Initial Draft of Hemingway Paper (0D) . . .

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In an essay by published over sixty years ago now, Green D. Wyrick begins by claiming that "to suggest a philosophic dimension to Hemingway's writing would have been a sort of suicide a few years back . . . "[1] Setting aside for the moment whether or not the situation Wyrick describes here has truly been eclipsed, it is certainly the case that secondary literature on Hemingway's corpus has not been hesitant to offer readings of his texts that do have strong philosophical and theoretical tinges to them. One can find, scattered here and there throughout the scholarly record, readings of all kinds: careful and close exegeses, stylistic analyses, interpretations that focus very carefully on questions of race, gender, sexuality, treatments of Hemingway's biography and his craft, and much more. This continues to be the case, to be sure, as a good deal of quite recent work has attempted to chart many of the ways in which Hemingway studies has incorporated most of the theoretical innovations of the latter half of the twentieth century: all of the schools of the "high theory" era would seem to have already been brought to bear on Hemingway's ouevre.[2] Despite this, we feel that the tradition of psychoanalytic thought in particular still has much to offer when focused on Hemingway's work, especially the short fiction {{ADD STOLTZFUS AND ROHY ON *GARDEN OF EDEN*?????}}. In this essay we would like to try bringing Lacanian thought into the conversation on "Hills Like White Elephants" and plan to get a number of already-existing close readings of various stylistic elements of the story to articulate with Lacan's rather infamous "formulas of sexuation" from *Seminar XX*.[3] {{REWORK THIS AS THIS HAS DROPPED OUT?????}} In order to pull this off, we would like to set out a number of the stars here so as to offer some different lines of connection—hoping that a Lacanian reading might allow us to draw some new constellations. The major threads here fall into, essentially, two large camps.

[1]"Hemingway and Bergson: The *Élan Vital*," *Modern Fiction Studies* 1, no. 3 (1955): 17.

[2]See Laurence W. Mazzeno, *The Critics and Hemingway, 1924-2014: Shaping an American Literary Icon* (Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2015) for the critical tradition in the twentieth century and Suzanne del Gizzo and Kirk Curnutt, eds., *The New Hemingway Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), which brings us up much closer to the present-day.

[3]Jacques Lacan, *Seminar XX: On Feminine Sexuality, The Limits of Love and Knowledge*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998).

The first grouping of lights in the sky center around many of the very close "stylistic" analyses of this story, most visible in the work of Alex Link and, going a bit farther back in time, Timothy D. O'Brien.[4] The second cluster is composed of scholars—like Stanley Renner,[5] David Wyche,[6] Hilary K. Justice.[7]—who have read the story with especial focus on questions of gender. It is our position that thinking through Lacan's conceptions about metaphor, metonymy, and the simile in particular (although this last is not explicitly theorized in Lacan's corpus, as Sharon Shirley-Zisser has so perspaciously noted[8]), provides a quite stable ground upon which to argue that some of the ways in which readers recuperate some degree of agency for Jig (Renner's essay here is no doubt the clearest case of this) simply end up keeping Jig confined within a masculine logic that would seem to be destabilized more thoroughly precisely by not collapsing many of the alluring ambiguities into an "either-or" logic (either Jig has the abortion or she doesn't).

As all readers of "Hills" know, the first long narrative paragraph that opens the story lays out the land along with many of the key coordinates for the story as a whole: we have the hills that come with two adjectives ("long and white"); one "side" has "no shade and no trees," with the sitting "between two lines of rails"; we have the "shadow of the building" of the train station and a curtain, which further carves up the space into "inside" and "outside"; there are two characters who are situated "outside the building"; the day "was very hot" and we know that in between the two rails is the station that will stop for two minutes, a parsimonious line that cuts the temporality of the story into past and future ("[i]t was very hot and the express *would come* in forty minutes"), with the main focus of our setting here in between the tracks located precisely in the present—though we hope to greatly problematize such a simple picture.[9] This opening sets out clear binaries working across both the spatial layout of the setting and the temporal as well—and this first paragraph is also content not simply to show all of these different pairings, but also to suggest third things that serve to mark the boundaries between these binaries (the tenses in the verb in the last two sentences along with the often-remarked upon "curtain" that separates inside from outside the bar). To be sure, it would be all too easy to multiply further instances of the physical setting that come in twos (two drinks for the two characters, "two glasses of beer and two felt pads" brought by the waitress, the beer is itself "nice and cool," two different kinds of alchohol, etc.). Of course, as readers have so often noticed, these pairings and

[4]"Allusion, Word-Play, and the Central Conflict in Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants'," *The Hemingway Review* 12, no. 1 (1992): 19–25.

[5]"Moving to the Girl's Side of 'Hills Like White Elephants'," *The Hemingway Review* 15, no. 1 (1995): 27–41.

[6]"Letting the Air into a Relationship: Metaphorical Abortion in 'Hills Like White Elephants'," *The Hemingway Review* 22, no. 1 (2002): 56–71.

[7]"Well, Well, Well: Cross-Gendered Autobiography and the Manuscript of 'Hills Like White Elephants'," *The Hemingway Review* 18, no. 1 (1998): 17–32.

[8] *The Risks of Simile in Renaissance Rhetoric* (New York: P. Lang, 2000), 251.

[9]Ernest Hemingway, "Hills Like White Elephants," in *The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*, The Finca Vigía Edition (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1987), 211–14.

oppositions are themselves redoubled at the figurative or allegorical level of the story too: we have the fundamental simile of the title (which is itself repeated within the main body of the story), which links two things together with the word "like"; we get, essentially, two different takes on Jig's main trope (the American's literal parsing of her expression, justifiably, leaving many readers quite unsatisfied with said take); we have what Pamela Smiley famously argued was two drastically different "forms of communication" played out along gender lines by Jig and the American (and this split also frequently gets mapped onto the "literal"/"metaphorical" dichhotomy with the masculine tied to the first and the feminine to the second[10]); last but by no means least, we have what many readers argue is essentially two choices for Jig and the American in this story: the question of a potential abortion ultimately falling onto one side of the other (one will take either the path of "fertility" or that of "barrenness"—which is itself another way in which the binaries present in the physical landscape redouble themselves on the allegorical level). The further one peers into the story, these doublings seem to multiply and proliferate quite rapidly—one can even see this profoundly significant word "like" working as both an operator of comparison/conjunction/linking (as in the simile [212]) and as a verb ("But if I do it, then it will be nice again if I say things are like white elephants, and you'll like it?" [213]—indeed, this last sentence shows the same word doing double-duty, first as an "adposition" and then as a verb). The multiplicity contained within this simple word, "like," has so many functions in this story, and we think readers would do well to remember this flexibility between the word as preposition and also an active verb, as Stephanie Burt has copiously shown: " 'Like' appears to be the only word in English that is both a preposition and an active verb. This is like that. I like that. It can be a noun, too. Like attracts like."[11]

Given how prevalent all these doubles, pairs, and echoes are throughout the story as a whole, it would make quite a bit of sense for readers to follow this track and offer interpretations of the story that stays quite fixedly consistent within this paradigm of twos and twoness. But all this talk of all the twos pushes one to wonder about whether or not this number is really the number to look for in the story: are there any "thirds" in the story that so many of the discussions of all the oppositions either fail to locate or notice? We would like to argue that there are such thirds—indeed, there are multiple "thirds" here that require further focus. Beyond the perhaps too obvious image of the station itself, which lies *between* so many twos, there is the matter of the object that itself redoubles the betweenness of the station, namely, the infamous "curtain" that bifurcates all the paired territories—thus, we want to camp out a bit on the line, the mark, the boundary, that slices the story's "in-between" spatiality into two.

[10]Pamela Smiley, "Gender-Linked Miscommunication in 'Hills Like White Elephants'," *Hemingway Review* 8, no. 1 (1988): 2.

[11]Stephanie Burt, ""LIKE" A SPECULATIVE ESSAY ABOUT POETRY, SIMILE, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, MOURNING, SEX, ROCK AND ROLL, GRAMMAR, ROMANTIC LOVE," *The American Poetry Review*, n.d., https://aprweb.org/poems/like-a-speculative-essay-about-poetry-simile-artificial-intelligence-mourning-sex-rock-and-roll-grammar-romantic-love.

We should also note at the outset here that it is not as if this curtain has gone unnoticed in the secondary scholarship—many articles in the *The Explicator* canvased the symbolic possibilities of this object within the story as a whole.[12] Not surprising, numerous meanings have been proposed: Gary D. Elliott argues for the beaded curtain as really signifying "rosary beads";[13] for Dennis Organ they are "familiar infant's playthings";[14] Gilmour takes up Organ's suggestion of "rosary beads" and tweaks them to become "worry beads," but also argues for suggesting "motifs of doubleness and separation, and fertility and sterility."[15] It seems unobjectionable to say that there are numerous other possibilities here: are we meant to think of this curtain as suggesting not theology or religion,[16] but theater and stagecraft, instead? One could perhaps extend here the reading Justice provides of the curtain by arguing that if Jig's taking hold of the "two strands of beads" means that she "decides to concede to the man's wishes that she terminate the pregnancy," then it seems allowable to describe the curtain as pertaining to a kind of dramatic action *re* the decision.[17] However, we want to steer away slightly from playing the "content" game for this physical object in the story, as we feel that the form of this thing is far more curious and generative for thinking about the story more broadly. What would it mean for one to fixate on the curtain more formally? Justice's reading really seems to be on the right track: the significance here is not so much that Jig reaches out to hold "two strands" nor to clearly signal that some kind of "decision" has been made on her part (indeed, we would like to argue that this gesture precisely does not signal a decision at all), but that she is the one to play with, one might say, the thing that creates the division. Moreover, as far as we can tell, few readers of the story have thought to link this heavily symbolically overdetermined physical thing to the master trope of this story, which is not that of metaphor, as many readers have (perhaps inadvertently) claimed, but, more obviously, the simile.[18] There is an

[12]See Sherlyn Abdoo, "Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants'," *The Explicator* 49, no. 4 (1991): 238–40, who cites multiple other essays taking up the question of the curtain, and also Mary Dell Fletcher, "Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants'," *The Explicator* 38, no. 4 (1980): 16–18; for readings that are hesitant to jump immediately to a symbolic reading of the curtain itself, see Jake F. Kobler, "Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants'," *The Explicator* 38, no. 4 (1980): 6–7 and also David R. Gilmour, "Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants'," *The Explicator* 41, no. 4 (1983): 47–49.

[13]"Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants'," *The Explicator* 35, no. 4 (1977): 23.

[14]"Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants'," *The Explicator* 37, no. 4 (1979): 11.

[15]"Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants'," 48–49.

[16]Having opened up this space of theology, one could easily wonder about what a particular Jewish reading of the infamous curtain(s) in Exodus that are meant to make visible and palpable a separation between the "Holy and the Holy of Holies" that is the "Ark of the Pact" (26:31) might lend to readings of this story. {{PUT ALL THE CATHOLICISM STUFF HERE, NO?????}}

[17]Justice, "Well, Well, Well," 20.

[18]See O'Brien, "Allusion, Word-Play, and the Central Conflict in Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants'", p. 20: "Aligned with the natural surroundings are the girl and her metaphorical, suggestive discourse . . . "; Claude Maisonnat, "Falling into the Embrace of the Muse: Pregnancy as Problematic Creation in 'Hills Like White Elephants'," *Journal of the Short Story in English*, no. 49 (2007): 57–66 is similar: "She is indeed a something of a metaphor herself, as her name openly suggests, since in the turn of the century slang of sailors, the phrase jig-jig is a graphic translation of sexual intercourse" (3)

argument to be made that if Jig is interested not so much in either crossing over the border, moving across/through the divider that is the curtain, or passing beyond it, but, instead, wishes simply to touch that border—to maintain it in place without transgressing or stepping over it, this relation to the thing that marks inside from outside is one that strikes us as easy to align not with the metaphor, but with the work or the ontology of the simile.

Given how much criticism has been devoted to a reading of this story that focuses so strongly on metaphor—this focus lends its power to the very title of David Wyche's article[19]—one wonders if the lowly simile is being shortchanged a bit too much. One would be saying absolutely nothing new by recalling that in the Western rhetorical and philosophical tradition, the simile has so often been seen as the underappreciated "poor stepchild," as it were, in contrast to the truly legitimate trope of the metaphor. Shirley Sharon-Zisser has traced this diminution quite expertly in a number of different places in her work.[20] Charting the privileging of metaphor—as many others have done, from Derrida[21] to de Man[22] to numerous other poststructuralist theorists—Sharon-Zisser has appropriately reminded us how gendered this history is:

> Metaphor is rhetoric's master trope, the form of elocution theorized with respect to phallic masculinity, to the I as ego and to ontology, or better, to the delusion that Being can be made to appear in language through the deployment of the ontological copula, the verb "to be." Metaphor is rhetoric's attempt to produce Being . . . [23]

The psychoanalytic tradition—arising most clearly from Lacan's work—would have us thinking just a little bit more about the metaphor/metonymy pairing. Too many scholars to even count have shown the incredibly powerful use Lacan put both the groundbreaking linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure and Roman Jakobson[24] in his infamous "return to Freud." Hoping to spare our readers an all-too-long-winded (and undoubtedly far too pedantic) treatment of something as inchoate and basic as what literary and rhetorical terms like "metaphor" and "simile" might mean, we would start with how precisely these tropes work with regards to all the twos within this story, along with a very cursory treatment of Lacan's own theorization of metaphor and metonymy.

Assuming that it's fairly unobjectionable to say that metaphors can fashion a

[19]Wyche, "Letting the Air into a Relationship."

[20]Sharon-Zisser, *The Risks of Simile in Renaissance Rhetoric*; Shirley Sharon-Zisser, "Some Little Language Such as Lovers Use: Virginia Woolf's Elemental Erotics of the Simile," *American Imago* 58, no. 2 (2001): 567–96.

[21]Jacques Derrida, "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 207–72.

[22]Paul de Man, "The Epistemology of Metaphor," in *Aesthetic Ideology*, ed. Andrzej Warminski, vol. 65, Theory and History of Literature (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 34–50.

[23]Sharon-Zisser, "Some Little Language Such as Lovers Use," 580–81.

[24]Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); Bruce Fink, *Lacan to the Letter: Reading* Écrits *Closely* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

situation where "a new relation (and perhaps a new meaning) is created,"[25] Lacan's system accords a quite special place to metaphor. The really significant aspect of Lacan's treatments of metaphor and metonymy, for us, is the way in which he reworks the famous "dividing line" that Saussure's picture of the relation between the signifier and the signified gives us into what the former will often refer to as "the bar." Zisser reads Lacan's interventions through the texts of Michèle Montrelay) and canvases this tweaking thusly:

> In Saussurian linguistics, the copula, the function keeping the components of the sign related yet bonded appears as a line. Lacan names this copular line the bar. When Lacan appropriates Saussure's linguistics, he makes the bar as much a psychic and sexual as a linguistic operator. The bar is especially sexuated in its maniifestation as the symbolic or veiled phallus, the phallus in its lantency or disappearance inaugurating the ratio of desire. (570)

Indeed, according to Lacan, metaphor is the trope that manages to "cross this bar" separating the signifier from the signified—it is through metaphor's "substitution of signifier for signifier that a signification effect is produced that is poetic or creative . . . "[26] The major question for us is how one might try to think Jig's gesture of reaching out to touch the divider as itself connected to the simile itself as a tropic form.

If the metaphor is the trope that Aristotle genders as quite masculine—and that Zisser shows is an "association of metaphor not only with a phallic masculinity but with a phallic structure of object relations where the other is recast as a low-Other one may 'command' "[27]—then is it possible to read Jig's preference for the simile as itself connected to this larger concern with gender? In order to make such an argument, one would have to dispense with a number of different theoretical treatments of metaphor itself—not to mention how similes might work in many of these theories. For starters, one would need to dispense with Aristotle's argument that metaphors should be seen as merely including similes under the same category.[28] As Lynne Tirrell has persuasively argued, hacking away at this foundational pillar of rhetorical thinking is quite efficiently destabilizing—as this view manages to unite "such diverse writers as Cicero, Davidson, Paul Henle, Hegel, S. J. Brown, George Miller, Max Black, and Scott Buchanan, plus the myriad writers of textbooks on English composition and on rhetoric."[29] Her position holds that any account of simile (no matter how sophisticated the treatment might be) that removes the simile's distinctiveness—by, say, claiming that "simile and metaphor play the same linguistic role: they make (or prompt

[25] Russell Grigg, "Metaphor and Metonymy," *Newsletter of the Freudian Field* 3 (1989): 155.

[26] Jacques Lacan, "The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious: Or Reason Since Freud," in *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), 429.

[27] Sharon-Zisser, "Some Little Language Such as Lovers Use," 581.

[28] Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*, ed. Harvey Yunis, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 3.4, p. 127.

[29] Lynne Tirrell, "Reductive and Nonreductive Simile Theories of Metaphor," *The Journal of Philosophy* 88, no. 7 (July 1991): 339, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2027089.

us to make) comparisons"[30]—should be avoided simply because, in her phrasing, "[a]dding a semantic marker [e.g. a "like" or "as" to a statement] is not trivial": "... there is a big difference between saying 'A is a B' and saying that 'A is like B'. The former entails A's inclusion in the set of B things, while the latter does not."[31] Rather than enter into the absolute minefield that is philosophical treatments of something as simple—allegedly—as what it is we're talking about when we talk about a metaphor or about a simile, it suffices for us to simply note the rhetorical tradition's alignment of metaphor with the masculine and the simile with that of the feminine. It is also significant to us that Tirrell is quite right—unarguably so, one might say—to note that there is something about the "A is B" logical form, which the metaphor shares, that is profoundly "opened-up" by the addition of the "like." Simply in terms of the logical form, the metaphor seems to be slightly more determinative than is the simile; the latter "holds itself open"—refuses "to entail A's inclusion in the set of B things"—just a little bit more than does the metaphor. This "holding open," this maintenance of the tension between the two, exists not on either of the two sides—not on this side or that side of the track—but in the space in between. It strikes us that Hemingway's use of the simile, not only in the title but also within the story itself, plays itself out with the train station—mentioned early and often in "Hills"—but also in terms of JIg herself. Noticing how often the simile is linked to the femininity all throughout the Western rhetorical tradition, this can help to make sense of a number of key lines in the story that have been mentioned by earlier readers, but rarely synthesized into a larger conceptual framework.

In addition to the curtain separating the inside of the bar from the external space of the train station, there is a somewhat peculiar and odd little detail of the narrator's mentioning Jig's look that is directed not at the table that the pair sit at, but, "at the ground the table legs rested on."[32] Multiple scholars explicitly mention this peculiar look of the girl at the table,[33] but do not flesh-out its significance.[34] The girl's look not at what is erected, standing, upon the ground, but at the material foundation that the upright thing "rests on," strikes one as quite profound precisely because it leads one to think quite readily of more thematic ideas like those of "support" and that which allows something else to stand and "rest." One would certainly be justified in linking the girl's concern with what supports to all of the internal conversations readers have frequently imagined Jig is working out throughout the story: "Is this man going to support me? Will he support me and the child? Will he be someone that my own legs

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid., 341.

[32] Hemingway, "Hills Like White Elephants," 212.

[33] Scott Consigny, "Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants'," *Explicator* 48, no. 1 (1989): 54; Kobler, "Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants'," 7; Elliott, "Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants'," 23.

[34] Howard L. Hannum, "Jig Jig to Dirty Ears: White Elephants to Let," *Hemingway Review* 11, no. 1 (1991): 54, mentions Hollander's reading, where the latter "carefully distinguishes between [Jig's] 'looking at' the hills and a casual notice of them"—we think that what goes for the hills also goes for the table in the sense that both needs to be taken notice of and further theorized.

and the legs of my child can rest upon?" The brilliance of Hemingway's work here is that such questions are alluringly invited and we would not wish to close off such avenues of thinking. However, given the long-running history—going all the way back, as Sharon-Zisser has catalogued, to Aristotle's description of the "simile" as like a "womb" that itself "contracts" in order to give birth to the privileged phallic/masculine trope of the metaphor, which is itself always "latent" within the simile—we would like to suggest that Jig's focus on the ground be strongly connected with her use of the infamous simile.[35] Rather than focus on that which is standing, the table, there is an attention to the ground, to what provides the basis for that which stands upright. Acknowledging the rich (to our minds) history of the simile's historical associations with the feminine, it strikes us as incredibly apt for Jig's eyes to go not to the thing that stands, but, instead, to the thing which holds and allows the other matter to "rest" upon.

Although it is necessary to remember the mention of Jig's look towards the ground as an ontologically and rhetorically rich movement and not simply passed over either as some sort of quite understandable case of feeling of social awkwardness or potential embarrassment or avoidance on her part), once the narrator notes that the wind this day causes the table to be touched by the curtain that cuts in between so many things in this story, it becomes quite incumbent on the reader to meditate on why this connection between the two objects occurs.[36] Is this touching that which elicits Jig's own movement to reach out and touch the border and to draw close to its very dynamism (the split, the cut, the border itself, *moves*)?

Jig's gesture of reaching out to touch the bamboo curtain also has not gone uninterpreted as numerous readers have taken a stab at elucidating its meaning. Most of these interpretations are wonderfully inventive and no shortage of ink has been spilled on what we are supposed to infer from her hand's reaching and grasping "two of the strings of beads."[37] Elliott[38] suggests that her movement is meant to really solidify parsing the beads as akin to the rosary (although Hannum notes that if this were true then the number is off as one normally only holds one rosary bead at a time).[39] Justice draws our attention to the number—two beads are grasped, not one or three or ... *n*—and concludes that after this moment "Jig decides to concede to the man's wishes that she terminate her pregnancy"[40] But what if all of these readings are far too symbolic or far too

[35] Sharon-Zisser, "Some Little Language Such as Lovers Use," 585.

[36] Elliott, "Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants'," 23 mentions this touching, but does not suggest any further work this could be doing; Stanley Kozikowski, "Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants'," *Explicator* 52 (1994): 107–9 similarly cites the line and notes that "[t]he breeze, the moving beaded curtain, and the evocative drink—like hills like white elephants—connote to Jig the sweet promies of seexing and the bitter termination of birthing" (107).

[37] Hemingway, "Hills Like White Elephants," 213.

[38] "Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants'," 23.

[39] Hannum, "Jig Jig to Dirty Ears," 52.

[40] "Well, Well, Well," 20. But why assume there's only one way to take three and reduce it to a two—do we end up with Jig and the American as the two or Jig and the child?

focused on the meaning—and what would it mean to try to read the gesture in a much more formal or material manner, asking not what the gesture as signifier means (i.e. what's the signifier's signified?), but simply to focus on Jig's hand as it wishes to touch the border, to hold the curtain (but only for a moment)? Does the hand that reaches out solely to touch or caress, to grasp and hold but only so as to let the beaded strings slip away, what are we to say about this? Additionally, how might this line of thinking be used not just to meditate on the questions of gender in the story, but also that of pregnancy as well?

Before we get to the question of pregnancy in "Hills," a slight parenthesis is necessary to lay out the parameters of the Lacanian reading we wish to marshall here, with especial focus on the sigifnicance of two ideas put forth in this tradition—namely, that of the "phallus" and the "veil." It would be impossible to fully canvas all the work done by the veil and the phallus within Lacanian thought, but one truly exemplary landmark from the secondary criticism will have to be serve our purposes here. Firstly, Todd McGowan has done yeoman's work to lay out the travels that these two paired themes play in Lacan's work of the late 1950s.[41] Central for the way in which McGowan reads Lacan's 1958 "The Signification of the Phallus" essay is the distance Lacan himself takes from treating the phallus as linked either to biology or to some kind of overpowerring "cultural investment in the penis." For Lacan, the phallus is not the biological organ, but is a signifier—and the alleged superiority of this signifier is one that Lacan shows to always be, as McGowan writes, "illusory."[42] According to McGowan: "If the phallus is just a signifier, its status is that of an imposter, and its bearer must have recourse to imposture in order to take on the position of [*sic*] the phallus. If the phallus is ever forced to show itself, its imposture would become evident for everyone to see, which is why it can only play its role as the privileged signifier while veiled."[43] Of course, this mention of veiling here should remind one of our earlier mention of the bar, the cut, between the signifier and the signified in the Lacanian algorithm's reworking of Saussure's infamous diagram of the sign.[44] Although McGowan's essay does not explicitly invoke this bar, it is simple enough to draw the parallel, such that Lacan's focus on the signifier as cut (and not on what might lie "above" the bar of the cut, i.e. in the signified) becomes so significant to notice. Indeed, Lacan himself will link the phallus and the veiling quite strongly to the question of castration, which he also, as McGowan correctly notes, "understands ... much differently than Freud." In Lacan's work, castration "isn't related to the fear of losing, or trauma of having lost, the penis but to the lack that every speaking subject endures as

[41] Todd McGowan, "The Signification of the Phallus," in *Reading Lacan's Écrits: From "Signification of the Phallus" to "Metaphor of the Subject"*, ed. Stijn Vanhuele, Derek Hook, and Calum Neill (New York: Routledge, 2019), 1–20.

[42] Ibid., 2.

[43] Ibid.

[44] See Shirley Zisser, *Writing, Speech, and Flesh in Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Of Unconscious Grammatology* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 27 for more on the synonymy between "the bar" and "the veil."

a result of its subjection to the signifier."[45] The "bar" as "cut" is no literal cut, as "[t]he phallus is not, as we might suspect, the cause of castration but rather its signifier."[46] Furthermore:

> ... the phallus signifies what the desiring subject—the subject of the castration complex—has given up in order to exist as a desiring subject. But the reason Lacan can say that the phallus is a fraud or the badge of imposture is that even though the subject has given up a part of itself, this part exists only in being lost. ... The (symbolic) phallus signifies what the subject lost but never actually had. This is why it is the signifier without a signified—what the subject has sacrificed in order to be a speaking being—doesn't exist.[47]

As McGowan further explains:

> The priority of the signifier over the signified manifests itself in the subject having a location in the big Other prior to the subject viewing itself through the lens of meaning. The subject is split by signification in the sense that the I that speaks is distinct from the I that is spoken. Or, in Lacan's own terms, the subject of the enunciation is not the same as the subject of the statement. This splitting forms the unconscious by separating the subject from itself. The emphasis on the signifier allows Lacan to recoginze the subject as split, which is another way of describing castration.[48]

If the phallus is a signifier—and a signifier that can exist "only in being lost"[49]—it is this position that puts Lacanian psychoanalysis in fruitful dialogue with feminist thought more generally. As McGowan puts it: "The phallus isn't the penis but instead symbolizes the penis. When he says this, Lacan marks his distance from any defense of patriarchy. Lacan's insistence that the phallus is a simulacrum rather than a substantial source of idenity aligns him with the feminist project and not the patriarchal one."[50]

Lacanians have a very rich vocabulary and lexicon with which to talk about one being "subjected to the signifier." McGowan rightly invokes the distinction between the subject that speaks and the subject that is spoken. Slavoj Žižek utilizes a similar structure when he notes that the proper way to think of "symbolic castration" is "[n]ot castration as symbolic, as just symbolically enacted (in the sense in which we say that, when I am deprived of soemthing, I am 'symbolically castrated'), but the castration that occurs by the very fact of me being caught in the symbolic order, assuming a symbolic mandate. Castration is the very gap between what I immediately am and the symbolic mandate that

[45] McGowan, "The Signification of the Phallus," 7.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid., 12.
[49] Ibid., 7.
[50] Ibid., 12.

confers on me" some kind of authority.[51] It would be all too banal of a point—at least for Lacanians of a particular stripe—to say that it's never quite enough to notice the way in which there is a mismatch between what one "immediately is" and the "symbolic mandate" that is attached to me; yes, there is me and then there is the "phallus" as "an 'organ without a body' that I put on, which gets attached to mey body, without ever becoming its 'organic part,' namely, forever sticking out as its incoherent, excessive supplment."[52] Indeed, just as Hemingway's story shows, there are so many twos littered all throughout the space and time of the story, but it would never seem to be sufficient to be able to count to two—one needs to be able to count to three in order to catch the role and functoin of the curtain, the cut, the line or bar that separates one from another. It is precisely this cut, or this gap, or this "excessive supplement," or this "third thing" that we would like to highlight here so strongly[53]—all with the goal of seeing if it gives us a new way to talk about Jig's "fascination," as Elliott puts it, with the curtain.[54]

If one attends quite carefully to this preliminary theoretical excursus, one sees that there are a number of key characteristics here that will be imperative for us when we move over to Jig's look at the curtain: at the top of the list is not simply the connection between the phallus and the veil, but also the way in which, if the phallic signifier "exists only in being lost" and that it is a siginifer without a signified, a simple composition of these two ideas results in a situation where the real secret of the veil is that the veil hides, precisely, nothing. Lacan helps illustrate this idea In *Seminar XI* when he rehearses an old story of a painting contest between Zeuxis and Parrhasios. The former paints grapes that manage to fool birds that swoop down to eat them; the latter "triumphs over him for having painted on the wall a veil, a veil so lifelike that Zeuxis, turning towards him said, *Well, and now show us what you have painted behind it.*"[55] The possibility of reading the curtain itself as functioning in a quite similar way to the veil in this painting of Parrhasios strikes us as incredibly enticing. Once one adds the fact that Hemingway's story possesses a curtain that itself has "something painted on it"—is it an image, like the one we get in, say, *The Sun Also Rises*,[56] of a virile and virgorous bull, thick steam issuing from its nostrils; is it simply the words "Anis del Toro"; or perhaps both word and image are

[51] Slavoj Žižek, *Organs Without Bodies: On Deleuze and Consequences* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 87.

[52] Žižek, *Organs Without Bodies*.

[53] See Žižek, ibid 99 for the way in which this "counting" to three works vis-à-vis the couple in the sexual relation, since, for Lacan, "two sexual partners are never alone, soince their activity has to involve a fantsamatic supplment that sustains their desire (and that can ultimatey be just an imagined gaze observing them while they are engaged in sexual intertcourse). ... every couple is a couple of three: $1 + 1 + a$, the 'pathological' stain that disturbs the pure immersion of the couple)."

[54] Elliott, "Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants'," 23.

[55] Jacques Lacan, *Seminar XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), 103.

[56] Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* (New York: Quality Paperback Book Club, 1993), chap. 13, pp. 138-39.

"painted on it"—the road is open for a reading of Jig's relation to the curtain as a form of her relation to the phallocentric nature of this privileged signifier. What strikes the reader as most significant about what might be imaged or written on the curtain is the very fact that it is beaded. If there is an image or a word that the American can read and that Jig cannot, this too must be put in dialogue with so many of the issues that this story is concerned with, first and foremost being all of the twos throughout the story. Indeed, Smiley's wonderful reading of this story as exemplary of a division or split between masculine and feminine ways of communicating can also be further materially supported and formally substantiated through the two very different ways in which Jig and the American relate to the image or word, in the latter's case, and to the curtain itself, in the former's.[57] If the image or word on the curtain is legible to the American, it no doubt is due not simply to the fact that he is the Spanish speaker, but also to the masculine structure's analogousness to metaphor. Indeed, a curtain that is beaded, cut, fragmented and split into so many strands, that then gives way to a third thing (the image or the word that is, Gestalt-like, added and that unifies all of the fragmented pieces into some kind of a whole), gives us the structure of metaphor as such. The feminine relation to the curtain would seem to be exactly what we get with Jig: she cannot see (or has no interest in seeing) the whole that unifies all of the parts; rather, we get a focus on the materiality of the pieces. Furthermore, if to see the Gestalt-ish whole is to forget the fragmentation, to obscure the cuts, then Jig's reaching out to touch the curtain or veil is not just a privileging of the formal or material aspects that give rise to the whole image/word that the American can see, but it is also a physical gesture—if we imagine for a moment that when she grabs hold of the beads, she might also pull them towards her, say, or, at least pull them a tiny distance away from all the other strings of beads—that itself creates another gap, makes another part, fashions another split of sorts.[58] Jig's hand thus produces precisely what we call, again following Zisser's work, "a moment of holing" that is intimately connected to concerns of castration, the veil, the cut, and the signifier.[59]

Such a reading proposes a slightly different take on the no doubt quite orthodox reading of Jig as easily conflated with "the metaphorical." Once we have extracted the formal/structural elements of Jig's noticing of the table and her interest in "playing with the border" that is the curtain, it remains for us to

[57] Smiley, "Gender-Linked Miscommunication in 'Hills Like White Elephants'."

[58] Lacanian readers will detect a vibe here that will remind them of Lacan's infamous treatment of the "mirror stage" essay, where he lays out a similar structural relation between the child's image of imaginary "wholeness" in the mirror, all while this illusory wholeness is just that, quite illusory. Thus, keeping in mind that it is hardly warranted to say that the ideas in "Mirror Stage" are just picked up and transferred without alteration to the "Signification of the Phallus" essay, it does seem allowable to take what McGowan says about the latter and get it to work quite well with Lacan's theorization in the "Mirror Stage" essay: "Maturation and achieving the genital stage fail because no one can become whole. The insistence on a split subject is foundational in Lacan's theory. One cannot even try to become whole. The centrality of displacement and condensation—effects of the signifier—in the subject makes attempts at wholeness impossible" (McGowan, "The Signification of the Phallus," 14)

[59] Zisser, *Writing, Speech, and Flesh in Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, 26.

get this articulated with her use of the simile of the story's title. In a quite different context—that of thinking about the role that "maternity" and the "maternal body" play in Levinas' late text, *Otherwise Than Being, or, Beyond Essence*—Robert Gibbs notes in a review of Claire Elise Katz[60] why a perspective that moves away from the "fecundity" of the couple in *Totality and Infinity* (and that we would associate with the creatively "fecund" nature of metaphor itself) ultimately results in Levinas' heavy use of the "like" (*comme*) in *Otherwise*: "Perhaps a simile is actually a stronger means of holding on to the difference with its specificity and to the reaching beyond the originary sense. Stronger than metaphor because the simile veers towards allegory and moves away from the underlying unity of meanings and referents."[61] This insight—that metaphor is always pushing towards an "underlying unity of meanings and referents"—brings into sharp relief and contrast why the simile is Jig's preferred trope. We are after a similar effect here of the simile in "Hills": that it "holds open ... difference," even better, Jig's touching of the curtain not "holds open" difference, but even multiplies that difference as well and further moves the simile as such away from the "underlying unity of meanings and referents" that the metaphor so clearly desires.

If the metaphor pushes toward unity, toward identity, then the simile could not be farther from such a movement. As Burt notes, "Simile ('like') denies identity (implies 'is not'): 'It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas' means something quite different—and probably something sarcastic—if Christmas is already here."[62] This reading of simile's "denial of identity" is undoubtedly quite consistent with other readings demonstrating the contrasting power of metaphor which show up in numerous "[m]odern thinkers [who] emphasize the relationship of the One with the totality of a closed circuit."[63] Zisser notes that from Heidegger to Jean-Luc Nancy to Irigaray and Lacan, this process of "totalization" resulting in the "One" "is the hallmark of the discourse of the master. This discourse is predicated on a non-recognition of plurality. It 'masks the division of the subject'," in Lacan's parlance. Moroever, this "totalizing unicity" is strongly tied to "its alignment with the phallic. The fantasy of totalizing ... is the phallic fantasy *par excellence*."[64] The consequences of this for Zisser are clear—as she suggests it was clear for most writers within the Western rhetorical tradition—: "In not recognizing plurality and division in subjectivity, the totalizing and solipsistic discourse of the master in which metaphor in its early modern theorizations is allied is emrboiled with what I call phallic desire, desire predicated on the

[60] *Levinas, Judaism, and the Feminine: The Silent Footsteps of Rebecca* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003).

[61] Robert Gibbs, "Review of Claire Elise Katz, *Levinas, Judaism, and the Feminine: The Silent Footsteps of Rebecca*," *Continental Philosophy Review* 37, no. 3 (2004): 375, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11007-004-5351-4.

[62] Burt, ""LIKE" A SPECULATIVE ESSAY ABOUT POETRY, SIMILE, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, MOURNING, SEX, ROCK AND ROLL, GRAMMAR, ROMANTIC LOVE."

[63] Sharon-Zisser, *The Risks of Simile in Renaissance Rhetoric*, 177.

[64] Sharon-Zisser, *The Risks of Simile in Renaissance Rhetoric*.

desubjectivation of the other, on the production of the other as low-Other."[65] Given this theorization of metaphor, it is possible that even more details within the story also flash into prominence even more starkly. It might even give us a different perspective on the American's act toward the end where "[h]e picked up the two heavy bags and carried them around the station to the other tracks."[66] Here we have the American performing precisely the function encoded in the very word, "*metapherein*," which we all knows means "to transfer" or "carry." It is, of course, possible to read this as quite ironic: the American, the one who doesn't seem to know anything about how metaphor works, becomes the very thing he doesn't understand at all: namely, a force of *metapherein*. Cute as this reading is, it seems to us preferable to claim that this does not perform an ironic reversal of sorts, but, instead, pushes us back towards our earlier attempt to try to keep the simile separate from the metaphor: this act of transferring the bags to the other side points up Jig's connection to simile, and the way in which the simile does not perform this "transferring" movement in the same way as does metaphor.

There are even further consequences to all of this, implications that would suggest slight revisions to quite time-honored readings of this story. Here one thinks quite readilly of Renner's significant essay,[67] which leans incredibly heavily on this issue of transferring or of "moving" from one side (of the tracks) to the other. Renner's argument that the story illustrates some kind of progression such that Jig ultimately comes to some kind of conclusion about the main topic of conversation between her and the American relies on a paragraph of narrative description that has Jig moving away from the table. It strikes us that Renner is more than right to highlight this point in the narrativw, though we would like to question whether or not there is, as he claims, "a pivotal turn, in terms of both structure and character development" here: "The girl stood up and walked to the end of the station. Across, on the other side, were fields of grain and trees along the banks of the Ebro. Far away, beyond the river, were mountains. The shadow of a cloud moved across the field of grain and she saw the river through the trees."[68]. Renner's interpretation of this moment reads thusly:

> When "The girl stood up and walked to the end of the station;' she effectively distances herself from the influence of her male companion and enables herself, evidently for the first time, to realize what is in her own mind. In choosing to write his story from the dramatic point of view, Hemingway set himself the problem of how to show, not tell, what is going on in the minds of his characters. Now he uses the physical movement of his character within a carefully defined setting to represent a pivotal movement of mind. Thus, figuratively speaking, the girl's movement to a point where she can look out to the other side of the station shows the freeing of her mind from the

[65] Ibid.
[66] Hemingway, "Hills Like White Elephants," 214.
[67] Renner, "Moving to the Girl's Side of 'Hills Like White Elephants'."
[68] Ibid., 31; Hemingway, "Hills Like White Elephants," 213.

> control of the American and her development toward discovering her own feelings, represented figuratively by the other side of the valley she now sees for the first time. The living things that now appear to her view-the trees, the"fields of grain" that suggest the cycle of life in nature, the river as the stream and water of life-all show that she is powerfully drawn to the full involvement in the life process that having a child signifies.[69]

Must one read Jig's "physical movement" as indicating that something about the situation has become determinable and determined? If our focused reading on the significance of the simile, on the "like," on that which does not at all reach towards some kind of determination (as the metaphor does), then could one suggest that it is no mere accident that Hemingway tells us quite explicitly that Jig walks "to the end of the station"? Once she walks to this point, on which side of the border, on which side of the curtain or veil is she then on? Is she taking up a determinate position when she merely walks "to the end of the station," thus leaving open the possibility that this movement hardly puts her on a determinable side—does this not evoke Jig's consistent interest in playing with the border, with staying on the border itself, much as the "like" and the "simile" themselves do? If the metaphor wants to jump the border, leap over the cut, Jig's walking puts her on the border—puts her in a spot of a good deal of interdeterminacy, quite similarly to the way the simile itself does. Yes, to be sure, the simile does open up the possibility of potential determinations, but we never get to see Jig pull herself out of this indeterminate state into one that would justify a claim that some determination has been made.

Moreover, reading Jig's relation to the border as one that never actually ends up with her choosing or picking one side or the other—she does not walk to the "end of the station" only to then cross the border or the curtain, but simply puts herself even more clearly *on the border or cut itself*—can help us further tease out the strangenesses associated with the time and temporality of the story.[70] Every reader immediately notices the way in which the dramatic structure of the story begins, in good classical literary fashion, *in media res*—but few have traced out how this works with the temporal oddities in this tiny little "slice of

[69] Renner, "Moving to the Girl's Side of 'Hills Like White Elephants'," 32.

[70] Perusing the secondary literature on this story, one can find peppered throughout mentions of time in the story. Joseph R Urgo, "Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants'," *The Explicator* 46, no. 3 (1988): 35–37 36 picks up this thread, but focuses on the way in which the American's power and arguments both seem to wane over the time of the story: "Each of the man's sources of authority are undermined in the course of the story. His powers of translation, first of all, prove to be unnecessary when the waitress displays a working command of English. Furthermore, when he translates from Spanish to English near the end of the story, telling the girl that the waitress has said"the train is coming in five minutes," his powers backfire. The girl smiles "brightly" at this information, knowing that time is on her side in this argument. As time passes, her side of the argument gains; if enough time passes, it will be too late to have the abortion. In this way, the man's control of the money only buys them time by buying them drinks, and time serves the pregnant girl, not the aborting man." (36) We find it highly debateable to say that "time passes" in this story—this is precisely what time *does not do* in this story, despite all of the chronological markers that populate the narrative.

time" that we as readers never see the characters actually move out of over the course of the story. The story is full of temporal and chronological markers: "the express would come in forty minutes. It stopped at this junction for two minutes and went on to Madrid";[71] the waitress tells us towards the end that "[t]he train comes in five minutes";[72] and although we do get tiny hints of the way in which this slice in time reaches back into the past (the pair's luggage with all "labels on them from all the hotels where they had spent nights"[73])—we are left flailing a bit when we ask certain perhaps silly empirical questions like how the couple even got to this junction in the first place. Additionally, we actually never get to see them exit this slice in time: as every reader knows, we never see them get off the initial train that puts them in this quite clearly delineated space in the first place and we never see them board another train to depart—we don't even get the hint of any trace of the train itself either for that matter ("He looked up the tracks but could not see the train"[74]). The very temporal frame of the story itself is so indebted to the cut here that one could say we don't have just one curtain or veil here in the story—we have at least two since the story's temporal framing is itself a border, a curtain, a slice. The entire story is one enormous curtain, one enormous curtain that is cut and split into all of the twos that so many scholars have already selected out and discussed time and time again.

If Zisser is correct to say—and we think she is—that to fixate in on the way in which the metaphorical copula "is" links up with the "logical copula" of that very same word, the aspect of tense and temporality must also be brought into the conversation. Zisser notes the way in which John Florio's preference for the "is" in the metaphorical is due to the fact that the metaphor does have a tense: the copula speaks of the present: "Expounding the use of this signifier in the 'Italian tongue', John Florio describes its 'tence' as 'present' and '*definitiue*'."[75] This fact that the metaphorical is has a tense and speaks of the present in a "definitive" way helps one to understand past rhetoricians' worry and concern about the simile:

> In contradistinction to the metaphoric copula to which it is often said to be formally related, the similaic copula "like" does not designate a grammatical tense, certainly not the ontologically-weighted present tense early modern grammarians associte with the signifier "is" structuring the metaphoric copula. This implicit distinction between a metaphoric copula designating a tense and a similaic copula not designating a tense suggests a split between the category of simile and the categry of time in early modern aesthetics. The allusions to the connections bewteen simile and a lost timeless archaic in the

[71] Hemingway, "Hills Like White Elephants," 211.
[72] Ibid., 214.
[73] Hemingway, "Hills Like White Elephants."
[74] Ibid.
[75] Sharon-Zisser, *The Risks of Simile in Renaissance Rhetoric*, 169; citing John Florio, *Queen Anna's New World of Words* (Urbana, Illinois: Project Gutenberg, 2017), 645, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/56200/56200-h/56200-h.htm, emphais ours.

texts of Shakespeare, Meres, and Coles suggest the same split.[76]

The similaic "like" has no tense, does not give us anything present or "definitive"—it opens up a temporal space that, like the story of "Hills," takes on hints of this "lost timeless archaic" nontemporality that Zisser finds in so many poets.[77] If the "is" speaks definitively of and in the present tense, cuts into clearly determinable spaces, into determinate tenses, the "like" can hardly be said to do the same and it seems quite unobjectionable for us to say that both Jig and her similaic "like" exist in this same strange temporal register. There are two things linked by the like, the hills and the elephants, but the time and temporality in which this linking occurs simultaneously gives us nothing determinate in terms of tense and time. In what time does this story exist? Certainly not in the realm of the "is," but only in this peculiar oddity of time signaled by the "like."

Although previous readers have been aware of many of these temporal oddities—[78] mentions a couple of the strange "time-lapses" within the conversational dialogue of the story (how much of a lag is itself uncertain and not at all clear, one should be sure to note)—most readers have been content to want to collapse these lapses and indeterminate temporal spans into some kind of meaning. Our argument is that "Hills" quite legibly makes clear these odd temporal spaces within the "between" of the story itself—and careful attention to this fact suggests that one should try to avoid collapsing them in order to claim that someone decides or something has been decided. Justice's reading would seem to fall into this camp, especially when one looks at her essay's final paragraph, which lays out all the alternatives:

> The palimpsest of the published text, like much in the story itself—the white elephants, "Jig," the shadow of a cloud, "across," the smiles, the act of moving suitcases, nearly every spoken pronoun (Josephs 55) and almost all of the dialogue—can almost miraculously support two equal and opposite meanings. But no matter how we choose, each by each, to approach the story, to resolve these oppositions, the story is about more—much more—perhaps even seven-eighths more—than the end of a shallow relationship or the fly-by-night expediency of the operation necessary to keep it that way.[79]

We laud this reading quite strongly and find Justice's work to have greatly pushed the conversation about this story and all its attendant ambiguities. No doubt it is important for us to understand precisely "why the published story seems to support at least two equal and opposite readings of its ending" and

[76] Sharon-Zisser, *The Risks of Simile in Renaissance Rhetoric*, 221–22.

[77] This "archaic time" is definitely an idea that should be put in dialogue with Kristeva's theorization of the "monumental time" that is found in her Julia Kristeva, "Women's Time," trans. Alice Jardine and Harry Blake, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 7, no. 1 (1981): 13–35. This is a fruitful angle that space constraints force us to merely suggest here.

[78] Wyche, "Letting the Air into a Relationship," 62.

[79] Justice, "Well, Well, Well," 30.

to continue offering an examanation of "the textual elements which create that ambiguity," but we part ways with her as it seems that, at the end of the day, the ultimate goal is still one where readers "resolve[s] questions arising from the story's ambiguity."[80] Indeed, we are quite tempted to wonder if it's necessary at all that the reader "resolve these oppositions." Could one offer a reading that leaned more on a generativity that keeps tight focus on the space of the "between" (indeed, the syntax of the second half of Justice's last sentence, with its strong use of the em-dash to cut up the sentence, only to then generate an excess: "the story is about more—much more—perhaps even seven-eighths more— . . . " seems to be following the correct intuition about the story that we are proffering here) without any effort to try to "reduce" anything? This final sentence is itself quite beautifully split in two: on one side we have a desire to reduce the oppositions and Justice seems to suggest how hard (or how impossible) it might be for a reader to *not do this*—while the second half registers the creation of more indeterminacy. If we could speculate about a reading that would understand this excess in the second half while showing how this very excess forestalls the necessity of having to reduce things as asserted in the first half, then we would have readers in the precise spot where we would like them to be: not on either side of the opposition, but right on the curtain, right on the border itself.

One could also adduce here Wyche's reading—which cites Justice's essay, but ends up concluding with a very similar refrain. Here is the last paragraph of his intervention:

> The diversity of plausible, but mutually exclusive, scenarios for the fate of Jig's baby would seem to render any definitive interpretation unlikely. If, however, we read the unmentioned abortion as an additional metaphor in a story that critics have long recognized as allegorical, then we can say with some certainty that, by the story's conclusion, the relationship between Jig and the American has been effectively destroyed. This is true whether Jig concedes to the American's adolescent demands, whether he acquiesces to her more mature insight, or whether apparent concessions are merely shifts in negotiating positions, with psychological movement being toward polarities rather than consensus. Like an aborted fetus, the love affair has died before it had time to grow into a complex and meaningful life.[81]

Here again Wyche gives us so many of the determined and determinable possibilities, but there is still a movement and a desire to collapse them: ". . . then we can say with some certainty that, by the story's conclusion, the relationship between Jig and the American has been effectively destroyed." But, once more, we wonder if we must take this zone or space-time of indistinction, this zone of indiscernibility, as to be surpassed so that some kind of conclusion can be drawn. We are aware that it is a perhaps quite contentious claim that readings

[80] Ibid., 18.
[81] Wyche, "Letting the Air into a Relationship," 70.

which result in some kind of determinability—either of Jig and her decision or of the fate of the child—end up collapsing this very temporal indeterminacy given to us by the "like." This would mean that readings that were quite opposed in terms of which side of the tracks one ultimately has Jig and the American end up on largely miss the significance of the "like" in the story's simile. Thus, one could claim that regardless of whether or not we read the conclusion of the story as pointing to either Jig's autonomy in deciding to have the child (as we get in Renner, Justice, and numerous others) such readings—from the standpoint of the similaic "like"—are functionally indistinguishable from those that read Jig as acquiescing. From this perspective, it would be perhaps somewhat formulaic to argue that a reading like Maissonnet's,[82] which says the story has much more to do not with some literal reading of Jig's pregnancy, but, instead, with Hemingway's conception of the author himself as undergoing some kind of "birth" into his role as writer and creator, just further reduces Jig's potential autonomy: if the story is really about the male author's generativity, then we might just have more instance of the masculine's usurpation and appropriation of the feminine's very same reproductivity. The odd reading, however, would be the one that suggests that this is perhaps also true for readings that focus so squarely on the maintenance of Jig's autonomy when she decides to have the child. Both readings are indebted to a phallocentric reading that diminishes the power of the simile and of the like. This reading is admittedly strongly aligned with the Lacanian interpretation of the phallic signifier and the two positions here end up looking quite similar to the way in which McGowan tries to lay out the true radicality of the Lacanian treatment of this key signifier:

> There will always be one signifier that functions in the way that the phallus does, one signifier that signifies all meaning or all signifieds. replacing this signifier would have no political effect at all because the structure would remain the same. This is the problem with traditional feminist critiques of the privilege invested in the phallus. *One must give up the struggle against the phallus. What is necessary, instead, is altering the relationship to the phallus and recognizing its imposture.* The privilege of the phallus is no priviledge at all, though this is the most difficult recognition to accept.[83]

Is it warranted to describe "pro-Jig" readings as themselves still "struggling" in some way with the phallus—and how legitimate would it be to say that readings that simply place "Jig" in the slot of the phallus actually result in a state of affairs where "the structure would remain the same" as one where phallic authority is accorded solely to the American? Is it not possibly much better to read Jig's relation to the ground upon which the table rests upon or to the curtain itself that cuts the space in two or to her walking "to the end of the station" and thus placing herself right on the border, as all different ways in which we can see Jig "altering her relationship to the phallus" in some way?

[82] Maisonnat, "Falling into the Embrace of the Muse."
[83] McGowan, "The Signification of the Phallus," 6.

It would seem not to be a coincidence that so many of the pro-Jig readings themselves rely heavily on the structure of metaphor or on eliding the simile in order to categorize "Hills" as clearly metaphorical: either the story itself is one giant metaphor (as it seems to be for Wyche) or the story becomes a metaphor for many of the biographical details recorded by Justice (i.e. the story points us to its function vis-à-vis Hemingway's relationship with Pauline Pfeiffer).

And what if all of this talk of "abortion" is already slightly off-target right from the very start? As Justice notes concerning the dedication to Pfeiffer:

> "Hills" is the only story manuscript so dedicated, and perhaps Hemingway intended the dedication for Pauline's eyes only. Everything about the abortion is left out of this deceptively simple "abortion story" (Baker, *Life* 595)—not only the word, but also its metaphorical status in the context of the newlywed's intimate history, and the dedication which provides the signpost "To Biography."[84]

What would it mean to read this story not as about abortion or birth but about pregnancy itself—and pregnancy as a state of being that does not collapse immediately into an either/or statement of some kind (or that reads this lacuna as itself having some metaphorical meaning, as Flora's reading suggests[85]), but that holds open all of the indeterminate possibilities that come with pregnancy, e..g not just the life or death status of the child, but also the miscarriage as itself an ineradicable possibility? It seems highly questionable to say that the "time of pregnancy" is simple collapsible into the "time of abortion." Additionally, we think that Barbara Johnson's still unsurpassed essay on abortion and rhetoric,[86] remains accurate in claiming that it is rhetoric's (language's) power itself to continually and endlessly place the fetus in a space and position of undecidability through what she calls the "apostrophe":

> The fact that apostrophe allows one to animate the inanimate, the dead, or the absent implies that whenever a being is apostrophized, it is thereby automatically animated, anthropomorphized, "personified." (By the same token, the rhetoric of calling makes it difficult to tell the difference between the animate and the inanimate, as anyone with a telephone answering machine can attest.) Because of the ineradicable tendency of language to animate whatever is adduces, rhetoric itself can always already have answered "yes" to the question of whether a fetus is a human being.[87]

As Johnson so rightly argues, language and rhetoric are that which make it quite "impossible to tell whether language is what gives life or what kills"—and it is no wonder that something like "the question of 'when life begins' is complicated

[84] Justice, "Well, Well, Well," 30.

[85] Joseph Flora, *Ernest Hemingway: A Study of the Short Fiction* (Boston: Twayne, 1989), 34.

[86] Barbara Johnson, "Apostrophe, Animation, and Abortion," *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (1986): 28–47, https://doi.org/10.2307/464649.

[87] Ibid., 34.

partly because of the way in which language blurs the boundary between life and death."[88] A decision either for or against an abortion is not the same as the temporality of the pregnant person—the former would seem to collapse this temporal space of the "between," the strangely undecidable "in-between" space of pregnancy might miss this power of language, rhetoric, and signification that Johnson so brilliantly brings to our attention (and that our Jig is intimately aware of in her strangely formalist/materialist readings of her surroundings, the "like" included). Also, in a completely different literary context, one wonders if so much of the critical conversation about this story has taken it to signal a form of temporality where this "interim" space-time is elided in a desire to leap further along the track that is pregnancy. As Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg has perspicaciously noted about many pregnancies within the Hebrew Bible—especially in the case of Adam and Eve and also of Sarah—, "Hills" seems too often to be read as a scenario where "[o]nce the child is conceived ... birth follows instanteously. The space and time of pregnancy are effectively absent from these narratives."[89] Rebecca, the one whose pregnant body is itself "turbulently" split in two by the twin boys, Jacob and Esau, she carries within her maternal body, is the outlier here: "Rebecca's pregnancy is in a sense the only biblical pregnancy. As a condition in itself, a human experience to be questioned and constructed into meaning, this pregnancy is unique in the entire range of biblical narratives."[90] Is the "space and time of [Jig's] pregnancy absent from" Hemingway's story? Not at all, as we hope our reading here has convincingly shown.

It is precisely Jig's tarrying within this indeterminate space-time of the "like," of the simile, that shows us the necessity of resisting any foretting of the curtain, the cut, the difference between all the twos in the story. Even if readers are somewhat hesitant to agree with us that Jig's forever remaining in this indeterminate space that need never end up becoming determined, an awareness of this in-betweenness seems necessary to us in order to maintain a proper awareness of the difference created by the border itself. As Johnson argues, if one holds too strongly to all of the twos that are in some way symmetrical, there is great risk of forgetting difference: "there is difference *because* it is not always possible to make symmetrical oppositions. As long as there is symmetry, one is not dealing with difference but rather with versions of the same."[91] For Johnson, such a situation is no more clear than in questions surrounding that of abortion—following Carol Gilligan's *Different Voices*, she writes:

> Gilligan's difference arises out of the imposibility of maintaining a rigorously logical binary for ethical choices. Female logic, as she defines it, is a way of rethinking the logic of choice in a situation in which none of the choices are good. "Believe that even in my deliberateness I was not deliberate": believe that the agent is not entirely

[88] Ibid., 34, 35.

[89] Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, *The Murmuring Deep: Reflections on the Biblical Unconscious* (New York: Schocken Books, 2009), 209.

[90] Ibid., 208.

[91] Johnson, "Apostrophe, Animation, and Abortion," 33.

> autonomous, believe that I can be subject and object of violence at the same time, believe that I have not chosen the conditions under which I must choose.[92]

Our reading here proposes an extension of this "logic" proposed by Gilligan and Johnson that subtlely maintains the tension raised by the similaic like such that there is not even a "must choose" here for Jig. In the conclusion of,[93] he notes:

> It is hard to avoid the temptation of ending this article by offering a new answer to the question why Jig smiles. So here it is: she is not pregnant at all. She has misled the man, telling him that she was pregnant, probably in order to assess his character and their relationship, perhaps to pressure him into marriage. By the end of the story, she knows all she needs to know about him. As she has suspected, he is not the kind of partner she wants, and she will leave him soon.

Similarly to the tenor of Avitzour's concluding paragraphs, we also cannot help but succumb to a similar temptation to offer "a new answer" to this story—we prefer a reading where nothing is determined: we never see the pair arrive at the station; we never see the couple board a train to depart; we never see Jig make a decision—for us, this story ends in a Beckettian "Godot-esque" state: the couple never leave the in-between space of the station; they remain there forever, with Jig also tarrying on the border between all determinate positions: what we never see Jig is succumb to the masculine-phallocentric logic that says one "must choose"; she defers, in this endlessly and infinitely, forever. Just as Jig and the American, in this reading, never ever leave this space in between all the twos, it is precisely this ending that maintains the tenseless nature of the "like." In contrast with numerous previous readings, we do not find the truly profound time of the story to work according to any strong chronological markers; the really important kind of time within "Hills" is not the "dramatic time" that allows one to say that "the whole of the action is telescoped into 'forty minutes.'"[94] nor is the real time the one that is telescoped but that still allows, say, the American to be able to give himself "the time for his next action."[95] This is perhaps a masculine temporality that is undercut by the feminine timelessness of the "like," which expands out infinitely from this space of the between.

[92] Johnson, "Apostrophe, Animation, and Abortion."

[93] Daniel Avitzour, "Why Does Jig Smile? Readings of 'Hills Like White Elephants'," *Connotations* 27 (2018): 68, https://doi.org/https://dx.doi.org/10.25623/conn027-avitzour-1.

[94] Joseph DeFalco, *The Hero in Hemingway's Short Stories* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1963), 170.

[95] Nilofer Hashmi, "'Hills Like White Elephants': The Jilting of Jig," *The Hemingway Review* 23, no. 1 (2003): 80.

Supplementary Stuff:

Trajectory:

a.) phallus and veil ... the image written on the veil (from *Seminar IV*), in this case, an image of the phallus ... the bull, the drink, etc. ... Jig only interested in the material ground of the image ... b.) no desire to jump the border ...—American's obliviousness c.) tarrying with the veil ... as distinctive "feminine" ... d.) the curtain is itself already cut, fissured ... use Rothenberg on Laclau to get at this ....[96]

Of Veils in Lacan:

1. Ragland, p. 13: "Indeed, the veil proves that the Other is barred, is not complete within itself. It needs objects to supplment it. It belies a complete Other who would wish to have nothing to hide."
2. Ibid., p. 18: "Underthe veil is nothing, an enigmatic emptiness. That place of emptiness mimes the void in the Other that occurs with castration."
3. Ibid., p. 19: "The veil speaks as a message that is not a discourse, but is of the semblant. Lacan concluded that all that is discourse can only give itself as semblant. The early relation to the mirror is passed by the rapport of the semblant. The word 'semblant' comes from 'similes,' that which is not declined."
4. Ibid., p. 22: "The veil only hides what is not under it."

Of tables and curtains—in the Secondary Criticism:

1. Consigny 54 mentions both ...
2. Elliot 23: "The woman's curiosity about the curtain and fascination with it continues as ..." then cites the sentence from the story ...
3. Gilmour's whole essay ...
4. Kobler mentions both on page 7 ...
5. Kozikowski, p. 107: To the American man, as distant from metaphor as he is from the hills, the "wind" of the hills simply defines casually and literally what an abortion is: As "the warm wind blew the bead curtain against the table"

[96] Molly Anne Rothenberg, *The Excessive Subject: A New Theory of Social Change* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2010), 143–45.