

## “Sifilus” and “That Awful Lust”: Hemingway’s Struggle with the Social Acceptability of Sexuality

Susan Sontag argues that illness is charged with *metaphor*, or the invented and punitive value pressed upon pure physical state, and that “the most truthful way of regarding illness — and the healthiest way of being ill — is one most purified of, most resistant to, metaphoric thinking” (3, her emphasis). Among other diseases, syphilis, whose cause of infection was attributed to arguably the most guilt-laden activities in the first decades of the twentieth century, carried the worst overtones. Indeed, venereal disease at the turn of the century was used “as a symbol for a society characterized by a corrupt sexuality” (Brandt 5).<sup>1</sup>

Because of this much charged metaphorization, the dawn of the twentieth century was obsessed by the fear of the incurability of this ubiquitous disease, and frightened by the fact that there was no way of knowing if one had contracted syphilis or not. Stephen Kern refers to this situation: “The fear of syphilis in particular was so acute that it generated an independent derivative disease, a special kind of hypochondria called ‘syphilophobia’” (42). The prevention of the disease thus became the foremost target of the social hygiene campaign; especially during the First World War, since the morbidity rate of syphilis among soldiers could exert a considerable influence on military strength. To achieve this tough goal, numerous magazine articles were produced to maintain “the public in a state of alert by keeping syphilis continually in the news” (Quétel 183). In the course

of this campaign, the genteel prudery which notoriously marked the American Victorianism was as it were dragged out of the comfortably hidden boudoir of the nineteenth century social complicity to be exposed by the broadly illuminated sexual enlightenment of the twentieth.

The anti-syphilitic movement after the war, however, returned to the state of the previous century — society's conformity to the genteel indifference to sexual matters. Although the actual number of venereal patients was steadily increasing after the war, direct mention of the names of venereal diseases was no longer permitted in public. The general release of "Fit to Fight," the anti-venereal propaganda film during the war, was vehemently protested by censorship throughout the United States, and "By 1922 the Public Health Service had withdrawn all its anti-venereal films" (Brandt 124). This tendency for eradicating "obscene" words culminated in 1934, at which time Thomas Parran, Jr., New York State Health Commissioner was to hold a lecture concerning venereal diseases. "But the talk was never delivered. Moments before air-time, CBS informed him that he could not mention syphilis and gonorrhea by name; in response to this decision, Parran refused to go on" (Brandt 122).

The time was, in short, a period of confusion in which two attitudes toward sexuality were, contradicting as they were, intertwined and thus coexistent with each other. And it was in this atmosphere that Ernest Hemingway's father, a physician by profession, was incensed by his son's first major collection of short stories, despite his once advanced attitude which led him to provide school children with sex education during the war (Reynolds 119). According to Hemingway's sister, "[Father] told him that no gentleman spoke of venereal disease outside a doctor's office" (Sanford 219). And it was also in this situation that June issue of *Scribner's*

*Magazine*, which serialized Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, was suppressed by the censor in 1929.

We shall in this paper reexamine Hemingway's attitude toward sexuality in order to expose his inner struggle between his desire and the social morality forbidding such desire. Looking at two stories that were derived from letters originally sent to Dr. Logan Clendening, a friend of Hemingway's, shall clarify his relationship to the medical ideology and to the puritanical intolerance against sexual promiscuity. His rather contradictory and equivocal expressions of sexual matters must shed some light upon the previously unrecognized complexities of his life and works.

It is a widely shared assumption that Hemingway, all through his lifetime, pretended to have more sexual experience with women than he really did. Listing many improbable yarns that Hemingway spun, Scott Donaldson insists that these tales of boastings are "totally unsupported by biographical evidence, formed part and parcel of the tough-guy aura with which he invested his youth" (175). As far as we know from his stories, which were often censored or regarded as immoral, and which occasionally depict superficial idealization of prostitutes or promiscuity, he, allegedly as a man of the world and as a manly man, seems to have celebrated libertine values much more than the puritanical values of his cultural heritage.<sup>2</sup> However, a close look at his texts rather indicates the opposite: however hard he may have tried, Hemingway could never escape from the Victorian values implanted in him.

We shall, to begin with, clarify that Hemingway's choice of words, which was often criticized as obscene, was essentially equated with that of the social hygienists of the day. It is aptly illuminating for this purpose to compare Hemingway's

“One Reader Writes” and Eugene Brieux’s *Damaged Goods: A Play in Three Acts*. The play was written for the purpose of warning people against committing acts that cause venereal infection, and theoretically based on *Syphilis and Marriage* — a treatise by Alfred Frounier, the most famous of syphilologists in France at the time. The English translation of the original play was widely performed in the United States in the years prior to and during the war.<sup>3</sup> “The object of this play,” exclaims the theater manager at the beginning of the play, “is a study of the disease of syphilis and its bearing on marriage” (180). In the play, the hero-doctor diagnoses George Dupont as syphilitic, and tries to dissuade him from marriage. The doctor then attempts to extenuate the guilt-laden implication which syphilis conveys to Dupont: “Come now, I repeat, there is nothing in all this beyond the ordinary. It is simply an accident that might happen to anybody . . . .] There is, in fact, none that is more universal” (182). What he attempts to do here is to expose the mystery with which society invests a mere medical disease (“there is nothing in all this beyond the ordinary”); in effect, emancipating venereal patients from a sense of dishonor from contracting this much charged affliction (because “It is simply an accident”). The doctor maintains that his infection was not caused by a sinful act but by mere bad luck.

Dupont, after all, proceeds with the marriage with his fiancé without listening to the doctor’s advice, urged by the necessity of obtaining his bride-to-be’s dowry for buying a notary’s practice. As a result, a year later, a terrible fact comes to light, the fact that a wet nurse has contracted syphilis from Dupont’s baby who shows symptoms of congenital syphilis. Knowing that his son-in-law is the infector, his wife’s father, M. Loches, comes to the doctor’s office to obtain a certificate testifying that his son-in-law had been infected before their marriage,

intending to demand a divorce of him on behalf of his daughter. After a series of futile attempts at dissuading him from the idea of divorce, the doctor asks him if he can truly declare that he has never engaged in the same act as that of his son-in-law's, the act which causes the present disaster.

Come, come: let us have a little plain speaking! I should like to know how many of these rigid moralists, who are so choked with their middle-class prudery that they dare not mention the name syphilis, or when they bring themselves to speak of it do so with expressions of every sort of disgust, and treat its victims as criminals, have never run the risk of contracting it themselves. It is those alone who have the right to talk. How many do you think there are? Four out of a thousand? (232)

Here we should notice that what is under attack in the above quotation is not only the hypocritical double standard of M. Loches, who blames others for the act that he himself is not free of, but also the “prudery” of refraining from articulating the word syphilis in public.

The original text carries a brief letter to Fournier as a preface to the play, excluded in the English translation: “I believe, with you, that syphilis will lose much of its gravity when one dares to speak openly of a sickness [mal] that is not a shame nor a punishment [...]”(qtd. in Leavy 161).<sup>4</sup> In Brieux's conception, the absence of the word “syphilis,” or the lack of appropriate sex education gives rise to the diseased state of society and, thus, the best way of preventing the disease is to openly articulate the word. As George Dupont admits, the newspaper owned by his father has never “printed that word” (198), lest it should lose its readers. This reluctance to speak of the disease, according to the doctor in the play, produces the

rueful condition of society. There is a subtle yet well recognizable landslide under way about the cause of the present disaster: that is, the current familial misery is caused not by sexual intercourse that brought on infection (because few are free of the vice) but by the act of imparting the sense of shame to the biological disease — by unanimous silence of society. To look at the disease itself (to achieve, in Sontag's words, "the healthiest way of being ill"), according to Brioux, one has to deprive syphilis of the mysterious silence haunting the mere physical state. In short, the arch-villain is the act of silence.

According to Leavy, taking the place of the medical profession in his play, "The writer becomes healer, and — conversely — the doctor as literary character becomes one who uses *words* rather than dispenses medicines to heal private and public disease" (161, emphasis is Leavy's). This treatment of the writer-healer dispensing the effective remedy of *words* to the public reminds us of Hemingway's incessant employment of prurient words. It is possible that, by using vulgar language, he not only conveys the actuality of the sexually liberated age but also attempts to cure the social disease by articulating the forbidden words. The similarity between this play and "One Reader Writes," which shall be detailed below, seems well to support this possibility.

The story is one of the most neglected ones written by Hemingway,<sup>5</sup> and the reason for this disregard might be explained in the offhand easiness of its composition. The story was composed from a letter originally sent to Logan Clendening, a Kansas City doctor and a friend of Hemingway's. According to Carlos Baker, "Ernest edited the letter slightly, changing the date and the place-name, and adding a short introduction and conclusion. The result was 'One Reader Writes' — probably the easiest short story he had ever devised" (227). In my view, however,

this story needs more attention all the more for this peculiar composition history, since how Hemingway dealt with the letter reveals his attitude toward the general perception of syphilis. Some scholars have criticized Clendening for giving those six letters to Hemingway as well as the writer for making use of an innocent woman's plight to write a story. Paul Smith, however, objects to these sentiments and maintains that, given the doctor's concern for human suffering and his anger at those religious beliefs that approve the existence of such sufferings, "Hemingway shared that concern and anger; and one simple and effective way to express what he and the doctor felt was to reprint the woman's letter and end it with an appeal, not to the ministers of her day but to 'My Christ'" ("The Doctor" 38). What we should see in the text is not the author's offhandedness in composing the story nor the small quantity of his own writing, but what he wanted to present by using the letter almost as it is.

The story begins with a short introduction composed by Hemingway, which describes a woman who decides to seek advice from a medical column in a newspaper and who writes the letter consisting of the major part of the story. And the short conclusion attached to the letter describes the wife's pitiful prayer to Christ: "It's such a long time though. It's a long time. And it's been a long time. My Christ, it's been a long time" (CSS 321). Afraid of the dreadful disease, she desperately wishes that she and her husband can reunite after the treatment. She has been waiting for her husband for a long time, yet it is very likely, from his infection with syphilis, that he gratified his lust by having intercourse with prostitutes during military service in Shanghai. This scheme is typically seen in the nineteenth-century syphilitic literature, in which syphilis is a punishment for lust, "the most unforgivable of the sins of the fathers" and as "a punishment unjustly

shared by innocent women and children” (Showalter 88). Here, we can recognize that Hemingway retains the clearly established norm about sexuality: to present a female writing *as it is* without the intrusion of a male voice cannot help functioning as a censure of the Victorian double standard.

Yet, of greater importance is the very composition of the letter. Though the content of the letter might be too lengthy to be fully cited, it nevertheless needs our full attention.

May I write you for some very important advice — I have a decision to make and don't know just whom to trust most I dare not ask my parents — and so I come to you — and only because I need not see you, can I confide in you even. Now here is the situation — I married a man in U. S. service in 1929 and that same year he was sent to China, Shanghai — he staid three years — and came home — he was discharged from the service some few months ago — and went to his mother's home in Helena, Arkansas. He wrote for me to come home — I went, and found he is taking a course of injections and I naturally ask, and found he is being treated for I don't know how to spell the word but it sound like this “sifilus” — Do you know what I mean — now tell me will it ever be safe for me to live with him again — I did not come in close contact with him at any time since his return from China. He assures me he will be O K after this doctor finishes with him — Do you think it right — I often heard my Father say one could well wish themselves dead if once they became a victim of that malady — I believe my Father but want to believe my Husband most — Please, please tell me what to do — I have



a daughter born while her Father was in China —

Her misspelling of the word “syphilis” suggests that she might hardly have heard the name of the disease spoken around her, or at least never seen it in the printed form. Yet she knows the problematical aspects of the disease partly because of her father’s instruction: “one could well wish themselves dead if once they became a victim of that malady.” This guilt-laden perception of the disease, like that of M. Loches in *Damaged Goods*, is transmitted to the daughter, who also imbues the disease with the sense of shame. She is, as it were, an exemplar of commonplace prudery about sexual matters in that she seems rather reluctant to broach the subject of the disease and continues lengthy explanations up until the middle of the letter; that she attempts to hide her husband’s disease from everyone around her — even from the local doctor; that she cannot articulate straightforward expressions about sexual matters and thereby employs euphemisms such as “live with him,” and “come in close contact with him” to mean “have sexual intercourse with her husband.” One of the most remarkable aspects in the letter is that, even to a person without any relationship to her real life, she thus falters in articulating the problem. The wife’s misspelling of “sifilus” for “syphilis” symbolizes the society’s complicity of silence<sup>6</sup> about the venereal problem, the complicity which is severely attacked in *Damaged Goods*. The incorrect transcription of the word not only indicates the public ignorance about the problem but also embodies the silence surrounding the disease and its patients, the silence leading to tacit consent to avert their eyes from the disease itself.

Yet the conclusion attached to the end of the story informs us that she vaguely knows the cause of the disease — that the disease is sexually transmitted: “I don’t

care what he did to get it” (CSS 321). Partial knowledge as acquired by the wife in this story, however, necessarily entails much worse psychological effects on a patient’s family. In spite of her husband’s insistence that “he will be O K after this doctor finishes with him,” she cannot fully believe in his health state, assumedly because of the hideous imagery implanted by her father. This is caused not by proper medical knowledge but by the groundless public belief about the disease, the belief which inflamed M. Loches in *Damaged Goods*. All these details of the story, with a tint of irony and pathos, accentuate the scheme, as seen in Brieux’s play, the scheme that prudery about sexual matters and the lack of education lead to the useless condemnation against venereal patients and bring about the needless familial disaster much worsened by the sense of shame on the part of each member of the family.<sup>7</sup>

Taking into account the above mentioned, we should consider that the relationship between Hemingway, the author of this story, and Dr. Logan Clendening, the original recipient of the letter, is very much similar to that between the playwright Brieux and the famous syphilologist Fournier. As Brieux theoretically based his play upon Fournier’s medical opinion, Hemingway was more or less affected by Clendening’s best-selling books (Smith, *Reader’s Guide* 298-99). Usurping the authority of the doctor as Brieux did in his play, Hemingway attempts to give an appropriate solution to the letter on behalf of the original recipient; by showing the woman’s plight, he dispenses words to cure the public ignorance producing worse effects on people’s minds than the disease itself does. Though by no means presenting any effectual solution to her, he shows that the root cause of the tragedy of the disease is her very attitude of prudery, silence, and ignorance. In one sense, by publishing this story, he dispenses a cure to society as a whole rather than to

the wife as a person.

Following social hygienists' viewpoint, Hemingway and Brieaux attempted to strip off the shameful investment — or metaphor in Sontag's word — from venereal patients; in that sense, they were both predecessors of Sontag, who tried to eliminate the psychological stigma from, in her case, cancer. There being no evidence of their contracting venereal disease unlike the case of Sontag, they somehow needed to do this de-metaphorization. Playing the role of a doctor, and attempting to extenuate the immorality of the husband who committed the sin of promiscuity, Hemingway in this story tried to convert religious immorality into a simple mistake in its secular sense.

Then how should we understand his tolerance toward those who perpetrate the sinful act resulting in venereal infection. This tolerance is possibly caused by his fear of syphilis caused by his hidden desires bringing on the disease. In his essay, *Death in the Afternoon*, he maintains thus: "Three things keep boys from promiscuous intercourse, religious belief, timidity, and fear of venereal diseases. The last is most commonly the basis of appeal made by the Y.M.C.A and other institutions for clean living" (103).<sup>8</sup> In the puritanical viewpoint, syphilis is the result of the wrath of God against abnormal sexual intercourse. As we can know from the posthumous publication of *The Garden of Eden*, and Carl P. Eby's meticulous study on Hemingway's sexual preferences, it is almost certain that he had sexual desires socially unacceptable in his time. Living in the sexually liberated age, and brought up in the rigid puritanical tradition, he could never succeed in reconciling his inner desire and the moral standards implanted in him.<sup>9</sup> Unable to abandon such dreadful sexual appetite, and also unable to reject the social norms about sexuality, his conscience must have constantly scourged his own sinfulness

throughout his life.

Another story written based on a letter sent to Clendening provides us with Hemingway's attempt to reconcile his deepest desire with the puritanical morality of the day. "God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen" deals with a boy who wants to be castrated because he cannot accept his burgeoning sexual desire to which he refers as "that awful lust" and "a sin against purity" (CSS 299-300). After he comes to the hospital to ask doctors to perform castration only to be rejected, he cuts off his own penis with a razor and is dying from excessive bleeding on Christmas Day. Considering Clendening's constant charge against the inhuman and absurd (for the eyes of the scientific age) doctrine of religious institutions, and considering Hemingway's sympathy with him as well, this story seems a condemnation of anachronistic beliefs in religion in favor of scientific medicine. The boy, in this line of analysis, is a trapped victim of erroneous piety that goes hand in hand with a lack of sex education, caused by the society's conspiratorial silence about sexual matters or the prudery typical of the puritanical society. Distressed by his uncontrollable desire, he decides to go to the hospital, not to a confessional.

Yet it is a curious fact that the role assigned to the doctors in the story does not properly function to support the superiority of medicine over religion. Doctor Wilcox, one of the two doctors, obviously lacks ability as a doctor, since he cannot get along without "*The Young Doctor's Friend and Guide*, which, being consulted on any given subject, told symptoms and treatment" (CSS 298). His blind reliance on the guidebook without judging the case by himself reminds us not only of his inability but of the Pharisaic rigidity in obeying the written rules. The boy confesses his sin not to the priest with the Bible but to the doctor with a guidebook.<sup>10</sup> Doc Fischer, the other doctor, also is powerless in the attempt to persuade the boy

of his naturalness. The boy being about to die, the two doctors endlessly and aimlessly continue to quarrel as if to blame the boy's impending death on each other; Doc Fischer insinuates Doctor Wilcox's inability in the form of vulgar irony ("he was unable to find this emergency [the boy's self-mutilation] listed in his book."), and Doctor Wilcox teases Doc Fischer about his pretending to be a Christian in spite of the fact that he is actually a Jew, a fact which Doc Fischer refers to as "my achilles tendon" (CSS 300-01). The boy, as it were, comes to a confessional under a religious opposition between a Pharisee and a Christ-killer disguised as a Christian.<sup>11</sup>

There exists another character in the scene, when the boy visits the hospital — Horace, a journalist. He is the first person narrator of the tale and complicit with the silence around sexual matters. When Doc Fischer asks the boy what the problem is, the boy's answer is summarized by the narrator thus: "The boy told him" (CSS 299). The boy's consultation is, even though self-evident for the reader, left to the reader's imagination. Similarly, the doctor attempts to give sex education to the boy to dissuade him from the foolish attempt of castration, and the narrator describes the scene thus: "[. . .] and he told the boy certain things" (CSS 300). The content of the "certain things" is not specified. The problem of sexuality is actually spoken and discussed, yet the narrator leaves it unmentioned in a way which reminds us of Victorian prudery. Essentially it is the same sort of silence on the part of the society that results in the tragic misunderstanding of the boy, the misunderstanding which is caused by the lack of appropriate sex education.

We should consider that this religio-medical image of the doctors and the prudery in sexual matters reflect Hemingway's father, who was a doctor. In "Fathers

and Sons,” his semi-autobiographical story, the protagonist, reading in the paper a singer’s arrest on charges of mashing, asks his father what “mashing” means.

“It is one of the most heinous of crimes,” his father answered. Nick’s imagination pictured the great tenor doing something strange, bizarre, and heinous with a potato masher to a beautiful lady who looked like the pictures of Anna Held on the inside of cigar boxes. He resolved, with considerable horror, that when he was old enough he would try mashing at least once. (CSS 371)

This comical passage well captures the painful situation in which silence about sexual matters produces a crooked imagination investing the matter with much charged implications. Though this conversation might be fictional, the author’s father is ostensibly the model for this typical Victorian character.<sup>12</sup> If the boy in “God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen” is a victim of prudish morality, the problem that afflicts the boy also afflicted the author since his boyhood. In light of Hemingway’s fear of violating the morality of the day, it is very likely that the boy, who desperately wants to deprive himself of “that awful lust” and who confesses his alleged sin to the priest-doctor, reflects the author’s hidden sense of guilt for having “that awful lust.” The boy’s cut-off penis is a symbol of the author’s forbidden sexual desire, and thus the boy’s possible death is a vicarious expiation for his lust. Not successful in escaping both from the rigid puritanical morality and from his desire (unlike the boy in the story who succeeded at the cost of his own life), Hemingway sublimates his substitute into a victim, a martyr, or a Christ figure.

Though Hemingway declares in the posthumously published “fictional mem-

oir,” *True at First Light*, that “I was as afraid as the next man in my time and maybe more so. But with the years, fear had come to be regarded as a form of stupidity to be classed with overdrafts, acquiring a venereal disease or eating candies” (*TFL* 283), it is doubtful whether he really overcame the fear of syphilis; since the fear is tightly linked to the fear of his immoral sexual desire, which he could never abandon until death.<sup>13</sup> The description of his medical treatment of venereal patients in an African village, the description which lasts as many as four pages long, rather betrays the considerable fear he once had in the pre-penicillin age. We should surmise that the sudden relief from the fear by the discovery of the antibiotic<sup>14</sup> found an outlet for the suppressed anxiety in the form of the overabundant recording of his treatment and of the overemphasis of the tractability of the disease. In other words, though the fear of syphilis was removed by the antibiotic, the more fundamental fear that he was violating a deep-seated morality inscribed in his body must have remained to prick his sense of guilt. His desire itself was, as it were, a crown of thorns on his head, tormenting his inner psyche throughout his life.

Hemingway, all through his lifetime, attempted to be seen as a manly man living the life of a libertine. Hemingway scholars have hitherto focused either on his licentious aspect that attempted to revolt against the genteel tradition of his hometown or on his hidden self that was recently discovered to be much more feminine than the outward disguise; however, as we have seen in this paper, his attitude toward sexuality cannot simplistically be determined as by previous critics. Rather he wavered all through his lifetime between his own desire prohibited in the puritanical society on the one hand and his inmost fear of the wrath of God as embodied in venereal diseases. The two stories which were derived from the

letters sent to Logan Clendening indicate us the key to understanding the hidden aspect of Hemingway's sexuality under the surface of the simplistic public image of the author.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Stephen Kern settles this situation as follows: "It was an ideal Protestant disease, as well as an ironically Victorian disease" (42).

<sup>2</sup> Comley and Scholes insist that "Mr. and Mrs. Elliot," one of Hemingway's early stories, "is based on a binary opposition, deeply embedded in American culture, between puritan and libertine. In this instance the opposition takes the form of sex as sensual pleasure versus sex as procreative duty" (83). In my view, however, this binary opposition is not limited to this story alone, but almost universally recognized in the whole of Hemingway's texts. Brought up in a later Victorian family, Hemingway could not see sex as sensual pleasure.

<sup>3</sup> For the circumstances around the play before the war, see Brandt 47. Quétel also states that "in 1913 it [*Damaged Goods*] was staged on Broadway after a 'Sociological Fund' created for the purpose had collected the necessary monies to put on this militant play. There was even a special performance in Washington before President Wilson and the members of Congress — a political act intended to make an official break with the conspiracy of silence deplored by the American medical profession" (158). As to the period during the war, the note to the fourth edition of *Three Plays by Brieux* published in 1917, which contains this play, records that "the ban of the Censor has been removed from two of [the plays included in the volume]." And this is "because the war [...] has given the most urgent importance to Brieux's subject-matter in the case of *Damaged Goods* [sic], which has been performed nightly for many months in London, and is still running at the St. Martin's Theatre as I write" (viii*a*).

<sup>4</sup> Translation and the bracketed annotation is Leavy's.

<sup>5</sup> According to Paul Smith, "The only extended analysis of the story is Mark Edelson's" (*Reader's Guide* 299).

<sup>6</sup> Edelson maintains that "The story's theme is communication — and more especially *non*-communication — between people" (Edelson 330). This non-communication, recurrent motif in Hemingway's works, can be enlarged from the personal problem as viewed by Edelson to that of the society as a whole, since the prudery and ignorance of the wife were typical of the ordinary people in those days.

<sup>7</sup> In spite of the claim both by the doctor who treats the husband in "One Reader Writes" and by



the doctor in *Damaged Goods*, syphilis had been incurable until penicillin was put to use in 1942. However, Brieux and Hemingway believed the contrary — that the disease was much more slight than it really was, following the theory of, respectively, Fournier and Clendening.

<sup>8</sup> Also in the semi-autobiographical tale, “Fathers and Sons,” Hemingway, perhaps based on his childhood memory, summarizes thus: “His [The protagonist’s] father had summed up the whole matter by stating that masturbation produced blindness, insanity, and death, while a man who went with prostitutes would contract hideous venereal diseases and that the thing to do was to keep your hands off of people”(CSS 371).

<sup>9</sup> Michael Reynolds states about Hemingway’s hometown as follows: “In Oak Park a man married the woman he lay with. In his fiction he might escape that unwritten rule, but in his own life Hemingway was a native son. He was capable of one night stands and casual beddings, but he could not sustain an affair without marrying the woman or at least asking” (147). Hadley, Hemingway’s first wife, referring to their divorce afterwards, comments: “If Ernest had not been brought up in that damned stuffy Oak Park environment [. . .] he would not have thought that when you fall in love extramaritally you have to get a divorce and marry the girl” (qtd. in Kert 226).

<sup>10</sup> We should remember that, at the height of the anti-syphilitic movement at the beginning of the twentieth century, there was a consensus among doctors that “it is necessary to ‘act as a confessor to the patient’ in order to reduce [. . .] ‘the moral pains of syphilis’ ” (Quétel 196). As to the religious discourse in “God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen,” see Monteiro.

<sup>11</sup> Regarding Hemingway and anti-Semitism, see Wilentz.

<sup>12</sup> About the prudery of Hemingway’s father, see Spilka.

<sup>13</sup> See Eby for abundant biographical evidence.

<sup>14</sup> The industrial production of penicillin began in 1941 in the United States. See Quétel 249.

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