The "Is," the "Like," and the "And" - Hemingway's Hills Like White Elephants

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1. Philosophical Lumber

Before making a study of Hemingway's story, it will be prudent to introduce some philosophical material to aid in our analysis.

Before continuing, let us recall Deleuze's conception of the virtual and of virtual objects–this will be crucial to our discussion of metpahor, simile, and conjunction. In his *Difference and Repetition* Deleuze states his conception of the virtual: DELEUZE REAL MINUS ACTUAL. It is in the space of the virtual that what Deleuze calls intensities, these being ???, can vary and fluctuate, thereby altering the nature of the interaction between the subject and the object. That is, the virtual is the space that exists in between Deleuze's field of difference and the space of the actual. The virtual is the space that allows the nature of the object to flow and fluctuate without the object changing in actuality. One may think of these fluctuating intensities as akin to changing probabilities; the likelihood of certain modes of perception, use, and perspective of an object change, as governed by their changing intensities.

Let us now conduct a small study of metaphor, simile, and conjunction: the "is," the "like" and the "and." Let us have two linguistic objects, x and y. We may connect these terms with the metaphor (x is y), the simile, (x is like y), or with the conjunction (x and y). All three of these devices deisolate x and y, bringing both terms into the same space. This space is not the space of actuality, of course. None of the three statements above give any *actual* information about x or y. Indeed, in the case of the metaphor, we must note that, in actuality, the statement x is y is a false statement; the equating of x and y removes any possibility of any distance whatever between the terms. Since there is such a clear difference between the terms, the metaphorical statement, when read in the space of actuality, is false. And yet, though these statements may be said to be poorly stated or even incoherent (when read in the actual space), we must note that all three are intelligible, evocative, and even informative. Where do these capacities exist, if not in actuality? They are certainly elements of the real. It does not seem far fetched, then, to locate these statements of "is," "like" and "and" in Deleuze's virtual space–or, if not, in a space nearly indistinguishable

from the virtual. More will be said about these statements as virtual object in the pages that follow, but for now let us move along to an analysis of what these statements *do*.

Let us begin with metaphor. As the etymology of "metaphor" contains both "process" and "result," we must ask: under what process does metaphor operate, and what is produced by that process? To take our example: x is y. For this metaphor to have aesthetic value, or any significance *as* a metaphor, the terms x and y must be quite dissimilar. ORTEGA ON DISTANCE It is of little use to metaphorize, for example, "oranges are grapefruits." Though oranges are, clearly, not grapefruits, the two terms are too similar too each other for the metaphor to make any difference. Statements of the form x is y, where x and y are too near each other, cease to exist in the realm of metaphor and move into the realm of incorrect fact. The two terms of a metaphor must be sufficiently different as to provide a hole in the page for the eye to trip over. ORTEGA DECREATION. What, then, is the meaning of the phrase x is y, when not only is x *not* y, but x and y are clearly and obviously different? What must be realized is that when such an equivalence is drawn, the created thing is *not* simply the pairing of x and y, but is rather a new object altogether. That is, the metaphor does not compare so much as it creates. When [author] writes [metaphor], [author] is not attempting to make a bizarre, counterfactual statement about [term1] and [term2], but is rather melding [term1] and [term2] to produce the new linguistic object signified by "[term1] is [term2]." Ortega y Gassett, in *An Essay in Esthetics by Way of a Preface*, describes this process quite well: ORTEGA LAVA QUOTE. This is quite an apt metaphor to speak about metaphor with. Two directly opposing forces The metaphorical object is, then, a *new* creation. True, it was produced by the combination of x and y, but it is not comprised of or determined by x and y. As in a chemical reaction, x and y react with each other, to produce a new synthesized object.

Now, what is the nature of our newly created metaphorical object? Most importantly, it is creat*ed*. Its process of creation is ended, past. LEVINAS STAMP QUOTE. This is not to say that the metaphorical object is static or constant, as stone seems to be, but only that its being does not slide or turn. It is every bit as rich as the objects is was created out of: it admits of the possibility of interpretation, it keeps secrets, it recedes from our view. But it is, in a fundamental sense, remains as it is and cannot be altered. It is determined, completed, constituted. There is no more to be added to it. Once the metaphor is stated, the object it creates becomes an object for observation, not for alteration. But the metaphorical object is also entirely new; it has not been previously signified. One may say that it did "exist" before the artist signified, but this must be taken as a hidden or undiscovered existence. What then, can we say about a linguistic creation that, though entirely new, is dead as soon as it has been born? Simply this: metaphor opens a space between x and y, a space in language, for a brief moment, allowing something truly new through the gap before allowing language to snap shut once more before severing the connection between x and y. ORTEGA FOOTNOTE 3.

The simile, though often regarded as either a "special case of metaphor" or as that thing which aspires to the heights of metaphorical language, is a process distinct from metaphor. We may note this distinction in several ways. First, we note the ambiguity of the statement "x like y." In what way is x like y? Under what criteria? The simile provides no answer to these questions, nor does it provide a definite path to an answer. This is a distinct quality of the simile, separate from both the metaphor and the conjunction: the "is" of the metaphor is definite and assertive, allowing no space for questioning. Either x *is* y, or x is *not* y. There is no space for similarity in the metaphor: the question "in what way is x, y?" is meaningless. Conversely, the conjunction makes no pretensions to similarity or equality whatever. "x and y" draws no connection between x and y, save that they exist in the same space. The conjunction, though quite inactive, is just as definite as the metaphor, in a negative sense. The distinct property of the simile is the simultaneous existence and ambiguity of a link between two terms.

This ambiguity has been criminally left unnoticed in the secondary literature - the simile is too often considered as that term which aspires to the level of the metaphor, a special case of metaphor, or simply an empirical statement. A proper consideration of the ambiguity of simile is able to dispense with these degradations of the simile and instead bring forward the incredible linguistic power of the device, as we see it used in Hemingway's story. This consideration relies on the question "what sort of similarity does simile draw?" This must be closely considered. For when a simile is stated, x like y, it is crucial to note that no detectable concrete similarity is stated–thus the use of mathematical variables here. In what *way* is x like y? Which quality do they share, if any? The answers to these and other similar questions are not present in the simile. Rather, the simile makes a pre-identical, pre-actualized, pre-attributal comparison between the two terms and presents some fundamentally constitutive similarity between the two. The simile makes no claims of equality, nor difference, nor does it admit of any measure of intensity. Things are "like" in many ways–x may be incredibly similar to y, but incredibly dissimilar from z. These measurements may be valid, but cannot be said to be deduced from the word "like"–this is the ambiguity of the simile.Only after a simile is stated can one begin to list similar attributes of the two terms: the statement"x is like y in *these* ways relies on x and y being similar *first*.

Now, a simplistic question: why is the simile not necessarily banal? That is, why do statements of similarity not bore the eye into slumber? Isn't it quite obvious that, given any two terms, *some* valid similarity can be drawn between them? These questions are valid. It is certainly true that similarities between even the most distantly related terms are ever-present and easily found. The error in these questions comes when one forgets that though all is one, all is also many. Everything *is* like everything else in an infinite number of ways, but just so is everything *different* from everything else in an infinite number of ways. This tension is compacted and focused, geniusly, into the term "similar." To say "x is similar to y" holds x and y in precisely this undetermined, compacted state;

x and y are simultaneously similar and dissimilar. Herein lies the generativity of the simile–if the simile sought to make a statement of total equality or total difference, it *would* be a weaker sort of metaphor. But similarity is irreducible to equality or inequality. Rather, it holds identity and difference in an unresolved tension, allowing a continuous and unending process of free and untrammeled comparison.

The simile is an incredibly versatile device; one does not suppose that a simile can ever truly "fail," as is said of metaphors. Metaphors have an agenda–they are created for a purpose. In relation to that purpose, it may be quite apt to speak of a "poor" metaphor. This cannot be said of simile. Simile has no agenda because the statement of the simile is not productive–only associative. It seems disingenuous, then, to speak of a "failed" simile. It does not seem that the distance, so to speak, between the two terms in the simile has anything to do regarding the effectiveness of the simile. Even a simple simile, in which the two compared terms are supposed to be naturally quite similar, opens a space for *un*natural excess, so to speak. That is, though the two terms in the simple simile may seem quite similar, the openness of the simile allows for uncommon or unobvious similarities to be drawn. The simile, while not equating the two bodies it considers, does fashion a statement of similarity that extends to each body as a whole. x, in its wholeness, is like y, in *its* wholeness. The simile does not compare sections, subsets, or attributes of its terms, but rather suggests a likeness in the two terms as wholes. Thus the simple simile, whose terms are, it might be said, similar enough to evade the necessity of the "like," makes just as radical a comparison as the "complex" simile, whose terms are so distant as to necessitate the "like" for any connection to be seen in the first place. Can we accept these ideas and still claim that the terms of a simile can be too close (the unnecessary simile) or too far (the unfounded simile)? I think not.

It is crucial, also, to be acutely aware that the simile, in preceding the terms it compares, does not exist in either term and is not collapsable into either term. It exists on the border of the two terms, as an external third. If we return to our previous claim, that everything is like everything else in an infinite number of ways implies by negation that everything is *un*like everything else in an infinite number of ways, we might ask how it is possible to distinguish anything from anything else! What, indeed, is the state of the identity of any object if it is simultaneously infinitely similar and infinitely dissimilar from its neighbors? We must, again, join Deleuze to the simile to answer this question. Deleuze tells us to "Think difference before identity." That is, we must not suppose that tangible identities exist positively, without reference to any deeper principle. We must note that it is necessary to have difference *first*, so as to allow distinction, language, and/or the existence of the subject to exist at all. It seems clear, then, that though the simile does make an attempt to draw likenesses between terms, it also necessitates a recognition of the difference in the two terms, lest it collapse into the metaphorical "is" and equate its terms. The simile, therefore, acts as both a joining bridge between terms and as a separator of those terms. It dances on the border of similarity and difference, thereby containing both within itself.

The "like" is both infinitely similar to itself and infinitely different from itself. Deleuze's field of difference finds its linguistic equivalent in the "like."

This ambiguity, indifference, or undetermined quality of the simile is present also of the simile's position in time. Note that the "is"

To the ever-popular pair of the simile and the metaphor, we must include a third: the conjunction. This inclusion is necessary if the connection between the metaphor and the simile is considered. The one characteristic that can definitely be said to be shared between the metaphor and the simile is the structure of their actions. Both structure make a consideration of two terms, linking them in the case of the simile and equating them in case of the metaphor. This consideration, as previously shown, takes place in a common virtual space, which allows linguistic manipulation of the multiplicities and intensities of the terms concerned. The ability to observe, so to speak, of *an* object or term's multiplicities and intensities in the virtual space does not seem particularly contentious. But the location of *two* terms in the *same* virtual space requires further discussion, it seems. The question must be asked: what can account for this common space? It could be naively said that objects and signifiers are self-contained, isolated, and unable of legitmate interaction–any supposed interaction would be accountable to the subjective observer. This claim may hold a certain level of validity, but only if one disregards the affective quality of objects and signifiers. This is precisely why Deleuze introduces consideration of the field of difference and the virtual space: if a subject interacts with two identical objects and experiences them differently, the difference in affect cannot be located in either the object or the subject. The consideration of some intermediary space in between the subject and the object is necessary to explain this difference in affect. Objects cannot be self-contained, then, if one has a proper conception of the virtual space. For the object must bare its interior to the virtual space, that the virtual space might change its shape slightly. But then, of course, *all* objects must be open to the virtual space, and must be open to it simultaneously. There is, therefore, no obvious issue with the simultaneous existence of two objects or signifiers within the same space.

Furthermore, it is not only true that the existence of two signifiers in the same virtual space is a commonality between metaphor and simile, it is also true that the existence of the two signifiers in the same virutal space *precedes* and grounds the metaphor and the simile: the "and" comes before and gives the conditions for the "is" and the "like." Deleuze and Guattari, in their landmark work *A Thousand Plateaus*, regard the "and" as *the* foundational word: DG AND QUOTE. The "and" is to the "like" what Heidegger is to Deleuze.

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We enter into the following space: the center of the story, and of the world the story describes, is a train station sitting between two tracks which carry trains

in opposite directions: one travels from Barcelona to Madrid, the other from Madrid to Barcelona. The trains stop at the station for two minutes to pick up and let off passengers before continuing on their way. The station is located in the valley of the Ebro, which is clearly divided, the story tells, into two sides: "this side" on which "there was no shade and no trees" and "the other side," which contains "fields of grain and trees along the banks of the Ebro." Simply put, the valley is divided into the fertile side and the dry side. The station, of course, has an interior and an exterior. The couple in the story sit at a table on the outside of the station, next to a beaded curtain, hung across a doorway, separating the interior of the station from the outside. As well as promoting divisions of space, the station also promotes divisions of time. In waiting for a train, one participates in the division of time into the "now," the time spent waiting, and the "then," the time when the train will arrive and end one's wait. These divisions are incessant in the story. Hemingway writes that "the girl looked at the ground the table legs rested on"–a curious division to note. Who would ever notice that table legs are quite separate from the ground they rest on? Such a cut between the table-ground pairing is rarely made by any usual person. Yet the distinction is, of course, quite accurate. It may not be as obvious of a distinction as those of dry-fertile, inside-outside, now-later, or here-there, but it is certainly not a constructed or imagined difference. Given this plethora of separations, splits, and pairings, the question arises: what is it that separates these pairs? That is, given that a separation or cut can be noted in a seemingly unified object, what makes the cut? There is certainly no fence running down the middle of the Ebro river valley separating the dry side from the fertile side. Nor is there a sort of temporal fence dividing the time of waiting from the time the train arrives; importantly, the train arriving is *not* the thing that divides time in two–the train arriving is the side of time for which waiting is the "other side," and vice versa. Unless we are willing to attribute the division of table from ground to the Newtonian normal force F_n, which we are not, it is necessary to posit some other division that allows the two objects to be at once unified and divided. For these pairs are, in fact, as much the same as they are different. The Ebro river valley is both whole (in that it is *a* river valley) and separated (in that it is split down the middle, divided into fertility and barrenness). The beaded curtain at once separates interior from exterior and joins interior and exterior (without it, how could one pass from one to the other?). The objects in these pairs are held in an eternal tension, like two magnets separated by a sheet of paper. They cannot touch each other, lest they collapse into each other and lose their individuality and definition. Neither can they be entirely divorced from each other, for they do exist as inseparable pairs. Our question, therefore, is this: what can account for the simultaneous separation and jointness, unity and disunity, or difference and similarity of two terms? We will posit an answer to this soon, but first we must take up another matter.

Let us ask: why is a pregnant woman like a train station, and why are both like a beaded curtain? This may seem to be a Carroll-esque riddle that not even the March Hare could answer, but the issues of the world of Hemingway's story

compel us to take it up. First, it should be noted that the state of an unborn fetus changes depending on the mother's agency. For a woman without access to the possibility of abortion, the unborn fetus is a passenger on a journey–the road begins at conception and ends at birth. The child's life status, though undetermined while in the womb, will eventually and unavoidably resolve to its inevitable end–the child *will be* living. But for the woman who has access to the possibility of an abortion, the child takes on a dual existence. With the inclusion of this agency, the child is neither inevitably alive nor inevitably dead. In the unborn fetus, we find that death and life, though opposed in the space of the actual, are two equivalent terms in the space of the unactualized. For we must take up the current political question: is the unborn fetus alive or dead? To say that it is one or the other would be foolish. To refer to the being of the unborn as simultaneously alive *and* dead, while also being neither alive *nor* dead is more satisfactory. B JOHNSON ESSAY.

The same variety of simultaneity of opposites is easily found in Hemingway's image of the train station. One might ask: is there a determinedness or fatedness to he who waits at the station? That is, does the traveller at the train station have a predictable destination? The answer must be no–of course not! The traveller may take one train or the other, or may simply wait at the station. He is not compelled to make any decision whatever, be it a decision of movement or a decision of rest. He, like the unborn fetus, may be said to be the locus of his two possible journeys. And, like the potential life or death of the fetus, his two passages, directly opposed in the space of the actual, are found to be equivalent in the undetermined space. Our passenger also presents us with a third course, which we did not find in the unborn child at a first pass. The passenger's agency allows him to choose neither definite path, but rather to remain at the train station–that is, the location between his two possible paths–and to *wait*. He does not wait for either train, or for anything in particular, but instead simply exists as "the one who waits." He is wait*ing*. The unborn child may be said to exist in a similar state. Given its suspension between life and death, we may say that the fetus is at once moving towards life, towards death, and towards neither, just as the traveller waits for no train and every train at the same time. Both, it seems, exist in a curious space that seems to admit of potentiality only–actualization is not guaranteed. One cannot, of course, expect to inhabit this world indefinitely. Eventually, the real will intrude–the train will arrive and the mother will either give birth to the child or abort the pregnancy. The proverbial clock is ticking–it is only a matter of time before some element of the real intrudes and interrupts the unactualized space of multiplicity, potentiality, and waiting. Soon, it will be necessary to realize that this space is more than an abstract creation of the mind, and in fact exists as the necessary intermediary between nonexistence and definition. To wit, let us continue by considering Hemingway's third image: the beaded curtain.

At the risk of boring our reader, let us make a small philosophical study of rooms and doors. Consider two rooms, separated by a wall containing a door from one room to the other. It should be noted that these two rooms, though well-defined

by the inclusion of the wall (when the door is shut), are found to flow into each other when the barrier separating them loses its solidity–the introduction of the doorway (being one of many possible holes in the wall) effects this change. The two rooms are therefore seen to be two partitions of the same homogenous space, defined only by the specific division between them. This same property is, of course, definitive of closed architecture–four, six, n walls containing a particular section of space, thereby giving it distinct definition in relation to the infinite space in which it subsists. Of course, an un-closed structure, a four-walled structure with one wall missing, for example, cannot be said to constitute a division of space. "Outside" and "inside" lose meaning when the totally closed is made open. We here see the architect's fascination with windows and glass: the invisible, solid barrier that definitively separates the interior from the exterior, while preserving some degree of communication between the two spaces. This communication is taken a step further with the *open* window. What could be more picturesque than Jeanne Crain sitting in open her bedroom window in rural Iowa in *State Fair*, at once out of doors and in, at communion with the safe definition of her home and the wild harmony of nature? Wild nature flows into one's room through the open window, producing quite the heavenly effect. One is both protected from the harshness of rude nature by one's walls and is able to touch the very tips of nature's untamed fingers. This harmony of the assuredness of the home and the unpredictability of nature is made to feel uneasy when one opens one's door. Where the window is the place of detached sight and observation, the door is the portal from the "in of doors" to the "out of doors"–from the defined and familiar to the undefined and other. The *open* door, then, is the place where the infinite other is permitted to mingle with that which is untouchably intimite–it is a locus of the uncanny. In the open door, we find the dissolution of boundaries, definite definitions, and certainty. The shutting of the door restores this.

What, then, can be said about the doorway that admits neither of being closed or of being open? What would such a doorway consist of? Certainly not of a half-closed door–the half-closed door is simply a poorly closed door. Neither is it an door left entirely ajar–such a door does not admit of closedness. What we wish to consider is a portal that does, indeed, separate interior from exterior, but at the same time undermines its own powers of separation, admitting the admission of the exterior into the interior, and vice versa. It, even in its capacity as divider, divides itself. It will be a divider of the subject–a barrier with an unconscious. What better image of this barrier can one fashion, we ask, than the one found in Hemingway' story?

> Close against the side of the station there was a warm shadow of the building and curtain, made of bamboo beads, hung across the open door into the bar, to keep out flies.

Hemingway's beaded curtain materializes precisely the kind of barrier we have adduced. It does, indeed, separate the bar (interior) from the exterior of the station, but in quite a different capacity to that of the solid, impenetrable door.

The curtain is, itself, split and divided. It undermines itself; it's very nature differs it from itself. At once, the beaded curtain partitions space in exactly the manner we have described *and* allows this separation to be continually and continuously breached. The beaded curtain is Hemingway's answer to the riddle "what is a barrier that one can pass through?" This is the curtain's function: to simultaneously join, separate, and fail to do either definitively. So, to answer out question from before (why is a pregnant woman like a train station, and why are both like a beaded curtain?), we present the following answer. All three–the pregnant woman, the station, and the beaded curtain–can be said to be the indeterminate locus of opposites. The two lines of rail, the interior and exterior of the station, and the child's life status are at once separated from and joined to their opposites. The "[. . .] station between two lines of rail in the sun" both makes the two lines of rail distinguishable from each other, differs them from each other, and provides a definite connection between them. The mother, having the choice between birth and abortion, carries within her a child that is simultaneously alive, dead, and neither alive nor dead. The beaded curtain, perhaps the clearest depiction of this principle in Hemingway's story, defines interior and exterior by its presence while failing to definitively and finally close one off from the other. Hemingway takes great pains to highlight such features of these images.

By distilling these images in this way, we come across Hemingway's insight which, it seems, has been so far unexamined in treatments of this story. Hemingway's insight is simply this: in order to speak of duality, one must not fail to speak of *that which separates*. For without this third, this border between a thing and its opposite, duality (and certainly not trinity, quaternity, etc.) can be spoken of. There must, one might say, exist a beaded curtain between any two signifiers. For this insight is, it seems, a profound insight on the nature of language as much as it is an insight on the nature of uncertain pregnancy. How can we speak at *all* if we cannot distinguish, that is to say signify? And how can we distinguish, that is to say signify, if we are entirely unaware or incapable of interacting with that which distinguishes. This is the power of language. And still, it is necessary to make a distinction (no pun intended) between distinction as a door and distinction as a beaded curtain. For though the signifier does carve out a place in being for the signified, it does not disconnect the signified from the rest of being. The signifier only serves to *distinguish* the signified from others, not to separate or remove the signified from its relation to others. In ingenious fashion, Hemingway notes this, materializes it, and finally returns it to language in the form of the simile. For the simile, per our above discussion, is the linguistic embodiment of this facet. The simile joins without homogenizing, separates without divorcing, and accentuates similarities without erasing differences. The simile is the that which cuts without cutting, and couples without binding.

This discussion of simile is not purely theoretical–it is our feeling that the world of Hemingway's story is not simply a world that admits of simile, but that it is, itself, a world *of* simile. Our discussions of simile, metaphor, and conjunction are, it must be said, informed by certain philosophical positions and

temperments–we do not hold them out of the reach of critique or of question. We are, however, quite adament that the ideas we have espoused here are to be found in Hemingway's story for any who wish to find them there. Accordingly, let us leave our philosophical foundations behind us and deal directly with the story, beginning with Jig. Jig is, as it were, in negotiations with her partner, only ever named "the American," as to whether she should abort the fetus growing in her womb. Her partner is very much in favor of this course, but assures her that he won't force her into it. Jig is unsure of which course to take–she ponders, hypothesizes, and agonizes, but never decides on what to do. Here, we differ from another Hemingway scholar of note, Stanley Renner, who, in his often-cited paper *Moving to the Girl's Side of Hills Like White Elephants*, is quite certain that by the end of the story, Jig has decided not to abort the fetus. Dr. Renner's argument is admirable, but we must disagree. We will come to this soon. First, let us return to Jig.

What can we write about Jig that we have not already written? Not only is she the locus of the unstable union of opposites, she herself is split in two by precisely that fact! She is always on the border of birth and abortion, never giving any definitive signs that she steps off of the border, even for a moment. This mode of being is reflected quite clearly in her actions–in what she *does*. Now, in typical Hemingway fashion, this story is shockingly short–just over two thousand words. Being as such, the events of the story are quite minimal, forcing us to pay very close attention to *what* Jig does and what she does it *with*. Let us begin with the action that, perhaps, most starkly manifests Jig as a creature of the simile. Recall the following line:

> The girl looked at the bead curtain, put her hand out and took hold of two of the strings of beads.

Nothing could be more fitting–Hemingway's craftsmanship is astounding. Jig, in whom the being of the world of the story, it seems, is focused, fixates on that very thing which materializes the self-same (or rather self-different, in this case) principle that she herself is the exemplar of. Jig is, on our view, the center of the world she finds herself in, and of the story that depicts that world. We must make such a claim for quite a simple reason: Jig is the only character in the story who is able to form an ethical (FOOTNOTE: LEVINASIAN ETHICS) relation to the world she exists in. In other words, Jig is *the* character who can, as it were, dance on the border of the divsions, taking both sides of the division and neither side of the division into account. It is this capacity that places her at the center of the story. Importantly, one should note that the American is able to note that the divisions *exist*, but is unable to relate to the fact of division as such in an ethical manner. He is, somewhat surprisingly, quite impartial with regard to Jig's decision about her pregnancy. He makes this quite clear:

> "Well," the man said, "if you don't want to you don't have to. I wouldn't have you do it if you didn't want to. But I know it's perfectly simple."

And again:

" I don't want you to do it if you feel that way."

And once more:

" I don't want you to do anything that you don't want to do—"

One could, perhaps, argue that the man has a slight preference for the abortion, given the tone of his rhetoric, but we, much like Jig, are not quite so willing to make this determination. It is not clear, at least from the given dialogue, that the man has a definite preference of *what* ought to be done, only that *something* ought to be done. He in uncomfortable in the world of simile he finds himself in. His relation to the simile and the fact of division and difference is quite the opposite of Jig's: where Jig is content to delay determination and live in a world of potentiality, the American yearns for definition and resolution. As to which particular resolution is reached, he seems relatively noncommital–so long as *some* determination is reached to pull him out of his indeterminate existence.

And yet, though Jig herself may be said to relate ethically to the simile, it would be slightly disinigenuous for us to place her in the position of the divine ethical actor. She, too, is divided, unsure, a creature of the simile. Not even she can avoid that. We may therefore consider her relation to the incorporial third as not-necessarily-perfect. And, indeed, if one considers her interactions with borders and similes in sequence, one does notice a progression. At the beginning of the story, when Jig first makes the simile "They look like white elephants," she seems to be rather uncertain–or at least not committed–to her statement. When the simile causes friction between her and the American, she makes an attempt at reconciliation: "They don't really look like white elephants. I just meant the coloring of their skin through the trees," she says. At this point she is, it seems, still willing to consider the man's position–that something must be done. But even in her attempt at communication, she seems unable to step away from the border which defies definition and solidification. Let us look closely at her sentence. "I just meant the coloring of their skin through the trees." This remark is not exactly clear. "The coloring of their skin" would, presumably, refer to the white elephants, where "through the trees" forces us, as well as the American, to place the object of the sentence in the physical landscape of the Ebro river valley. Hills, one supposes, do not have skin. Still, though she cannot bring herself to use determinate language, Jig does make an attempt at communcation–linguistic harmony or resolution, we might say.

Shortly thereafter, in response to the American's decisive comments "It's really an awfully simple operation, Jig" and "It's not really an operation at all," Jig "looked at the ground the table legs rested on," Hemingway writes. What a brilliant sentence! The division between table and ground, often unnoticed by those who sit at tables, is brought flatly to the fore. Jig, is response to an almost flippantly decisive statement about an unbelievably indeterminate subject, notes a shockingly profound division and the prescence of the incorporial third that characterizes her very existence in the most commonplace object imaginable–a

table. Jig, in being confronted with statements that partake of inconsistent logics, given the world she exists in, moves naturally, unconsciously, instinctively further into the simile. To note the division of table and ground is an act of rebellion against the American's relation to duality. Jig cannot help but note that duality is not enough–it requires a *third*.

At this point, we hold that Jig has no intention of making any decision. The American's overly simplified rhetoric has made her several degrees more aware of the necessity of the simile–the incorporeal third. Jig has, in an unconscious way, realized the necessity and power of this third, and the weakness and poverty of duality. Hemingway shows this change quite clearly, with "The girl looked at the bead curtain, put her hand out and took hold of two of the strings of beads." As we have noted previously, the importance of this action cannot be overstated. Jig notices the third (the curtain), recognizes it as the third, and notes that she is able to manipulate and play with the border between the two. At the same time, Jig notices that the third, the curtain, is itself split. She takes hold of *two* of the strands. She does not stroke the curtain, nor does she attempt to peer into the bar through the curtain, nor does she put her hand *through* the curtain, nor does she ignore the curtain. Any of these would, in one way or another, deny that the curtain is that which divides or that the curtain is, itself, divided. Rather, she makes intimate contact with the curtain, noticing and affirming it in its thirdness and in its self-division.

Now, diverting ourselves from Jig for a moment, we will ask the read to indulge us a small piece of literary delirium. Let us consider the detail that "The warm wind blew the bead curtain against the table." Once again, with the story being as short as it is, one feels the need to be hyperattentive to the particularity and materiality of every detail. Why should the wind take this action, as if to present the curtain to Jig? If we posit Jig as "the one who may decide," that is, the one with total agency, how can we account for this action of the wind? Let us again look to Barbara Johnson: JOHNSON MUTUALITY QUOTE. Just as Johnson writes, we must not posit that Jig holds an ultimate capability for choice. It is necessary to recognize that Jig is affected *by* her child just as much as the child affects her. Pregnancy, that is, is not a one-sided state. Without reaching too far, we hope, this same principle may be seen in Jig's relationship to the wind. With relation to her world, Jig is not only actor but is also acted *upon*. The being she inhabits is not indifferent to her existence and makes, it seems, every effort to make itself known. Jig, in developing her relation to the simile, may respond to this being where the American may not. The being of the story is an *active* being–thus, the divisions in the landscape, the location of the train, the fact of Jig's (unplanned and contingent) pregnancy, etc. Furthermore, if we may ask the reader to strech credulity even more, we suggest that when Jig makes her simile, she is not speaking figuratively! The being of her world is literlly displaying the surrounding hills to her *as* white elephants. Simile, on this reading, is not a rhetorical device but is rather the very character of the story's being. Jig's task is to become increasingly aware of and attuned to this character. We return now to her.

Jig has now been moved to an odd space–she possesses an awareness and recognition of the simile, but does not seem to know quite how to conduct herself in the face of it. After interacting with the curtain, her conversation with her partner takes on a hypothesizing, ruminating tint. Four of her next five sentences are questions: "And you think then we'll be all right and be happy[?] [. . .] And you really want to?[. . .] And if I do it you'll be happy and things will be like they were and you'll love me?[. . .] But if I do it, then it will be nice again if I say things are like white elephants, and you'll like it?[. . .] If I do it you won't ever worry?[. . .]. Note that Jig's questions are only partially directed at the American. She is not fact-finding with regard to possibilities, as it were, but seems rather to be experimenting with her new-found space–the space of the third."What if?" does not exist in a solidified or determined space–it exists in the space of the possible and the potential. This space is the same space that allows that simile to function, but does not, in these querying lines of Jig's, yet contain the "like." Jig's words do no suggest any linking of terms or joining of opposites. She is not, as of yet, making use of the simile. She only hypothesizes, placing one term next to another without expectation of similarity, difference, or any connection/disconnection whatever. Her threefold use of the word "and" to begin her sentence sweetens the fruit too much for us to resist–she is, at this time, participating in the space of the conjunction.

After these exchanges, Jig gets up from the table and "walk[s] to the end of the station." Here, we ask a simple question: when Jig stands at the *end* of the station, which side of the station is she on? In other words, if a train were to arrive while Jig stood at the end of the station, which train would she be closer to? The answer to both questions, of course, is neither! Jig is on neither side of the station and is closer to neither track. She stands in the impartial and indeterminate space, completely indifferent. Now, Hemingway's description of the structure of the landscape with relation to the station is tantalizingly absent, but one likes to imagine that the (presumably) sharp division between the barren side of the valley and the fertile side of the valley runs directly down the middle of the station, parallel with the tracks. Jig, standing at the end of the station, would stand with this border running through her. This is not in the text, of course, but one cannot help but wonder. Another change has occurred in Jig here–where a moment ago she was only comfortable with positing and conjecturing, she has now left the table where her partner sits–perhaps not unreasonably called "that location admitting of definition"–and stands as a split woman, carrying a split child, in a split space, facing a split landscape, with her back turned on resolution and determination, without flinching. She has, it seems, finally entered into the space of simile.

After one last heated exchange with the American in which Jig dispels his requests for a solified decision ("Would you please please please please please please please stop talking?"), Jig's development ends with a smile. Jig smiles twice, first at the woman who tells the pair that "The train comes in five minutes," and again at the American when he returns from moving their bags. We will, once again, have to ask the reader to suspend incredulity when we examine the

word “smile.” What is this word? That is, with regard to its atoms, a smile is nothing more than a simile without an “I.” Consider! Why should Jig smile, here at the end of a heated debate over a crucial topic? One might think she and her partner would sit in stony silence, their eyes cast away from each other. Jig, on the contrary, smiles–what a thing to do! Why does she smile? We contend that she smiles because she has, at last, recognized herself as an entity in a being defined by simile. Previous to this, she has always noted the incorporial third in the external–the table and the ground, the curtain, the station, the valley. She has always noted the simile without the “I.” Now, completing the final step, she realizes that the existence of the cutting third is not only present in the world around her, but is just as profoundly present in her own self: the simile is completed by the “I.” Completing the simile in this way, she is able to well-locate herself. She is no longer subject to the displacing confusion of *why one is displaced*. In finding a path through the simile, she is able to affirm her own incompletness and nature as a creature of the simile. Jig tells the truth when she says " I feel fine [. . .] There's nothing wrong with me. I feel fine".

What is of crucial interest in the story is the *thirdness* of the simile. When one says ’x like y“, the”like" is necessarily a third term, introduced in between the couple of x and y. This is Hemingway's project in *Hills*. As we have noted, there is a constant fixation, not only on divisions and oppositions, but on the causes and agents of division. That is, the story is not primarily concerned with *which* choice Jig will *eventually* make concerning her pregnancy, but is rather fixated on the state of the undetermined mother. We say again: this mother is a *third*, not collapsable into or subsumable under either of the two terms it joins. To exclude this third has, unfortunatley, been the position taken by most every Hemingway critic to write about this story for the last fifty years.

Similes

- Sonnet 60: Like as the waves make towards the pebbl’d shore, so do our minutes hasten to their end
- Henry V: I see you stand like greyhounds at the slips
- Macbeth: But like a man he died
- 1 Thessalonians 5:2: For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.
- Why is a raven like a writing desk?