingway 2004: 162).

On his departure from the tavern, Jake expresses his sense of disgrace perhaps on the only occasion of such kind in the whole novel: “The hard-eyed people at the bullfighter table watched me go. It was not pleasant” (Hemingway 2004: 162). If we take the author’s iceberg theory as a true premise, Jake felt a humiliation by one order of magnitude more powerful than he brought himself to verbalise in the text, which added negative sentiments to the following scene, when a furious Cohn inquires about Brett and Jake swings his fist at him – the novel gives a lapidary account of the boxing moves, and the very same night Cohn offers his apology for the incident.

The film takes visual liberty in the absence of first-person retrospection and presents a deeply agitated Jake spilling wine on a Pedro Romero wall poster, snapping at Bill that he has no idea what he feels like, and even deciding to leave town next morning. Cohn enters the café and argues with Jake, but he does not call him a pimp as in the novel – it is Cohn who starts the fight, and the brawl is given much more discourse time than in the fiction. Furthermore, Cohn’s aggression is climbing to its peak when he storms into Brett’s room, dealing Pedro so many blows that the entire sequence loses the indirectness of the second-hand account and turns into the depiction of an angry male wreaking his fury on a weaker opponent.

What is even stranger, Cohn in the novel breaks down and bursts out crying, begging for forgiveness from Jake, Mike, Bill and Pedro, which enhances the fullness of his character and increases the amplitude between his worst and his finest traits – it is not amiss to suppose that the screenplay author toned down Cohn’s personality to adjust it to the melodramatic stock type of the villain, leaving out many details which contribute to the reception of this tormented young man as a wronged person, not simply as a tongue-tied choleric wrongdoer.

To do justice to the film art, no motion picture is under obligation to follow a scene-by-scene adaptation principle, as it would not have attracted the adequate number of viewers, who have their own expectations horizon in mind when buying tickets on a weekend night: spectacular scenery, very wide shots in lavish colours, impeccable lighting (perhaps sometimes too pronounced), “exotic” locations, and a bittersweet love story given additional decency by the experienced cast’s professionalism. This highly standardised product has some advantages over the original work, which lie in its property of depiction, not assertion: the viewer is treated to well-adapted scenography, tasteful interiors, a whole spectrum of vivid colours of ladies’ clothes, the palpable directness of physical proximity in *bal musettes*, and most notably of all, the excitement of genuine Spanish bullfighting, which action-wise is as enjoyable as it is lengthy, no matter how much of its cultural depth is left out of focus. Although it plays like self-parody, not the quintessential expression of male existential purity Hemingway thought it to be (Carr 2010: par. 7), it accords well with the breadth of tolerance to inaccuracies and superficiality that the contemporary audiences generously showered the film with.

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