

Hunger in Hemingway's A Moveable Feast: An Analysis in terms of Food Metaphors

Reshma Anna Thomas, Geetha R. Pai

Abstract: This paper aims at carrying out a textual analysis of Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast* with regard to identifying food and drinks as a metaphor gratifying various forms of hunger in the novel through quantitative analysis. The focus will be upon the conceptual metaphor, where meaning is derived from everyday language and thought. Hunger can be seen as a positive creative force for Hemingway and he wishes to return to his youthful days at Paris and revive the vivaciousness that was present in him. A list of food and drink items used by the author is identified and represented as a chart, depending upon its occurrence in the novel, against the various hunger forms identified to form a statistical analysis. His memories of the days, well spent, in Paris and his appetite to be the greatest author ever can be traced in this particular work. Thus, a conclusion is reached where the author discovers an incentive in the moderate procedure, regardless of it being giving oneself a chance to be eager before a meal or the journey towards being a great writer; the wait is a part of it.

Keywords: Hunger, Metaphor, Conceptual Metaphor, Food, Drinks, Wine.

I. INTRODUCTION

The special relation between metaphor and literature has come under light in recent decades because of the launch of the cognitive-linguistic approach to metaphor by Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) famous book *Metaphors We Live By*. The present study is based on the fundamental standards of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, as initially propounded by Lakoff and Johnson. One of the statute of Conceptual Metaphor Theory that has pulled in acknowledgement since its initiation is the case that metaphor is basically a matter of customary, daily thoughts, as opposed to being used as a literary device. Ernest Hemingway, was an American author and journalist whose extraordinary style of writing, practical and downplayed style, known as the *Iceberg theory*, played a strong influence on the twentieth century writers and fiction. He served for the Red Cross during World War I and after being severely injured in Italy, he moved to Paris. *A Moveable Feast* is a book that allures readers through its depiction of sensual pleasures and irradiated accounts of the meals Hemingway delighted in amid his stay in Paris. All through the novel, Hemingway is portraying his day by day interactions with popular authors, artists, companions, family, and even library proprietors. "If you are lucky enough to have lived in Paris as a young man, then wherever you go for the rest of your life, it stays with you, for Paris is a moveable feast." Ernest Hemingway to a friend, 1950. He spent a good part of his youth in Paris discovering new territories, meeting up with critical social figures and acquiring the motivation required for an author. The insatiable appetite in him needed to write down one 'true sentence', which was his heart's deepest desire.

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It can be seen that most of his characters are always hungry, leaving a void in them which needs to be filled, depending upon a deep, universal human craving. *A Moveable Feast* is one such work where Hemingway combines occasions of his interactions with some of the most vital twentieth century social figures with perceptions about the subtleties of his daily life.



Fig 1 Ernest Hemingway at a Café in Paris

Metaphor is usually seen as "a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable." (dictionary.com) Metaphorical language substitute's one thing for another; Lakoff and Johnson asserts that "the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (5). This paper is categorized as follows: Second section, 74 rue du Cardinal Lemoine, focuses on the methodology used in this research analysis. Third section is the data analysis and presentation. It has two sub-topics: Hunger was Good Discipline and Memory is Hunger dealing with a detailed analysis of the text as well as the acquired quantitative data and finally the Fourth section concludes and summarizes the important findings of this analysis.

II. 74 RUE DU CARDINAL LEMOINE – THE METHODOLOGY

Throughout Hemingway's works, hunger is related to different desires vacillating from compositions, reacting to critics, and the pursuit for love. In order to undertake this research, I have used the methodology of quantitative analysis and the books named *A Moveable Feast* and *Metaphors We Live By*. Lakoff and Johnson's theory of conceptual metaphor draws a vivid picture of Hemingway reminiscing the days he spent in Paris– the place which inspired him and taught him the path to being the greatest author of his age. Hunger plays the role of a central metaphor in his memoir, *A Moveable Feast*, in order to consume life as part of his youthful desire. He mentions in his novel on how he eats mandarins and roasted chestnuts while writing and then tosses the mandarin peels in the fire; he and Hadley visits Gertrude Stein at her salon, who offers them fruit



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liqueurs distilled from purple plums, yellow plums, and raspberries. He uses hunger (both metaphorically and physically) to discipline himself to become the best writer and it can be noticed that often he skips having lunch in order to make himself hungry pretending that he cannot afford to go out for food but informs his wife that he had lunch with his friends. Hunger, craving and desire are present in every work of Hemingway and sustenance is included profoundly and metaphorically. Experience, to Hemingway, is irreversibly connected to utilization.



Fig 1.1

The original meaning of ‘a moveable feast’ is a holy day that doesn’t have a set date in the calendar, but instead moves each year. The thematic centrality of eating features an exact importance of the expression; the characters in the novel discuss art while eating or drinking together and this draws a parallel between feasting of art and feasting of food and drink. Literature and art are incorporated into daily life, and is fundamentally important to the characters as an art of feasting on food. The link between eating and composing has a revered lineage. Francis Bacon, observes in his essay ‘Of Studies’, “some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested”. (Eagleton, 3-4) The figure above (Fig 1.1) provides an insight into how hunger is taken as the basic instinct and food and drinks are used as metaphors to satisfy this basic instinct through various representations of hunger.

III. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

In this section we present and analyze the data related to the role of hunger as a basic instinct against food metaphors.

1. Hunger was Good Discipline

The novel introduces the reader to the café’s frequented by Hemingway for hope and joy in Paris, and it can be noted how the weather outside was rainy and gloomy. It is in these cafes that Hemingway connects with the surroundings which influenced his behavior in a surprising manner. The Parisian café is an inescapable fixture in the landscapes of the 1920s, inherent in the lives of the literary and artistic expatriates. This ‘café life’ comes alive in the beginning of the novel where Hemingway visits the Café Amateurs at Place St. Michel, escaping from the cold weather outside for a warm and friendly atmosphere to complete his journal. At the café, he is writing about Michigan and reflects how the weather outside matches the subject matter of his story. The characters in the story are drinking and this in turn makes Hemingway thirsty; who orders a ‘rum *St. James*’ which gives him an instant warmth. Hemingway gets entranced by a girl who enters the café; she is described as: “a face fresh as a newly minted coin if they minted coins in smooth flesh with rain-freshened skin, and her hair was black as a crow’s wing and cut sharply and diagonally across her cheek.” (Hemingway, 2) He is seen to be thoroughly inspired by her that he increases his effort and attention to the story he was

writing which seemed to have been ‘writing itself’ before he saw the girl. After he finishes the story, he notices that the girl had left and he feels ‘empty’ and ‘sad’ and ‘happy’ as though he had made love. He says: “As I ate the oysters with their strong taste of the sea and their faint metallic taste that the cold white wine washed away, leaving only the sea taste and the succulent texture, and as I drank their cold liquid from each shell and washed it down with the crisp taste of the wine, I lost the empty feeling and began to be happy and to make plans.” (Hemingway, 3) The hunger represented here is that of inspiration and it can be noted how the feeling of disappointment Hemingway faced at the café is replaced when he consumes food and a drink showing the readers that “Genuine eating combines pleasure, utility and sociality” (Eagleton, 2). Hunger is much more complex than the desire to have food. When comfort increases in human life, there tends to be an abundance of food and of many other things that it overpowers the ability to hear the real hunger. Human hunger speaks in a thousand languages and it is within us to identify these voices. Hemingway speaks of this very hunger throughout his novels and it can be often seen that his works have an importance to food and drinks.

To encounter war directly is to taste it, swallow the war in itself and have its capacity annihilate your abilities to comprehend. Expounding on it later winds up being troublesome as it requires the involvement of the taste buds to develop back. For Hemingway writing is re-experiencing and the theme of reinstatement is linked to appetite where Hemingway’s characters often feel vacant and hollow after writing and requires sustenance of diversity to prepare for their spell with the ensuing page. Recollecting a memory is an imaginative demonstration and therefore the act of living resembles the act of writing; the ideal approach to refill the repository is to fill it with more encounters. In modern times, the most successful of people tend to become soft and comfortable and are accused of having lost their hunger – the hunger to win, the hunger for excellence, the hunger to be the best and the hunger to be great. Hemingway, in his novel, writes about a day he spent with his wife Hadley, walking around the streets of Paris. As they passed the restaurant *Michaud’s*, they noticed the patrons enjoying their meals. They decide to splurge and have a feast where he ate like a king but on the way home he realized that the hunger was still there. He imagined it to be the hunger for food but it was subtler and more elusive. He makes love to his wife and while lying there in the dark, he realizes that he was still hungry. This emptiness and the hunger is what drives Hemingway ahead in his life. He is unable to distinguish on the kind of hunger he is feeling – whether it is the physical hunger for sustenance or is it the hunger for creativity? Terry Eagleton in his work, *Edible Ecriture*, states about food and creativity which can be seen as a response to the hunger and creative block which troubles Hemingway throughout his novel. “Food is what makes up our bodies, just as words are what constitute our minds; and if body and mind are hard to distinguish, it is no wonder that eating and speaking should continually cross over in metaphorical exchange.” (Eagleton, 3-4) Hemingway’s newfound focus on creative writing causes him worry as the amount of work he had been putting into reporting wasn’t earning him much and just like he had quit racing, he quits writing reports and focuses on writing stories. The lack of demand was causing him the

real hunger – the physical hunger which results from the inability to buy food; by eliminating nourishment you won't get a lot of "hunger-thinking". Hemingway goes on to say: "Hunger is good discipline and you learn from it. And as long as they do not understand if you are ahead of them. Oh sure, I thought, I'm so far ahead of them now that I can't afford to eat regularly." (Hemingway, 36) We are all hungry for something and figuring out this hunger could be one of the greatest quest in one's life. There are many types of hunger which obviously includes the natural hunger for food but many a time we are hardly hungry for food. The human tendency to overeat often limits the ability to identify the real reason behind this hunger. The hunger can be traced as hunger for comfort; hunger for kinship, hunger for success, hunger for sex, hunger for safety and security, hunger for adventure and travel. These varieties (Fig 1.2) can lead us to state that 'to be human is to be hungry'.

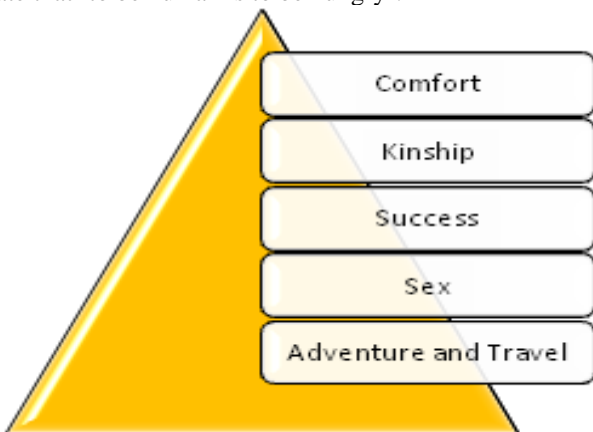


Fig 1.2. The varieties of hunger found in the novel.

The question which arises in the readers mind is 'What does Hemingway learn from hunger?' We are given a new direction of the subject by Hemingway with regard to his association between writing and looking at paintings. The other principle hunger that the readers are exposed to is correlated to creation and memory. Hemingway recognizes that all great artists feel a void when they use their experience for new manifestations. "When you are twenty-five and are a natural heavyweight, missing a meal makes you very hungry. But it also sharpens all of your perceptions, and I found that many of the people I wrote about had very strong appetites and a great taste and desire for food, and most of them were looking forward to having a drink." (Hemingway, 48) He is trying to establish his point, through these words, that he was both hungry and abnormally perceptive. Such contemplations arise in his psyche while waiting for having dinner at a diner, for example, 'the plat du jour was cassoulet. It made me hungry to read the name.' (Hemingway, 47) The purpose for this wasn't on the grounds that he was a starving artist but instead the entire procedure of cooking this dish (a rich slow cooked casserole) was a fairly conscious decision by Hemingway as he finds an incentive in the process, whether it be giving one a chance to be eager before a feast or the way toward turning into an incredible author – the wait is a part of it. This could be a reason behind why he could be believed to be outraged at a supper with Ernest Walsh. Ernest Walsh, the poet, was being paid "twelve hundred dollars apiece" (51) for each of his poem, as informed by one of the girls to Hemingway, when he met them for the first time. Later on he hears about Walsh starting up a literary magazine as a co-editor. Walsh soon

takes him out for a veritable feast, for lunch: "... after the oysters, expensive flat faintly coppery marennes, not the familiar, deep, inexpensive portugaises, and a bottle of PouillyFuise, began to lead up to it delicately." (59) "He wanted a good steak, rare, and I ordered two tournedos with sauce *Béarnaise*. I figured the butter would be good for him..." (Hemingway, 59-60) Hemingway is offered an award by Walsh but he refuses it by stating the deal to be disreputable. Walsh is described as a connoisseur and a hustler, not a real poet. Stuffing oneself with food can be seen, here, as an infringement of artistic integrity. An artist cannot be given honors by his colleagues; rather he ought to never need them. The measure of drinking matches Hemingway's legend, yet regardless it appears as a great deal. He consistently drinks one or two bottles of wine over lunch or whilst reading a book in the park or cafes, although his: "...training was never to drink after dinner, nor before I wrote, nor while I was writing." (Hemingway, 85) Hemingway's friendship with Scott Fitzgerald reveals to him the problems of alcohol, as: "...anything that he [Fitzgerald] drank seemed to stimulate him too much and then to poison him." (Hemingway, 85) Mountain climbing is yet another feat Hemingway and Hadley took up during vacation or on breaks. The steep climb was at first debilitating but when it was taken up a second time, the climb appeared to be simpler. Much the same as the cassoulet, the struggle or the procedure is avital part of moving ahead. He pursues this depiction by saying: "We were always hungry and every meal was a great event." (Hemingway, 99) Hunger sharpens his perceptions providing a new vision to the sights. Being a 'regular heavyweight', Hemingway feels hunger biting endlessly his stomach when he skips a meal. He's unlike one of his acquaintances, Ralph Cheever Dunning (Poet), who smokes an excess of opium and neglects to eat. At the point when Hemingway avoids a meal, hunger disturbs him.

2. Memory is Hunger

To denote the various meals that Hemingway has proposed in his work and to identify the role of each food material, a quantitative analysis is constructed by listing down the various food items and marking out the occurrence of the same in the novel. The various dishes and drinks used by the various characters in the novel, especially the protagonist, poses a critical insight into the individuals self and identity. If the amount of food items included by Hemingway were to be taken, it would clearly show us how much the creators of art depended on food and alcohol for their creativity. An outline of the different food used by the author himself and by other major characters, is represented, to symbolize the metaphor it stands for and since, the concept of hunger is being discussed, an analysis of these food items and drinks are taken against the satiation of the kind of hunger felt by the characters. The analysis has helped in identifying the food used by the protagonist to show the reader the representation of the feelings the protagonist felt while consuming the food element. The hunger to satisfy emptiness or void, to quench the thirst of creativity flowing into the paper, the protagonist depends upon various food and drinks in Paris. There are times when his hunger is satisfied, sometimes this hunger lingers on till a solution is found. It can be noted how Hemingway states that by consuming Kirsch towards



the end of completing a story, gives him the satisfaction and confidence on the completed work. Every food imagery used makes the readers hungry and yearn for the food described, and this can be seen as an accomplishment of the author who wanted to write one true sentence!

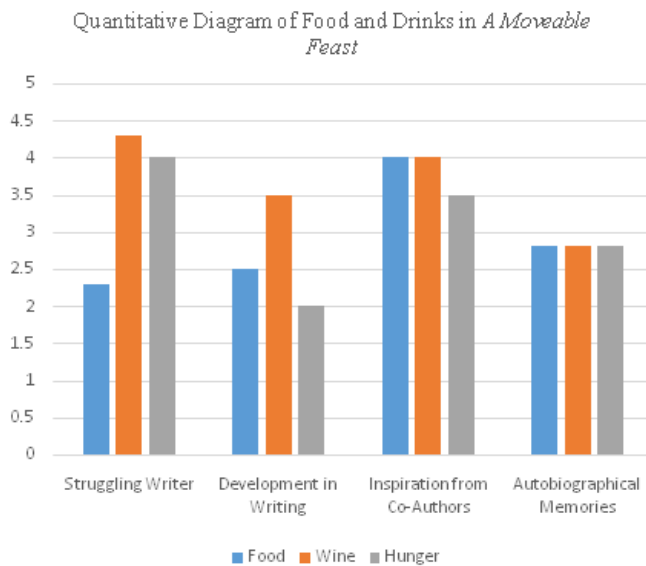


Fig 1.3 An Analysis of the Food and Drink representations against Hunger in *A Moveable Feast*

Hemingway's view is an austere one. He sees hunger as the adversary, the tempter that motivates, conciliates and lays a primeval force driving us at our most rudimentary level.

IV. CONCLUSION

A Moveable Feast was written a year before Hemingway passed away (committed suicide) and has used a lot of autobiographical elements by the author. It can be noted that he is reminiscing the days after the war and how the aftermath of war is still fresh in the minds of the soldiers and how each victim tries to divert the horrors of war through various available medium. Writers like Hemingway and Scott Fitzgerald take to expressing their memories and paints varied pictures through words to en-capture the life before and after war. There are speculations that few events described by Hemingway are purely fictitious and could have been a random thought which ran through his mind while writing the work. Since the work was revised by his fourth wife, Mary Hemingway, and published posthumously in 1964 and later on by his grandson Sean Hemingway, who re-edited and revised the work and published it in 2009, it can be noted that slight variations occur in both the versions. It can also be noted that many critics have found variances and untrue events recorded in the novel, though giving an ultimatum that it could have been altered to suit the readers mind or as an inner voice of Hemingway himself on looking back into the days spent in Paris. *A Moveable Feast* concentrated its hunger on the longing for and procedure of creation, composed thinking from the wise pole of old age. Thus by the end of this paper, we can conclude that hunger is the basic human instinct, having its own variations depending upon human needs, and food and drinks are the necessity used to quench this hunger in humans. Hemingway has placed an impact upon his readers on the implications of hunger, he as an artist felt, and has woven those tales through mouth-watering food and drinks. He shows us that aesthetic hunger was healthy and he craved to control his art.

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