

“Yes, That Is a Roll of Bills in My Pocket:
The Economy of Masculinity in *The Sun Also Rises*”

Jacob Michael Leland

This essay considers the idea of masculinity in *The Sun Also Rises* with regard to economic changes at the beginning of the twentieth century. Reading the novel against the shift, in the 1920s, from a U.S. economy based on production to one based on consumption, we reach the notion of modern American masculinity advanced by *Sun*. Jake Barnes, whom critics have shown to perform the functions of a Hemingway hero, articulates a form of sexual agency via his economic practices. The way Jake earns and spends his money affords him an empowering American consumerism.

“Not So True, Not So Simple:
The Spanish Translations of *The Sun Also Rises*”

Gabriel Rodríguez-Pazos

Analysis of the four Spanish translations of *The Sun Also Rises* published to date reveals the difficulties faced by translators when dealing with the works of Ernest Hemingway. The target texts show different types of deficiencies: 1) elisions, slips, and errors at the level of decoding, 2) mistranslations that result from differences in the cultural contexts, 3) mismatches in the knowledge of the external field of reference, and, most importantly, 4) defective rendering of Hemingway's unique style. As a consequence, the Spanish versions of *Sun* fail to convey the strengths of the original—its truth and simplicity.

“Staking Everything on It:
A Stylistic Analysis of Linguistic Patterns in ‘Hills Like White Elephants’”

Alex Link

The essay performs a statistical analysis of the grammatical patterns in “Hills Like White Elephants” as a means of opening new avenues for its interpretation. The story's careful deployment of pronouns and use of repetition bridge its disparate themes. In addition, the ambiguous, repetitious language deepens the significance and raises the stakes of the couple's argument. These linguistic patterns underscore the emotional violence, broaden the significance, and complicate the closure of that argument.

STAKING EVERYTHING ON IT:
A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF
LINGUISTIC PATTERNS IN
“HILLS LIKE WHITE ELEPHANTS”

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ERNEST HEMINGWAY'S "HILLS LIKE WHITE ELEPHANTS" is, if taken literally, a story in which little actually "happens": a couple has drinks at a train station in Spain and argues about something rather vague. A useful approach to such an enigmatic text is to examine the very language of which it is made. The story is, after all, a textual artifact, one that historically has been subjected to intensely close reading. Yet a particular reading of this or any story is a phenomenon of processing linguistic data within an interpretative framework. Thus, it is worthwhile to examine how the story creates points of emphasis and importance through precise patterns in its grammatical structure. *London School Stylistics* tries to combine quantitative linguistic analysis with traditional literary interpretation, partly in order to add to the former's relevance and the latter's substance. It engages in statistical analysis of a text's language and uses that analysis to supplement interpretation, calling the making of meaning through these linguistic patterns "motivated prominence." A stylistic analysis of "Hills Like White Elephants" will enable us to see how, at the textual level, the story is able to manufacture such a rich interpretative web from ostensibly gossamer materials.

The stylistician M.A.K. Halliday observes that motivated prominence is frequently generated by the repetition of words, clauses, and groups of related words or "lexical sets" (112–114). It is also generated by patterns of question and answer (106–107). Both kinds of linguistic pattern are put to productive use in

“Hills Like White Elephants.” Furthermore, the story’s limitation of agentive actions, and its effusion and precise use of cognitive verbs and pronominal substitutions, construct a textual pattern that greatly expands the stakes of the story’s dispute. An analysis of these instances of motivated prominence will help us to develop an understanding of how the story’s ambiguity does not obfuscate a coherent reading, but actually enables one of a deeper profundity. As the story’s complex stylistic pattern raises the stakes of the couple’s conflict, it also tracks the subtle ruthlessness at work in the man’s language.

Perhaps the most obvious means of foregrounding in “Hills Like White Elephants” is the repetition of sentences and lexical sets. It is through this repetition that much of the argument is played out. Within the economy of this short story, barely 1,500 words long, repeated items are notable. For example, the phrase “like white elephants,” occurring five times, is lent particular significance by its titular status. The title describes the hills as *being* “like white elephants” rather than as “hills [that look] like white elephants.” This precise choice leaves the comparison based upon value rather than appearance. Jig even qualifies the description, stating that the hills “don’t really look” like them except “through the trees” (SS 274). As with all of the story’s repetitions, this instance creates significance by establishing a pattern and then deviating from it. The final repetition of “like white elephants” breaks the established pattern by shifting the comparison’s focus from hills to a highly general noun, “things”: “But if I do it, then it will be nice again if I say *things* are like white elephants, and you’ll like it?” (SS 275, emphasis added). Thus, because the comparison is titular and repeated, and eventually becomes non-specific, it invites the substitution of other words for “hills.”

Certainly Hemingway scholars have wasted little time in finding other possible “white elephants” in the story. In a North American cultural context, a “white elephant” is not only a rare and sacred creature, but also a metaphor for an expensive and burdensome property. While some have suggested that the man himself is a costly “white elephant” (Hannum 53), it is a critical commonplace that the burden at issue in this story is the unborn child. However, the substitution of “things” for “hills” and, as we shall see, the complex play of pronominal substitutions in the story, suggest an even broader range of possible sacred and costly “things.” Stylistic analysis not only supports reading the couple’s relationship as another “white elephant” facing abortion (Wyche 56), but also expands the sense of the endangered and costly thing until it becomes, literally, “everything.”

Sentences repeated in the text include seven variations on a conditional question asked by Jig, if “afterward” the couple can be as happy as they were before the operation was necessary (SS 275–276). The final repetition is distinguished from its predecessors because it is a declarative statement: “And I’ll do it and everything will be fine” (SS 276). Jig, then, answers her own question, and in predicting that “everything will be fine,” suggests that despite her reluctance, the man’s persuasion is succeeding.

The man repeats six variations on “I don’t want you to do it if you don’t really want to” (SS 277). His fourth variation—“I don’t want you to do it if you feel that way” alters and further specifies the conditions he sets for allowing her refusal. He requires that she “care about [herself]” (SS 276). And the fifth, interrupted repetition begins with an adversative conjunctive phrase—“But you’ve got to realize....” (SS 276). The repetitions, as well as the addition of this phrase, emphasize the man’s persistence and power to change the conditions of agreement, as well as Jig’s reluctance or inability to want or feel as he directs.

In terms of lexical repetition, one instance is notorious: “Would you please please please please please please stop talking?” (SS 277). This sounds like a command. However, it is made optative—it asks, rather than demands—by its modal use of “would” and the repetition of “please,” emphasizing both the urgency of the request and its powerlessness. The strangeness of this sentence on the page goes beyond the conventions, as Gregory describes them (111), of writing meant to represent natural conversation. Its singular “oddness,” its placement at the argument’s end, and the fact that it is articulated as a request rather than a command, makes the sentence a central and prominent illustration of Jig’s powerlessness, as well as her ardor.

The couple’s power relationship also emerges in the prominence of questions in the text. Much of the dialogue in “Hills Like White Elephants” is a trading of questions and answers in which Jig asks a total of seventeen questions, thirteen of which are polar, yes-no questions. The man asks only four questions, three of which he does not ask until the text is nearly finished. They begin only after Jig has asked thirteen of her own, and his questions move the text into a new phase—from the argument over the operation, to what has been lost by Jig’s acquiescence. Except for one command at the text’s end—“Then come back and we’ll finish the beer” (SS 277)—Jig always articulates her desires as requests, using forms of the modal terms “could” and “would.” The text depicts the couple’s relationship as one in which the

man is positioned as an authority, and Jig's questions both challenge that authority and seek reassurance from it. Hence the polarity of her questions—the man defines what is true, correct, or permissible by answering “yes” or “no.” Authority shifts briefly from the man to Jig when she says “And we could have everything and every day we make it more impossible” (SS 276). He has to ask “What did you say?” and she defines the operation's consequences for him, that they cannot have everything (SS 276). But authority shifts back to the man when he refuses to stop talking, and Jig's final questions ask permission, as optative imperatives, to end the conversation. In her inability to demand an end, she can only threaten to scream.

This power relationship established by repetitions and features of dialogue is also static. The man and the girl are trapped in a state of imbalance and disagreement. Both are relegated almost exclusively to the passive role of “experiencers,” rather than the active role of agents. The story contains a large quantity of words describing purely cognitive functions. A list of forty-nine such uses includes “want” (17 times), “know” (12), “feel” (6), “care” (5), “think” (3), “realize” (3), “worry” (2), and “am willing” (1). The number of cognitive terms suggests that the text is focused on personal desire and the use of knowledge's authority in its pursuit. Thus, most of the dialogue is a discussion of what the man wants (10 speeches) and how it relates to what Jig might want (4 speeches). In fact, Jig's desires are quite irrelevant, given that the man is in a virtually unchallenged position of power. He would not “*have* [her] do it” (SS 275, emphasis added) if she did not want to, thereby implying that her wants are relevant only because he has allowed them to be so.

The man monopolizes the authority of knowledge. Of the twelve occurrences of “know” in the text, seven describe what the man knows, as in “I know you wouldn't mind it” and “But I know it's perfectly simple” (SS 275). Two are used by him to tell Jig what she knows—“You know I love you” and “You know how I get when I worry” (SS 275)—and one describes Jig's absence of knowledge about how to drink Anis del Toro—she doesn't “know” if she wants it with water (SS 274). The movement of the text from a prominence of “want” and “know” to one of “realize” and “feel” suggests that the man is not seeking a compromise, but instead a means of getting what he wants by manipulating how Jig feels and thinks. Thus, he treats cognitive, experiential functions as if they were agentive, demanding that she “realize” what he wants and that she “mustn't feel” certain ways (SS 276–277). The text ends with Jig's repeated assertion of “I feel fine,” which may be physi-

cally true after four drinks (SS 278). Following hard as it does upon her threat to scream, though, her assertion is also false, since we have no reason to believe she can change her mood at will.

While both characters technically act as agents throughout the text—the man orders drinks, the girl fingers the beaded curtain—the actual lexical set of the couple's possible agentive actions is severely limited. There seem to be very few ways they can affect the world around them. Almost all action deliberately undertaken by the couple is restricted to communication, as in saying and asking (36 examples), or looking (10 examples). Note that even the act of looking is intransitive. Thus, looking still relegates one, on some level, to the position of experiencer. All six examples of Jig's looking occur in the first two-thirds of the text, and are followed by all four of the man's acts of looking. In fact, there is a transitional sentence to shift the act of looking from her to him: "the girl looked across at the hills...and the man looked at her" (SS 277). Here, the text also moves from focusing on the man's demands and Jig's reaction to them, to emphasizing Jig's concept of what will be lost by her capitulation, followed by her demands, and the man's reaction. Her demands center on a very brief discussion of an "it" that the man should commit to; this "it," presumably, is keeping the child. However, the man remains in a position of power because Jig has already given in.

This absence of agentive possibilities reflects the couple's impasse. Neither one ever looks at the other, except in the instance above which explicitly states that Jig is looking away when the man looks at her. This is a literal illustration of their failure to meet eye to eye until the text's end, when she is able to smile at the man twice. Whether she is able to do so because there has been a sort of resolution or because she is drunk is an open question. After all, the prominent repetition of the lexical set describing drinking and liquor (27 instances) suggests that the couple is trying very hard to avoid a direct discussion of the operation. A prominent, conscious avoidance of each other's gaze is another form of their evasion. The text makes its own repetition of evasive maneuvers and prominent inactivity explicit in Jig's comment that all they do is "look at things and try new drinks" (SS 274). The couple's few remaining agentive actions outside of dialogue (16 instances) are almost entirely intransitive (10 instances), further emphasizing their inability to affect anything. All other agentive acts in the text occur within dialogue, outside of the story's "real time," and are not part of its action. They are also usually predictions such as "I'll do it" or even "I'll scream" (SS 275,

277). Otherwise, they are requests requiring permission such as “Could we have another beer?” (SS 276) or, most explicitly powerless and distanced from any real event: “Would you please please please please please please please stop talking?” (SS 277). Even this last is ignored.

Perhaps the most prominent linguistic feature of “Hills Like White Elephants” is its repeated use of substitution. This is foregrounded by the frequent use of indefinite pronouns: “something” (2 examples), “anything” (9), “nothing” (1), “everything” (6), “everywhere” (1), “anybody” (1), and the related phrases “any one” (1) and “only thing” (2). The use of “any one” as opposed to “anyone” in the man’s “I don’t want any one else” (SS 277) is especially striking as the only split compound word in this list. If setting this “one” apart is a deliberate lexical choice, then “any one” refers to a specific person. That person is the unborn child, who may also be the “anybody” in “I don’t want anybody but you” (SS 277). Objectified as the only “thing” in the couple’s way, the unborn child is in addition a possible referent for the substitutions “everything” and “anything”—as in Jig’s “And we could have everything” or the man’s “I’m perfectly willing to go through with it if it means anything to you” (SS 276-277). Both “everything” and “anything” are less specific and far more prominent in this story than the word “something.” Thus, the specific topic of the fetus as an entity, a “something” or a “somebody” can be avoided. At the same time, the baby or “it” can be equated, through “everything” and “anything,” to being as valuable as the whole world.

The pronoun “nothing” is notably absent from the text, only to appear in its penultimate sentence: “There’s nothing wrong with me” (SS 278). The textual pattern of ambiguous referents allows the term “nothing” to be ambiguous also. It can imply that all is well with the girl, that her argument is correct, or that what is wrong with her is the fact of nothing—an absence of love, of a child, of a viable relationship, of discursive authority, or of the possibility of “hav[ing] everything” (SS 276).

The text moves from foregrounding “everything” to foregrounding “anything.” “Everything” is what they might have or lose should she “do it.” “Anything” generally occurs in the context of that which is neither wanted nor cared about. In fact, all of the occurrences of “anything” but one are negative and synonymous with “nothing.” The exception, that the man “[would] do anything for” Jig (SS 277), is false, since he refuses to stop talking. This suggests that, in fact, he will do nothing for her. The negative use of “anything” in place of “nothing” also lends the final “nothing” prominence by isolating it. Thus, the text’s general

movement from the possibility of having “everything” to one of not wanting, saying, or having “anything” culminates in the closing “nothing.”

Two other forms of substitutive repetition are prominent in the text. The pronoun “it” occurs fifty-six times. Most of these occurrences are typical anaphoric or ambient references. Indeed, both uses are present in the very first paragraph. An anaphoric “it” refers to a noun that precedes it, as in “[T]he express from Barcelona would come in forty minutes. It stopped at this junction for two minutes” (SS 273). An ambient “it” refers to general ambience, as in “[i]t was very hot” (SS 273). However, the most prominent “it” in “Hills Like White Elephants,” repeated twenty-four times (four times as often as any other), is situationally exophoric, referring to something neither immediately present nor explicitly named in the story. In this short story, the referent of the situationally exophoric “it” is usually the operation which “isn’t really an operation at all” and is never specified beyond the ambiguous description of “let[ting] the air in” (SS 275). The fact that the “it” is never named suggests both the intimacy of the couple’s relationship in sharing this specific exophoric information, and the unspeakability of that information. This “it” appears in Jig’s capitulation, “Then I’ll do it. Because I don’t care about ‘me’” (SS 275). The absence of a specific referent aligns this “it” with another later used four times by the man, as in “I’m perfectly willing to go through with it if it means anything to you” (SS 277). “It” here seems to mean having the child and possibly marriage, things the man declares himself willing to undergo, but the absence of a referent artificially equates them with abortion, superficially aiding his argument.

By the same token, the “it” requiring the operation can be equated with another ambiguous, exophoric “it” used six times while Jig looks at the landscape and referring to “everything” and the possibility of having it—for example, “And we could have everything and every day we make it more impossible” (SS 276). Although the text does not make this explicit, one can infer that the “everything” refers to the landscape, which is in turn likened to white elephants, which can be likened, it has been argued, to the unborn child. This likening of the absence of everything to Jig’s abortion is made more directly when she says that “once they take it away, you never get it back” (SS 276). On a literal level, if something has been taken away, you would not have “everything.” Thus, the text’s liberal use of an ambiguous, if not exophoric “it” allows the substitution to tie together such disparate ideas as the abortion, fetus, landscape, carriage of the pregnancy to term, white elephants, and “having everything” into a cohesive

text. The use of “it” to carry so many things relevant to the discussion also shows how unspeakable their topic of conversation is, if only because it must be approached so obliquely. The conspicuously total absence of “it” from the text’s closing ten paragraphs suggests that a resolution, or at least a successful evasion, has been achieved.

The third prominent occurrence of pronominal repetition is that of the personal pronouns “I,” “you,” “we,” “us,” and “me” (137 examples). They are ubiquitous. The distribution of personal pronouns in the text is significant because of its visible imbalances. For example, the couple’s schism is reflected by the presence of only twenty-seven plural pronouns, “we” (23 uses) and “us” (4 uses), while singular personal pronouns more than quadruple that number. Nearly two-thirds of the plural pronouns are uttered by Jig, suggesting that her concern for the relationship is greater. By contrast, the man and girl refer to themselves as subject “I” nearly equally (man, 34 times; girl, 25). Even here, though, the balance of discussion tips toward the man as subject and woman as object. In a reflection of her powerlessness, Jig is referred to as an object “you” by the man twice as often as he is by her (29 times vs. 14 times), and she also refers to herself as an object “me” (6 times), while he never mentions himself in this way. The focus of their conversation, then, rests on the man’s discussion of the girl, rather than on a shared discussion of their relationship.

Further suggesting the dissolution of their relationship, there is also a shift in the text away from a discussion of the couple as an entity. The plural pronoun “we” occurs intermittently in the text as the couple discusses drinking and their future after the operation, but disappears as they discuss the operation itself and Jig’s reason for going through with it: “I don’t care about *me*,” she says (SS 276, emphasis added). It resurfaces in her assertion of what the couple has lost through her capitulation: “we can’t [have everything]” (SS 276, emphasis added). Jig’s repeated negative use of “we” and the ambiguity of “everything” leaves open the possibility that “we” cannot have everything not only because something—a fetus/relationship/white elephant—has been given up, but because there is no longer a “we” to have “everything.” Plural personal pronouns make only four more appearances after this exchange, and the text closes with the couple’s separation, as manifest in the use of singular personal pronouns in its closing lines: “I feel fine... There’s nothing wrong with me. I feel fine” (SS 278).

The specific linguistic features thrown into relief by a stylistic analysis of “Hills Like White Elephants” encourage us to reconsider how we read this

story. Its repetitiousness, allocation of questions, allocation of experiencer and agentive roles, and liberal substitutions, allow the story to portray a power imbalance that appears total, and a struggle whose stakes take on universal proportions. In a manner that goes beyond simply noting that the narration refers to its primary figures unequally as “man” and girl, the language of the story makes plain how fiercely the couple’s struggle rages beneath their seemingly innocuous and deceptively content-less words. Through the strategic deployment of repetition and role, the ambiguity of Hemingway’s pronouns actually *increases* the stakes of the argument because that ambiguity can extend to encompass “everything” and “nothing.” Nevertheless, the man’s seemingly total dominance becomes, in that closing “nothing,” less assured. The story takes us through argument and counter-argument to an ambivalent resolution—the weaker party might be left with “nothing,” but she has the certainty that there is “nothing” wrong with her, and that what is wrong is, precisely, that “nothing.”

Carefully deployed motivated prominence is what makes “Hills Like White Elephants” something more than a mere riddle of the “it.” A stylistic analysis of the story allows us to follow the dialogue’s shuttling of advantage between the opponents. The subject of the argument may well be the ambiguous violence of an abortion, but the man’s struggle to win Jig’s capitulation is far more violent, here. It takes precedence over *anything* the object of their struggle might be since, in the end, what he wants is the power to have *everything*.

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