

Reflection of Hemingway and Fitzgerald's Health Problems in Their Literary Heritages

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Abstract—This paper will demonstrate how Ernest Hemingway and F. Scot Fitzgerald's experience with their own health problems, influence on their life and writing. Both of them consumed alcohol a lot and they took several physical problems from drinking. While they were fighting with different illnesses and problems, they managed their creative writings forward to illness and death. From the First World War; Hemingway had physical and emotional injuries that according to them wrote his *A Farewell to Arms*. As F.Scot Fitzgerald's wife, Zelda had mental problem, that time physical penance and healthcare were main themes in his writing.

Index Terms—Hemingway, Fitzgerald, illness, insomnia, depression, psychiatric

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper is about two of the greatest writers of the world whose heritages have their own specific role in the literature. In 20th century Ernest Miller Hemingway and F. Scot Fitzgerald occupied a prominent place in American Literary history and both of them had health problems that it can be seen their reflection on the writers life and works.

It can be said when people are in positive mood they are most creative) and in fact mental illnesses such as depression or schizophrenia reduce creativity. "People who have worked in the field of arts throughout the history have had problems with poverty, persecution, social alienation, psychological trauma, substance abuse, high stress" (Takahiro, 2009) and other such environmental factors that are related with developing and possibly causing mental illness. "Therefore it is probably that when creativity itself is associated with good moods, gladness, and mental health, pursuing a career in the arts might bring problems with stressful environment and income" (Flaherty, 2005). Also it can be mentioned physical problems such as heart attack, liver damage, and blood pressure are other subject that can decrease creativity.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

There are a lot of researchers and literary sources that wrote about Hemingway and Fitzgerald's life and literary heritages. The published source *Hemingway the Writer's Art of Self-Defense* was done by Benson Jackson J., in 1969. "According to Professor Benson, Ernest Hemingway and his writing have had the curious quality of seeming to be one thing and turning out, time after time, to be something else entirely. At first he appeared to be a cocky young journalist who wrote stories about tough people on the fringes of society, and yet in the collected stories, the stories concerned with relatively normal people in domestic situations far outnumber those concerned with gangsters, boxers, and prostitutes. Those works that deal with hunting and fishing, his themes are more concerned with the mental and moral conditions of the participants than with the physical aspects of the sports themselves" (Benson, 1969).

The next literary source is *A Historical Guide to Ernest Hemingway; the editor is Linda Wagner Martin, Oxford university press, 2000*. Linda Wagner Martin writes on twentieth-century American literature, biography, women's writing and pedagogy. "By the author each volume as well contains a capsule biography and illustrated chronology detailing significant cultural events as they coincided with the writer's life and works, while photographs and illustrations dating from the period capture the flavor of the writer's time and social milieu. Equally accessible to students of literature and of life, the volumes offer a complete and rounded picture of each writer in his or her America. Here at the turn into the twenty-first century, Ernest Hemingway has become synonymous with American writer. Writing is serious business, Hemingway reminds us, the most important business anyone can undertake" (Wagner, 2000).

A research was done by Matthew J. Bruccoli that he stated "By the end of 2005, there were more than one hundred books about Fitzgerald, containing compilation essays. Only completely committed specialists are familiar with most of these works, and only the largest research libraries hold all of them. Some researchers outside of the academic groves need a Fitzgerald vade mecum to provide the facts and details. Serious Fitzgerald readers will study everything he inscribed. Everything means everything. Some of it is uneven; but it is all Fitzgerald, and it all connects. At that time

review his best books if necessary with the help of other works to found the information that Fitzgerald built into his creative writing.” (Tate, 2007).

The next book is the *The Far Side of Paradise, a biography of F. Scott Fitzgerald by Arthur Mizener and a new introduction by Mathew J. Bruccoli, 2006*. In this source Mizener noted that “there are three concentric areas of interest in a study of Scott Fitzgerald. At the heart of it is *his work*, for he was a *natural writer* if only in the sense that from his grade-school days until the end of his life nothing was ever quite real to him until he had written about it. *Zelda* is the second area of interest for a study of him, only less absorbing than the first, and, because his imagination worked so immediately from his experience, very related to it. The third area of interest is the *time and place* in which he lived. His time and place haunted him every minute of his life and the effect of his preoccupation is what most obviously distinguishes his work from that of the good sociological novelists like Doss Passos on the one hand and, on the other, from that of the emotional and self-regarding novelists” (Darzikola & Keshmiri, 2015).

The next literary source that has much useful information is *The Cambridge Companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald. It has been published in 2002* and this book has different analysis of Fitzgerald’s creative writing, and the consequences their receptions. Another interesting subject that reader can find of this volume is about Fitzgerald’s life and gives a special picture of social and cultural background of America in the twentieth century. Fitzgerald’s reputation, in the new millennium, is firmer than it has ever been and his celebrity resides in his achievements as an American writer whose masterpieces continue to be passed on to new generations of readers throughout America and the world” (Prigozy, 2002). One of the essays is related to the paper topic is “A lost decade: exploring F Scott Fitzgerald’s contribution to the illness canon through the doctor-nurse series and other healthcare stories of the 1930s by Kerr L. According this research F Scott Fitzgerald spent the 1930s writing about illness themes while he struggled with tuberculosis, insomnia, alcoholism, heart disease and the mental illness of his wife Zelda. During this decade, Fitzgerald published six stories that prominently feature hospitals and healthcare professionals. These stories, the ‘doctor-nurse stories’, along with nine additional published stories that touch upon medical themes have not previously been investigated as a thematic grouping. This paper explores the 1930s stories in the context of Fitzgerald’s life and career in order to highlight his significant yet previously undervalued contribution to the canon of illness literature and his work’s relevance to the field of literature and medicine” (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22628406>).

The next related essay is *Sleeping and waking*, by F. Scott Fitzgerald. He wrote in this paper: When many years ago he read Ernest Hemingway’s *Now I Lay Me*, he thought there was nothing further to be said about insomnia. After that he saw that that was because he had never had much; it appears that every man’s insomnia is as different from his neighbor’s as are their daytime hopes and aspirations” (<http://theessayexperiencefall2013>).

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher read books and papers that present the major issues and concerned of in theme of illnesses and creativity. Next, the required information has been collected by library research, internet surfing and journal analyses. In this paper, it has been tried to show parts of Ernest Hemingway and F.Scot Fitzgerald’s life by studying of their biographical work to get a clear picture of their response to the age that both of them lived in. At the next stage the health problems of two authors, Hemingway and Fitzgerald has been examined by reading and analyzing different critical works.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Hemingway was distinguished to have an uncommon illness, Hemochromatosis and because of this problem he became bipolar. On his life a logical looking for a psychiatric perspective is with his family of origin. Hemingway wrote, in *A Moveable Feast*, “Families have many ways of being dangerous” (Hemingway, 1964), and they were dangerous to him in different ways, not the least of that was the genetic heritage they gave to him. Hemingway’s father who was a physician had health problems and suffered from depression and his family was in bad condition because of his dramatic and unpredictable mood. Finally Dr. Hemingway could not accept his health problems and financial concerns so in the last month of 1928 killed himself by shooting in his head. He took his life and maybe released himself from all problems but put very bad effect to his family (Mellow and Hemingway, 1992).

Ernest mother, “Grace Hemingway, suffered from episodes of insomnia, headaches, and nerves. Some of others family members, Grace’s brother, Leicester, and Clarence’s brother, Alfred had similar problems” (Reynolds, 1986). Ernest’s siblings have been identified in same condition because his sister Marcelline had depression problem and when she died the family suspected suicide.¹ is other sister, Ursula, and his brother, Leicester committed suicide” (Burgess, 1987). ., (Reynolds, 1986). So, it can be said the Hemingway family has a history of health problems and suicide.

“Throughout the 1924 episode, Hemingway quickly wrote seven short stories. In 1934, he experienced another immense accession of energy, that he depicted as *juice* and found to be *bad as a disease*” (Baker, 1969). One of events that deeply mirrored on Hemingway’s life and writings was his eye injuring that occurred when he was an amateur boxing. For this reason he rejected to become a soldier in world wars and accepted as an American Red Cross ambulance driver in Italy. There he was injured from fight fields that it was another mirrored event on his life and creative writing.

When Hemingway was working as a reporter he had begun drinking large amounts of alcohol. "Hemingway's first marriage failed and escalated with the worsening of his relationship with his mother and his father's suicide was reason of his daily drinking in the early 1920s" (Lynn, 1987). "Because of consuming alcohol he presented to a physician complaining of stomach pain, was found to have hepatic damage in 1937" (Ibid).

It can be said Hemingway's drinking affected on his works and his body and many times he was told to quit alcohol but he did not accept. "And when his third wife, Martha, visit him in hospital and saw alcohol bottles near him it was time that the death knell sounded for his third marriage" (Lynn, 1987).

"Another reason of his drinking was his father suicide. In 1957, Hemingway's friend AJ Monnier inscribed directly, my dear Ernie, you *must stop* drinking alcohol. This is clearly of the most importance, and I shall never, never insist too much" (Monnier, 1957). Hemingway could not give up and the physical problems that he took from drinking were overweight, high blood pressure, hearing sounds in his head, and signs of cirrhosis of the liver.

In Hemingway's creative works; there is an adaptive defensive strategy for dealing with disorder moods and suicidal impulses as Baker noted that for Hemingway, "the story ached to be told" (Baker, 1969). Hemingway in *A Farewell to Arms*, wrote about Fredrick Henry, a young man who was injured in the First World War and while he was in hospital. fell in love with an American Red Cross nurse "His fiction character, Henry was injured in similar manner and geographical location as was Hemingway while he served as an ambulance driver on the Italian front" (Hemingway, 1929). "Hemingway too fell in love with an American nurse, and the two entered into a love affair. Hemingway and his nurse probably never consummated their relationship, and though he hoped to marry her, in the end she did not accept him in a letter when he returned home to Chicago" (Baker, 1969).

Also it can be mentioned from the First World War; Hemingway had physical and emotional injuries that writing about those wounds and applying twists of fantasy may have served a defensive role for him. In 1960, he started to lose his battle with depression and suicide. As he sent a letter to his friend, A.E. Hotchner, "I'll tell you, Hotch, it is like being in a Kafka nightmare. I act cheerful like always but am not. I'm bone tired and very beat up emotionally. He began to worry that his friends were plotting to kill him and that the FBI was monitoring him" (Lynn, 1987). Maybe these paranoid illusions are because of his bipolar illness and much drinking alcohol.

One of the Hemingway's final year's problems was his departing of Finca Vig because of Fidel Castro enforcing and Hemingway was not happy in last years of his life due to the fact that FBI control center bothered him and he was worry for his money and security. In Mayo Clinic, many times he was treated by electroconvulsive therapy. Unfortunately, shock therapy damaged his memory and for this depriving he could not remember what he need to shape his writings. In the *New York Times*, A.E. Hotchner explained that the novelist "was afraid that the FBI was after him, that his body was disintegrating, that his friends had turned on him, and that living was no longer an option. Writes Hotchner, Decades later, in response to a Freedom of Information petition, the FBI released its Hemingway file. It revealed that beginning in the 1940s J. Edgar Hoover had placed Ernest under surveillance because he was suspicious of Ernest's activities in Cuba" (Swaine, 2011). Hotchner states: "In the years since, I have tried to reconcile Ernest's fear of the FBI, which I regretfully misjudged, with the reality of the FBI file. I now believe he truly sensed the surveillance and that it substantially contributed to his anguish and his suicide" (Ibid.).

When Hemingway's illnesses increased and he aged his literary creations like *Across the River and into the Trees* and *Islands in the Stream* were criticized but Hemingway's name was recuperated by his *The Old Man and the Sea* "Hemingway's use of writing as a defense mechanism is suggested by his own words in response to reading F. Scott Fitzgerald's article, *The Crack Up*, which told the tale of its writer's own struggle with depression. Hemingway thought Fitzgerald should understand work was the thing that would save him if he would only 'bite on the nail' and get down to it, honest work with honest fiction, a paragraph at a time" (Baker, 1969).

While F. Scott Fitzgerald was fighting with different illnesses such as tuberculosis, insomnia, alcoholism and heart disease, he managed his creative writing forward to illness. Another reason to write this form fiction was his wife Zelda's mental illness. As well as in the middle of his life he stung by malaria. He believed that alcohol drinking improved his creative powers as he stated that "a short story can be written on the bottle, but for a novel you need the mental speed that enables you to keep the whole pattern in your head" (Ed Day, 2003).

During the mid-1930s, Fitzgerald's health deteriorated as his alcoholism intensified, and he was repeatedly hospitalized. In the fall of 1936 Fitzgerald suffering Hemingway's reference to him in *The Snows of Kilimanjaro* as a drunken, pitiful failure, tried to rededicate himself to writing. He worked intermittently on an historical novel set in ninth-century France. Begun in 1934, the novel was never completed, though *Redbook Magazine* bought four installments, now known as the *Count of Darkness* or *Philippe* stories. He had more success with *Author's House* and *Afternoon of an Author*, autobiographical essays or stories that appeared in *Esquire* in 1936. The following year he wrote *Financing Finnegan*, a story about an editor and agent who have to support a brilliant but unreliable author; the story, published by *Esquire* in 1938, amusingly reflects Fitzgerald's relationship with Perkins and Ober.

It can be said, Fitzgerald works in 1930s had covered to aspects of literature and medicine. All through these days, physical penance and healthcare were main themes in his writing.

As Hemingway and Fitzgerald mirrored their personal experience in their works; Fitzgerald's wife mental problem formed his creative writing "Although, Fitzgerald had been drafting the manuscript, that would gradually become

Tender is the Night since 1925, his 1932 notebooks reveal that Zelda's illness was the determining factor in his final approach to the novel" (kerr, 2012) which finally focused on the disintegrating marriage of this couple.

Fitzgerald suffered of insomnia and mental crisis that they have shown in a three- part article for Esquire magazine. Also in *The Crack-Up*, he stated "that you don't feel until it's too late to do anything about it, until you realize with finality that in some regard you will never be as good a man again" (<https://www.goodreads.com/user>).

When *Tender is the Night* was being written, Fitzgerald's alcoholic characters became more. Also it can be seen the trace of illnesses and alcoholism in his *Babylon Revisited* and *A New Leaf, Crazy Sunday* and *Family in the Wind*.

In 1935, because of Fitzgerald's tuberculosis outbreak he was sent to hospital again. "Between 1932 and 1937, Fitzgerald was admitted to hospital eight times for alcoholism, chronic inactive fibroid tuberculosis, or both, and once for an ailment tentatively diagnosed as typhoid fever" (kerr, 2012).these diseases became main theme in his works, "*The Saturday Evening Post*, which published all the early 1930s alcoholic stories except *Crazy Sunday*, would eventually decline Fitzgerald's work on topics like alcoholism and mental illness, considering them taboo and unsuitable for their mainstream audience" (kerr, 2012).

One of places that Fitzgerald used to write his works was Johns Hopkins Hospital that there was inpatient. "[I] realized after I left the place that I had been accumulating material for some writing and hadn't known it at the time, So followed One Interne [1932] a short story with a hospital as its scene" (kerr, 2012).Fitzgerald's the six doctor-nurse stories were written according this visit.

When Fitzgerald found out because of illnesses could not write well in a letter mentioned to her wife: "Well, that was the time of my two-year sickness, T.B., the shoulder, etc. and you were at a most crucial point and I was foolishly trying to take care of Scottie and for one reason or another I lost the knack of writing the particular kind of stories they wanted" (kerr, 2012).

Edward J Gleason explained that "nearly all of Fitzgerald's *Esquire* stories and even his final novel *The Last Tycoon* offer a parade of doomed characters and are full of images and allusions that reveal Fitzgerald's depressed state of mind. Even in *The Last Tycoon*, an incomplete masterpiece that would be published after Fitzgerald's death, the character Cecelia is a patient with tuberculosis who relays her story from a sanatorium" (Kerr, 2012).

Again Fitzgerald's alcohol and sweetened coffee drinking sent him to bed. That time he was writing *the love of the Last Tycoon* and inscribed to Zelda: "The cardiogram shows that my heart is repairing itself, but it will be a gradual process that will take some months. It is odd that the heart is one of the organs that do repair itself" (Brucoli, 1981).According to Petry hinting Fitzgerald is, "the greatest example of an American author whose private life is reflected, consciously or otherwise, in virtually everything he wrote" (kerr, 2012).

But this paper should not be full without analysis of the last works of the author. So, the first of the posthumously published works of Fitzgerald worth to be mentioned is *The Love of the Last Tycoon*. It would be his final treatment of themes central to his work, particularly the pursuit of the *American Dream* of success and the fulfillment of heroic aspirations.

This novel is commonly measured a roman a clef, enthused by the life of film producer Irving Thalberg, on whom protagonist Monroe Stahr is based on. He finds himself not only trying to get love and accomplishment in a world of cut-throats, but struggling for his own life. He is working unbreakable to make admirable movies and preserve his standards against aggressive studio forces. Stahr personifies Fitzgerald's image of the tycoon, the pioneer, who believed his quest had dominated American history and had supplied a model for Fitzgerald himself: "It is the history of me and of my people. And if I came here yesterday like Sheilah I should still think so. It is the history of all aspiration – not just the *American Dream* but the human dream and if I came at the end of it that too is a place in the line of the pioneers" (Fitzgerald, 1987).

The novel follows Stahr's promoting power in Hollywood, and his conflicts with rival Pat Brady, a character derived from studio leader Louis B. Mayer. The comments for the novel were firstly gathered and edited by Edmund Wilson, and the uncompleted novel was published in 1941 by the title of *The Last Tycoon*. The title was supplied from a list of rejected working titles in Fitzgerald's comments for the novel; although there is now critical agreement that Fitzgerald planned *The Love of the Last Tycoon* to be the book's title. Wilson provided a text of *The Last Tycoon* for the common reader, accumulating the episodes into chapters. By this redacting, Wilson aimed to represent the episodes in much more completed form than in Fitzgerald's draft.

Fitzgerald, in his last novel appears to have mastered lots of the inadequacies of his preceding writings and was prepared to symbolize convincingly in *The Last Tycoon* the tragic ideal with which he had established his profession as a writer. *The Last Tycoon* remains a demonstration to Fitzgerald's literary genius. "The revised edition of this novel won the Choice Outstanding Academic Books award of 1995" (Fitzgerald, 1941).

The next posthumously printed fiction is *The Crack-up* in August 1945. It should be noted that Fitzgerald was piously and economically at a low point in 1935. His plots had become slackly created and his heroes were unpersuasive. *The supreme achievement of the human mind* was perceptibly the ideal that Fitzgerald had set for himself as a writer. But the tragedy of his life was that he never attained the ultimate security for the affable personal situations that might have allowed him to achieve it. At the time of his *crack-up*, Fitzgerald appeared to have felt that he was no more able to write even the type of stories that the magazines would prefer to publish. This drying up of his source of earnings, jointly with Zelda's weakening condition and his own worsening healthiness, made his vision undeniably

bleak. He was an ill, weary, depressed man of thirty-eight who felt he had lost the capability to think deeply. For the first time in his occupation he was creating actually hack work which was different from commercial work.

"In *The Crack-Up* he explained that he no longer believed Life was something you dominated if you were any good" (Fitzgerald. F. Scott, 1945) but instead found him helpless and emotionally bankrupt, both as a human being and as a writer.

In his influential review of *The Crack-Up* Lionel Trilling recognized Fitzgerald's *heroic awareness*: "The root of Fitzgerald's heroism is to be found, as it sometimes is in tragic heroes, in his power of love" (Bloom Harold, 2006).

"In 1999, Modern American Library asked scholars, critics and authors to list the greatest novels of the last 100 years. *The Great Gatsby* was ranked 2nd just under James Joyce's *Ulysses*; *Tender is the Night* came in 28th. Ernest Hemingway placed 45th for *The Sun Also Rises* and came in 74th for *A Farewell to Arms*" (F. Scott Fitzgerald).

Fitzgerald's 1930 decade can be considered as a dark period, in which his illness especially his alcoholism, and Zelda's hospitalization had a deep impact on his core identity and his writing, notably in *Tender is the Night*, Fitzgerald's personal tragedy.

V. CONCLUSION

One of events that deeply mirrored on Hemingway's life and writings was his eye injuring that occurred when he was an amateur boxing. For this reason he rejected to become a soldier in world wars and accepted as an American Red Cross ambulance driver in Italy. There he was injured from fight fields that it was another mirrored event on his life and creative writing. Hemingway in *A Farewell to Arms*, wrote about Fredrick Henry, a young man who was injured in the First World War and while he was in hospital fell in love with an American Red Cross nurse same as him. It can be said Hemingway's drinking affected on his works and his body and many times he was told to quit alcohol but he did not accept and that time his third wife, Martha, left him. When Hemingway's illnesses increased and he aged his literary creations like *Across the River and into the Trees* and *Islands in the Stream* were criticized, but Hemingway's name was recuperated by his *The Old Man and the Sea*.

While F.Scott Fitzgerald was fighting with different illnesses such as tuberculosis, insomnia, alcoholism and heart disease, he managed his creative writing forward to illness. Another reason to write this form fiction was his wife Zelda's mental illness. Fitzgerald's wife mental problem formed his creative writing. As well as in the middle of his life he stung by malaria. He believed that alcohol drinking improved his creative powers. Also it can be seen the trace of illnesses and alcoholism in his *Babylon Revisited* and *A New Leaf*, *Crazy Sunday* and *Family in the Wind*.

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