



## Journal of the Short Story in English

Les Cahiers de la nouvelle

49 | Autumn 2007

Special issue: Ernest Hemingway

---

# The Values of Silence in “Fifty Grand,” “A Day’s Wait,” and “Nobody Ever Dies”

Cassandre Meunier

---



### Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/jsse/749>

ISSN: 1969-6108

### Publisher

Presses universitaires de Rennes

### Printed version

Date of publication: 1 December 2007

Number of pages: 83-97

ISSN: 0294-0442

### Electronic reference

Cassandre Meunier, « The Values of Silence in “Fifty Grand,” “A Day’s Wait,” and “Nobody Ever Dies” », *Journal of the Short Story in English* [Online], 49 | Autumn 2007, Online since 01 December 2009, connection on 03 December 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/jsse/749>

---

This text was automatically generated on 3 December 2020.

© All rights reserved

---

# The Values of Silence in "Fifty Grand," "A Day's Wait," and "Nobody Ever Dies"

Cassandra Meunier

---

- 1 There have been numerous attempts to analyze Hemingway's "terse tone and muted tension" and "laconic and carefully controlled conversation" (Young 195, 205). The general trend of criticism has emphasized the parallelisms between style and theme or between narrative style and the narrator's state of mind. Philip Young argued that Hemingway's technique of understatement reflected "the rigid restraint the man felt if he were to survive," and that the controlled narrative style fitted the author's subject, i.e. life, which was to be "constantly forced under the most intense and rigorous control, for it is savage and can get out of hand" (Young 208-209). On the other hand, Gerry Brenner analyzed Frederic Henry's laconic narrative discourse as a symptom of his lack of comfort due to his vulnerability and his defensive stance (Brenner 34-35).
- 2 While many critics have thus tried to analyze the effects and reasons for Hemingway's "evasive," "terse," or "laconic" style, Peter Messent was among the first of his critics to associate it with an identified linguistic phenomenon: silence. Comparing Gertrude Stein with Hemingway, he alluded to the use of silence by both writers:
 

Epistemological coherence is a myth in Stein's work. A stress on immediate perception and knowledge is foregrounded at the expense of any full sense of larger unity – of a complete and ordered historical narrative. Although she moves much further than Hemingway in this respect and in her consequent representation of the dislocation of the subject, they both work from similar starting points. Stein's preoccupation with silence [...] also connects up crucially with Hemingway's writing practice. (Messant 13)
- 3 This assumption made it possible for criticism to apply to Hemingway's work serious text analysis theories related to silence, and to discover, like Messent, that "the deceptive simplicity of his writing masks his careful control of narrative technique" (Messant 22). In the tradition of the works by Romeo Giger, Frederic J. Svoboda and Susan F. Beegel dedicated to the study of omission, silence was recently used as a new

tool to understand literary works that seem to resist interpretation. Silence became to poetics what omission had earlier been. Thanks to the critical works of Ihab Hassan, Steven R. Portch, Adam Jaworski, Deborah Tannen, and Muriel Saville-Troike, to name only a few, silence has become a new key to better understand fiction. A few articles (Abouddahab, Herndl) have considered silence as a key to Hemingway's literature. In this essay, I intend to investigate this assumption and establish a clear relationship between the values embodied by Hemingway's fictional characters and their – and the narrator's – silent attitude. I will be reading the characters of "Fifty Grand," "A Day's Wait," and "Nobody Ever Dies" as performances of endurance, to show how verbal or non-verbal attitudes are connected to physical control and function as ideals of behavior.

- 4 When, in his study of *The Sun Also Rises* George Cheatham explained that "as a defensive response to both the war's excess and the threat of [...] nothingness, Jake embraced exactitude" (Cheatham 103), his remark could also describe Hemingway's narrative attitude since the publication of *Three Stories and Ten Poems* in 1923. Ever since Hemingway started writing fiction, he began experimenting with the use of silence, not only because silence is part of a reality Hemingway wanted to render as truly as possible, but also because the use of silence would strengthen the narrative and make it more powerful to readers. In 1925 Hemingway tested this assumption with his attempt at omission in "Cat in the Rain." Less than ten years later, he associated this technique to the physical phenomenon of the iceberg because of its main characteristic: its "dignity." Hemingway believed that a story shaped like an iceberg would convey implicit meaning "as strongly as though the writer had stated" the unmentioned facts:

If a prose writer knows enough about what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of movement of an iceberg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water. A writer who omits things because he does not know them only makes hollow places, in his writing. (*Death in the Afternoon*, 192)

- 5 As Earl Rovit analyzed, there is a connection between the dignified attitude embraced by Hemingway's heroes and the quality of style Hemingway was trying to achieve (Rovit 64). The fact that Hemingway justifies the dignity of the iceberg with its hidden part clearly indicates that concealment (Brenner) and understatement can be perceived as moral values as well as stylistic qualities.
- 6 In a remarkable article about the "markedness theory," Sobkowiak Włodzimierz analyzed the definitions of silence in generalist English dictionaries and concluded that "silence is either acoustic or pragmatic":

Let me remark [...] that silence appears to be a linguistically non-autonomous concept *par excellence*: it is best defined acoustically and/or pragmatically. As a matter of fact, the five definitions of *Webster Collegiate* fall rather neatly (though unevenly) into these two rubrics:

the state or fact of keeping silent; a refraining from speech or from noise (pragmatic/acoustic),  
absence of any sound or noise; stillness (acoustic),  
a withholding of knowledge or omission of mention (pragmatic),  
failure to communicate, write, keep in touch, etc. (pragmatic),  
oblivion or obscurity (pragmatic). (Włodzimierz 43)

- 7 In the collection *In Our Time* silence seems to belong to the first category rather than work as a narrative strategy: silence is witnessed and simply reported. In "Indian

Camp," "The Three-Day Blow," and "A Very Short Story," silence is the voice of those who cannot communicate because of suffering and shame. In "The Doctor and the Doctor's Wife," "The End of Something," "Soldier's Home," or "Cat in the Rain," the absence of speech characterizes the main character's resignation and loss of illusions. Romeo Giger draws a parallel between the author and his characters: "Like Krebs, the protagonist of his short story 'Soldier's Home,' Hemingway soon realized that true emotions defied words. Krebs, having returned from the war, is unable to communicate his deepest feelings. Trying to put them into language would inevitably distort them [...]" (Giger 20).

- 8 Indeed, in his early short stories, Hemingway seems to have tried to represent the role of silence in dialogues with dialectic pauses or non-verbal communicative acts as in "Cross Country Snow" or "My Old Man." In the chapters of *in our time*, the less information about context there is the more powerful narratives are (Giger 28). If there was already an acknowledgement that speech was limited, Hemingway soon realized that silence was unlimitedly meaningful, and began to make use of silent responses and postures in his short stories.

- 9 In *Men Without Women*, Hemingway enlarged the use of silence to scenery description and as a way to communicate with the reader. This technique is particularly relevant in "Fifty Grand," and was first described by Romeo Giger who called it "A New Way of Communicating with the Reader" (Giger 37). In his study of "Hills Like White Elephants," he observed:

We are not told [why the girl looks at the floor] – at least not explicitly. Where other writers of the same period would have wished to explain what the girl was thinking and feeling at this particular moment, Hemingway purposely refrains from doing so, knowing that the emotional impact is much more intense if the emotion has to be supplied by the narrator. (Giger 40)

- 10 Later on, with *Winner Take Nothing* (1933), Ernest Hemingway raised cognitive and communicational issues: first, is there a difference between silence and the absence of words, i.e. is silence a characterization of the presence or the absence of a communicational act? Second, what are the consequences of a lack of dialectic response, and what kind of communicational exchange is possible in this case? Like a good number of stories published in *Winner Take Nothing*, "A Day's Wait" explores the taboos of death, and silence is here used to evoke internal conflicts to which characters are strongly holding.

- 11 Much criticism has associated Hemingway's style with male values. One latest example is Thomas Strychacz: "The overarching of a trajectory of a journey to manhood now appears as the hidden meaning and value of each one of [Nick's] early encounters. Put differently, we understand the hollowness of boyhood experiences by figuring back from whatever value – discipline, courage, holding tight, suffering wounds, enduring pain – is held to characterize man" (Strychacz 63). Stories like "Up in Michigan" and "The End of Something" certainly call this assumption into question, since Liz and Marjorie, the two female characters, embody the values mentioned by Strychacz much more than do Jim Gilmore and Nick – their male counterparts –, the first falling asleep after a brutal sex experience with Liz, and the latter accusing Marjorie for her extended knowledge as a way to delay breaking up, which he eventually does by saying it to her *back*. Both girls are forsaken by their male companions in a rude or coy way, and retire alone. While the one "straightened her skirt and coat and tried to do something with

her hair" (62) and walks back home in a "cold mist" after having covered Jim with her coat, the other makes arrangements for the two of them: " 'I'm going to take the boat' [...]. 'You can walk back around the point'" (81), thus stating their split in a practical manner, which he was not able to do: " 'I feel as though everything was gone to hell inside me. I don't know, Marge. I don't know what to say'" (*ibid.*).

- 12 Here girls have discipline and courage and they hold tight when suffering pain. They are even able to show concern for the other (Marge thinking of an alternative for Nick to go back without the boat, and Liz covering Jim). This demonstration is useful to show that the values of discipline and dignity are not gender values but character and narrative values.<sup>1</sup>
- 13 In "Fifty Grand," "A Day's Wait," and "Nobody Ever Dies," three characters prepare for the end of something, and adopt significantly similar postures although they differ in age and gender. Ann Putnam connects the story "A Pursuit Race" with many others and labels them as studies "in the art of waiting, [choreographies] of holding steady." Taking place "toward the end," stories like "Hills Like White Elephants," "A Day's wait," "Now I Lay Me," and others "dramatize the failure of action to materialize in any paraphrasable form, portraying as they do a world where significant action is impossible. [...] In a world such as this, the best one can do is to learn strategies for not running away – strategies for holding still with some dignity and pride" (Putnam 187). Indeed the protagonists of these stories all try to keep their misery unknown and stay immobile, a recurrent image that symbolizes, as Ann Putnam suggests, a struggle to hold on to one's dignity.
- 14 One of the features associated with dignity is control over oneself. In "Fifty Grand," the boxer Jack Brennan is about to fight for the last time and "doesn't feel too good about it." The reader attends his training at a farm in the week preceding the match: all Jack can do is little work-out and much "lying down." The image of "holding tight" is recurrent in the story: Jack needs to keep his weight and check what and when he eats (241, 243-244), control the money he spends (242-244), and keep his mouth shut about his bet on his own competitor. Also, he will have to hold himself up during the match, especially after Walcott's foul blow.
- 15 Susan F. Beegel showed Jack's lucidity and smartness throughout the story, first when she referred to an episode when Jack is mocked in a diner: "Jack's rhetoric is double-bladed; whether they answer yes or no, the 'broad's' will brand themselves as either casually or professionally promiscuous. [...] There is nothing of the punch-drunk slugger about Jack Brennan" (Beegel 16). She also considered his attitude in the ring:

When Walcott fouls him, Jack must become a 'smart boxer,' must begin to think in the ring. [...] Because Jack refuses to accept the foul, the fight goes on before Jack has time to recover from the blow and consider how to preserve his investment. [...] Jack nevertheless has the guts to withstand two hard punches from Walcott, while plotting to save his money and preserve the natural outcome of the fight by fouling Walcott himself. (Beegel 17)
- 16 Such physical and mental endurance entails demonstrations of admiration and awe at the end of the fight: "Freedman just looks at [Jack]," " 'You're some boy, Jack.' " Jack held tight all right. But he had actually prepared for that: when we look back, little work-out and much sleeping might be considered as the best preparation for what he had to face.

- 17 Throughout the whole story, both Jack and the narrator seem to avoid small talk as a way to protect themselves from calumny. At the beginning of the story, Jack gets people to shut up twice: once to "broads" who insult him in a diner, then to Soldier Bartlett, a "kidder" who accompanies Jack to Danny Hogan's health farm. Soldier keeps kidding Jack "rough" and "sour" by making allusions to Jack's being beaten up by Walcott. Jack coldly asks him to "go back to town": such talk is ineffectual for his preparation. Not only does Jack reject useless talk, but so does Jerry, the narrator: when he hears that journalists said that "they oughtn't let [Jack] fight," he dismisses them just as Jack did Soldier Bartlett and the "broads": " 'They're always wrong, ain't they?' " " 'What the hell do they know? They can write maybe, but what the hell do they know?' " (234). When journalists turn up, neither Jack nor Jerry is willing to talk to them.
- 18 When at Danny Hogan's farm, Jack occupies himself mainly with silent activities and limited movement during the whole week preceding the match: walking (two occurrences), writing letters, sitting (three occurrences),<sup>2</sup> leaning back, shutting his eyes, moving around, shadow-boxing a few rounds, skipping the rope a little while, lying down, lying asleep, digging deeper in the pillow, taking a drink, standing up, looking at people (three occurrences), pouring out drinks (232-241).<sup>3</sup> More, the way Jerry describes Jack's schedule indicates a complete lack of activity: "We didn't do any work" and "He couldn't sweat." Jack is also physically held and taken care of by Jerry as he is unable to move his body: "Well, about eleven o'clock Jack passes out and I put him to bed. Finally he's so he can't keep from sleeping. I helped him get his clothes off and got him to bed" (240).
- 19 Jack suffers from insomnia and shutting his eyes in daylight seems to enable him to overcome his fatigue. His recurrent minimalist moves all seem to belong to a global strategy to preserve his interests: he needs to save his energy for the fight, avoid knock-out and get the money for his family. One of Jack's major values is that he "doesn't waste any juice": during the fight, the same economy of movement will enable him to last in order to preserve his honor. " 'I think I can last [...]. I don't want this bohunk to stop me,' " (247) Jack says. Even though he knows he is going to lose, he still wants to do his best to damage the other boxer.
- 20 *Not wasting any juice* is, of course, characteristic of the author: the narrative choice for this story reflects Hemingway's wish to preserve secrets until characters accept to unveil them and thus create a suspense in narration that parallels the mystery about the outcome of the fight. This verisimilitude between depicted action and stylistic strategy is reached when Jerry is excluded from the private talk between Jack, John Collins, and two other unnamed characters. When he is back and knocks on the door, Jerry is commanded to " 'wait a minute' ": narrator and readers are temporarily unwanted where the action is discussed and therefore occurs. Hogan intervenes and seems to speak the reader's mind: " 'To hell with that stuff,' " and threatens characters to quit (237). One of them unlocks the door: there can be no story with external focalization if there is nothing to focus on. After being excluded from the situation of communication and eventually let inside the room, the narrator and the reader along with him are driven to make up for their lack of information and be aware of meaningful details like the postures of characters and their gazes at each other. In fact, all these meaningful details correspond to what Hemingway relied on: the underlying structure of the text, the submerged seven-eighths of the iceberg. The author here

provides the reader with what Steven L. Bindeman called "an empty stage for [...] words," that is the unutterable presence of the unutterable in what is uttered: "This is because silence reflects us back to what has been uttered before. And if we are able to provide an empty stage for the words we hear or speak, then we may enable these words to become more than mere gestures or intended meanings" (Bindeman 5).

- 21 The narrator being ignorant of the outcome of the preceding conversation, both he and the reader are urged not to judge the decisions made by the characters, but to understand them. This is exactly what Hemingway advised a young writer to do in an article published in *Esquire*:

[...] Get in somebody else's head for a change. If I bawl you out try to figure what I'm thinking about as well as how you feel about it. If Carlos curses Juan think what both their sides of it are. Don't just think who is right. As a man things are as they should or shouldn't be. As a man you know who is right and who is wrong. [...]. As a writer you should not judge. You should understand. (*By-Line*, 219).

- 22 Another passage counterpoints this scene, when the two boxers are about halfway in the fight: "It goes like that for three rounds more. They don't talk any. They're working all the time" (246). Here the same kind of exclusion takes place although Jack and Walcott do not exchange words but blows, and the room is not locked but watched by a very large audience. Still, the reader has no indication from Jack about what he is going to do and the outcome of the fight, just like in the preceding scene. His curiosity thus aroused, the reader will supposedly examine every piece of information, every move and word Jack makes or utters between rounds in order to decide whether Jack is going to lose the fight and gain money or give up money for his last victory.
- 23 This strategy of economy of movement is echoed in Jack's speech: all the time he controls his movements, he hushes too. The first episode shows Jack as a man who "could say what he wanted to when he wanted to say it" (232). The reader then knows that it is Jack's own choice to reject speech when he avoids the company of talkative people and retires into silence when his manager visits him ("Jack doesn't say anything [...]. He ain't with the others. He's all by himself," 237), after the visit ("We put our coats and started out. [...] Jack didn't say anything," "We had a couple of drinks without saying anything," 238), in the train ("Jack didn't talk," 242), and during the meal on the day of the match ("Jack didn't talk much," 243).
- 24 Except for the night before the fight when Jerry stays with Jack pouring himself drinks and confiding in Jerry, Jack generally keeps silent. During the fight, the noise prevents dialectic communication ("You couldn't hear on account of the crowd") and the two fighters are working so that they "don't talk any" (246, 247). Jack's willingness to keep silent is twofold. First, he needs to keep the secret about his bet on his adversary, because it could cause him trouble. Then, it allows him to reach his goals: when he keeps from telling the truth to the referee, he avoids winning the match and losing his money. Also, lying down and shutting his eyes or just remaining, still seem to allow Jack to focus on his goal after he has identified it and to build up confidence. Numerous passages confirm this hypothesis: when Jack sits in the train, immobile and silent, he then talks about the notice he gave his wife about the hotel's address and the fact that he would be home the day after. Later on, John makes a remark about his weight during a meal when Jack is described as quite silent and the latter boasts "I could make it with my clothes on" (243). Once they are back at the hotel, Jack wants to "lie down a while" (243), Jerry then describes him: "He was lying perfectly still but every once in a while his eyes would open" (244). When he sits up, Jack suggests that they play cribbage



and he wins three dollars from Jerry and a dollar and a half from John. Finally, Jack lies down just after the fight is over: "Once we got inside the dressing-room Jack lay down and shut his eyes." Then after a brief talk the narrator repeats: "He lies there with his eyes shut." Then again: "He lies there, his eyes open now" (249). In this scene, Jack shows signs of satisfaction. Each time he seems to curl into himself, Jack alludes to or does something helpful to gain hope (e.g. family meetings, physical well-being, games, no consideration for others' negative ideas, self-satisfaction and coy comments). The impression is that Jack finds confidence in private places: it is not necessary to explain to anyone what is good for him and his family; just shutting his eyes and cutting himself off from the external world gives him the confidence that his choice is – and eventually was – the right one.

- 25 In "A Day's Wait," a nine-year old boy waits for death to come to him, unaware that his disease is harmless. He too seems to gain confidence and courage by limiting his movements: he first talks his father into leaving (" 'You don't have to stay' " is repeated twice), then refuses to see anyone. His attitude is very rigid, reminding us of Jack "lying perfectly still" ("He lay still in the bed and seemed very detached from what was going on," 333). Besides, the boy's aspect echoes Jack's lying "with his eyes open": "I [...] found him in exactly the same position I had left him, [...] staring still, as he had stared, at the foot of the bed" (*ibid.*); " 'I'm taking it easy,' he said and looked straight ahead" (334). It is worth noticing that the bed has an important function in these two stories. It works as a place of relief where characters can "curl inside" and gain confidence – a recurrent image in Hemingway's stories.<sup>4</sup>
- 26 The evolution of the boy's gaze from "the foot of the bed" to "ahead" is another indication of his boldness in front of death: at first his beliefs were limited to the end of something, now he considers death as what lies "ahead," without any fear. He has gained confidence by remaining by himself, and silence has helped him just the same to eventually wonder not about the horror of his death but about a practical aspect: the time he still has to live before dying. After he is reassured, neither silence nor physical control are needed anymore and the boy can "relax" and "[cry] very easily" (334).
- 27 I argued earlier that it was probably wrong to consider that values of courage and dignity were always considered as men's values in Ernest Hemingway's fiction. Actually, the fact that an author probably spent more time in men's worlds than in women's does not exclude his sensitivity to the coexistence of female identities and the moral values cited above. "Nobody Ever Dies," published in 1939, encourages this belief. Hemingway achieved an emotionally intense short story about two young Cubans enrolled in the resistance movement who find themselves trapped in a watched house, then escape, and eventually get shot or captured. The one captured is a girl named Maria.
- 28 The narrative structure of "Nobody Ever Dies" is composed of three parts: the first one shows Enrique trapped in a house where "comrades" have left him with only a password. The second part starts when Maria knocks on the door to bring him food, and ends when they hear police car sirens and are forced to escape through a vacant lot. The last part focuses on Maria, alone in the grass and prey to only one fear: that she might not die and give away information.
- 29 After a brief physical embrace, the two lovers start at once a debate over speech. The starting point is Enrique coldly informing Maria that her brother is dead, as he eats and enumerates at the same time the names and death places of his fellow soldiers. From



then on, Maria's posture changes: before this revelation, she was "sitting tight against him [...] with a hand on his thigh and with the other she stroked the back of his neck" (473). The effect of Enrique's words is immediate: she "sat stiff and alone now, her hands away from him" (474). Driven by political ideals, Enrique denies the special family bonds and the specific values between individuals. As Maria alludes to Vicente as "the flower of the party," he answers that "the thing to do is to think how we can work to take their places," and he reacts to her desperate mourning of her lost brother saying "we are all brothers. Some are dead and others still live" (474). Enrique exercises power over Maria through speech and silences her questioning ("he is dead?" "It is not just a report?" "It is not worth it," "I never heard of it," "[...] you say such things are justified?") by a threefold strategy.<sup>5</sup>

- 30 First, he tries to silence her by direct commands: "It does no good to discuss it. They are dead," then later: "Don't cry." Secondly, he speaks more than her<sup>6</sup> and opposes her pain to theories that exclude fatality ("But sometimes the people on our flank would not attack. [...] Sometimes we were ordered to do things not in sufficient number"), and that he carefully develops with connectors, thus refusing the possibility that something could end, both grammatically and existentially ("so," "otherwise," "now," "if"). Finally, he remains in control of the conversation when she starts crying, only to repeat himself: "No. It is worth it," and "the thing to do is to think how we can work to take their place," then: "They are just a part. [...] But in the end, it was not a failure," "Don't cry, Maria," "What has happened has happened. We must think of what there is to do. There is much to do," "We must check all romanticism [...] so that we will never again fall into revolutionary adventurism." All of these verbal interventions seem to cancel each other out in an endless series of repetitions. Enrique's self-assured statements ("Yes. It is worth it," "No. It is worth it," and the references to what "there is to do") sound pointless when we know that they are in a watched house (474, 475).
- 31 Although Maria underlines his mechanical, rhetorical speech and accuses him of talking "like a book," she seems to have given up the debate. Just like Jack and the boy in "A Day's Wait," she avoids taking turns and thus becomes silent as her gaze goes fixed: "She said nothing and he could see her face in the light [...] looking straight ahead," or: "The girl still said nothing". This control over her speech and gaze seems to have the same effect as previously described: she is able to concentrate on what bothers her and matters to her. She makes her point clear, and facing the strength of her position, Enrique has to "eat" his own words and surrender to the acknowledgement of loss by commenting: "There was a bird" (475).
- 32 In this passage, the opposition between Maria and Enrique obviously reminds us of that between the protagonists of "Hills Like White Elephants": here again the woman refers to human casualties ("they were so happy," "we could have everything" "you never take it back") and the man to concepts ("to let the air in,"). Toward the end, the woman, nicknamed Jig by her companion, begs for silence and then surrenders but seems to overcome her frustration as she sounds perfectly good-humored (212-214). For Stephen R. Portch, she is the best at using silence:

Train time shows that 35 minutes have passed as the two talked – occasionally. If spoken as a continuous dialogue, their exchange would consume no more than 3 or 4 minutes of clock time. Therefore, at least 31 unaccounted minutes have passed [...]; the time has been spent in deafening silence. This silence confirms what the

dialog suggests: they fail to communicate on all but the most superficial level [...].  
But we do know who makes the best use of silence: the woman. (Portch 102)

- 33 Shortly after Enrique's surrender and their reconciliation, they can hear police sirens and have to flee. The narration focuses on Maria until the end of the story.<sup>7</sup> As she is first lying in the weeds, then sitting in the police car, the omniscient narrator shows that the values Thomas Stryczak considers as "male" can also apply to women in Hemingway's work.
- 34 Although the passage displays many loud statements, Maria does not address anyone around her: she takes refuge inside herself and tries to find comfort. Curling up inside, she shows postures similar to those described above. She straightens up and concentrates on what is going on in her body and mind:
- The girl lay flat against the ground [...], she could feel her heart beating against the ground. [...]  
In the field the girl lay, her hands clasped across the top of her head. "Help me to bear this," she said into the weeds, speaking to no one, for there was no one there. Then, suddenly, personally, sobbing, "Help me, Vicente. Help me, Chucho." [...]  
"Help me not to talk if they take me," she said, her mouth against the weeds. [...]  
She brought her hands down from her head and clenched them by her sides. (479)  
The whole physical and mental preparation takes place within herself. Indeed she speaks into the weeds and is lying on the ground, so her voice returns to where it originated: again, silence functions as a way of creating "a place of one's own." She thus gains enough confidence to make the decision to run in order to get killed, which will prevent risks that she might reveal secret information to the police. Just like other Hemingway characters, she uses silence and physical control to find enough confidence to face her own end. By making herself rigid, she becomes undefeatable.
- 35 We can notice the same determination that was hers when she talked with Enrique, but now she repeats negative words to reject the possibility of talking (" 'Help me not to talk,' " repetitions of " 'No,' " " 'No one dies for nothing,' " 479, 480) and summons dead people to strengthen her. She rejects death as a loss: the dead are still alive and are a part of herself and can support her like live friends (" 'Many, many people are helping me now,' " 480). This consideration enables her to face her own end with a "strange confidence."
- 36 Even policemen and their "Negro" stool pigeon wearing a voodoo necklace, fall into a silent awe: "[...] all of the policemen in the car felt uncomfortable about Maria now as she sat very straight with her face shining in the arc light," "[The Negro] sat without speaking [...]. Looking back, [he] saw the girl's face, shining proudly, and her head held high" (480).<sup>8</sup>
- 37 In the three stories, Hemingway's protagonists find in the "inward terrain" (Hovey) the only possible escape when they are trapped. Hemingway's short stories are powerful because they confront viewpoints, which the dénouement ultimately challenges. Just like in a boxing match, the one still standing at the end impresses the reader most. This is exactly what happens in "A Natural History of the Dead," which Susan F. Beegel brilliantly commented on: "The doctor's statement is triply ironic. He and the lieutenant have been arguing about nothing – a moot point of no practical importance – and nothing – the terrifying emptiness of death. The lieutenant cannot 'see' anything – the doctor has blinded him with iodine – but the lieutenant *can* see 'nothing' [...]" (Beegel 40).

- 38 In the three short stories studied above, weak mental or physical characteristics are first attributed to silent characters: Hogan says about Jack that "‘He’s nothing,’" and the boy’s father assumes that his son is "perhaps [...] a little lightheaded." As for Maria, she is first forced to surrender to Enrique’s ideological speech. Then Enrique slaps her and policemen walk her "steadily toward the car" before referring to her as "‘silly’" and "‘crazy’" (234, 333, 480). But the morals of the short stories eventually change sides when characters are confronted by a trial: fouled by Jack, Walcott is on the ground, unable to rise to his feet or answer Jack’s apologies. The father’s unconsciousness of his boy’s pain is counterpointed by his son’s over-consciousness and dignified reaction. Finally, Maria’s confidence makes policemen uncomfortable and impresses the voodoo believer, confronted by "an older magic" than his own.

---

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abouddahab, Rédouane. "Hemingway et l’écriture du silence." *Valeurs de contrôle*. Ed. Monique Vénuat. Clermont-Ferrand: CRLMC, Université Blaise Pascal, 1999, 165-182.
- Beegel, Susan F. *Hemingway’s Craft of Omission, Four Manuscript Examples*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1988.
- Bindeman, Steven L. *Heidegger and Wittgenstein: The Poetics of Silence*. Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1981.
- Brenner, Gerry. *Concealments in Hemingway’s Works*. Columbus: Ohio University Press, 1983.
- Cheatham, George. "‘Sign the Wire with Love’: The Morality of Surplus in *The Sun Also Rises*." *Ernest Hemingway’s The Sun Also Rises*. Ed. Linda Wagner-Martin. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, 99-106.
- Dendrinis, Bessie and Emilia PedroRibeiro. "Giving Street Directions: The Silent Role of Women." *Silence: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. Ed. Adam Jaworski. New York: Mouton de Gryuter, 1997, 215-238.
- Giger, Romeo. *The Creative Void: Hemingway’s Iceberg Theory*. Bern: Francke, 1977.
- Hassan, Ihab. *The Literature of Silence, Henry Miller and Samuel Beckett*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967.
- Hemingway, Ernest. *By-line: Ernest Hemingway, Selected Articles and Dispatches of Four Decades*. Ed. William White. New York: Touchstone, 1998.
- . *The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway. The Finca Vigia Edition*. 1987. New York: Scribner’s, 2003.
- . *Death in the Afternoon*. 1932. New York: Touchstone, 1996.
- . *Ernest Hemingway on Writing*. Ed. Larry W. Phillips. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Touchstone, 1999.
- Herndl, Diane P. "Invalid Masculinity: Silence, Hospitals, and Anesthesia in *A Farewell to Arms*." *The Hemingway Review* 21.1 (Fall 2001): 38-52.
- Hovey, Richard B. *Hemingway. The Inward Terrain*. Seattle: Washington University Press, 1968.
- Jaworski, Adam, ed. *Silence: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. New York: Mouton de Gryuter, 1997.

- Mann, Thomas. *The Magic Mountain*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953.
- Messent, Peter. *Ernest Hemingway*. London: MacMillan, 1992.
- Peterson, Richard K. *Hemingway, Direct and Oblique*. The Hague: Mouton, 1969.
- Portch, Stephen R. *Literature's Silent Language, Nonverbal Communication*. New York: Peter Lang, 1985.
- Putnam, Ann. "Waiting for the End in 'A Pursuit Race.'" *Hemingway's Neglected Short Fiction, New Perspectives*. Ed. Susan F. Beegel. Tuscaloosa: Alabama UP: 1989, 181-192.
- Rovit, Earl. *Ernest Hemingway*. Boston: Twayne Publications, 1963.
- Sobkowiak, Włodzimierz. "Silence and Markedness theory." *Silence: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. Ed. Adam Jaworski. New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1997, 39-61.
- Strychacz, Thomas. *Hemingway's Theaters of Masculinity*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003.
- Svoboda, Frederic J. *Hemingway and The Sun Also Rises. The Crafting of a Style*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1983.
- Tannen, Deborah and Muriel Saville-Troike, eds. *Perspectives on Silence*. Norwood, NJ: Alex Publications, 1985.
- Young, Philip. *Ernest Hemingway: A Reconsideration*. University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 1966.

## NOTES

1. Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain* raises similar questions in the comparison between Hans Castorp, his cousin Joachim, and the latter's mother. The sanatorium's surgeon general attributes male values to Joachim, i.e. silence associated to manners, reserve, and sense of responsibility, which work as counterpoints to Hans Castorp's attitude but also characterize his mother at the end of the novel. As she visits her dead son, she is described as showing courage, reserve and holding tight with composure and strength (Mann 528-534).
2. On the occasion of his manager's visit, Jack is described three times by Jerry as "sitting": "Jack was sitting on the bed [...]," "[Jack] just sits there on the bed [...]," "Jack sat there looking Irish and tough."
3. Three other action verbs describe Jack handling glasses and eating a fruit ("put down the glass," "eating a grapefruit," "spit [the seed] out").
4. Ann Putnam includes this element in her analysis of "A Pursuit Race" and compares it to the café of "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place": "When William Campbell can no longer 'stand the pace,' he drops out of the race and retreats to a peculiar kind of clean, well-lighted place, [...] marked only by the arrival of the 'wolf' at the door, his reach for the whiskey bottle under the bed, and the tender mercies he finds at the end of a needle. Out of these and a hotel room and a bed with a very peculiar top sheet, William Campbell fashions his own clean, well-lighted place" (Putnam 187). Analyzing "Fifty Grand," we saw earlier that silence and the refusal to talk worked as a form of protection.
5. The relationship between speech, silence, and power in mixed-sex couples is minutely analyzed in a wonderful empirical study by Bessie Dendrinos and Emilia Ribeiro Pedroin "Giving Street Directions: The Silent Role of Women" (Jaworski 215-239). Dendrinos and Ribeiro refuse the implication that "male discourse is intrinsically more authoritative than female discourse," and argue that men

"employ various methods to gain [linguistic] privileges and use language to exercise their institutionally bestowed power over women [...]. [Power] can be exercised by someone who interrupts her/his interlocutor in such a way as to make the interruptee feel that she/he has no right to the floor, and that what she/he is saying is less valuable than what someone else has to say [...]" (217). The authors also consider how silence may be an expression of power or powerlessness depending on the situation (218-219).

6. From the beginning of the argument about Maria's brother (" 'Vicente is my brother,' " 474), to the first mention of her silence ("She did not answer and he finished eating"), Maria pronounces 165 words and Enrique 346 (475).

7. Enrique's crawling in the grass then being shot occupies one page of the story whereas Maria's arrest is described in more than two pages.

8. We can notice here the [h] alliteration which reminds us of Maria's focus: that the dead help her so that she can hold herself.

## ABSTRACTS

This essay considers the interworking of movement and control, and speech and silence in the moral development of Hemingway's characters. After a brief overview of the use of silence in Hemingway's first collections of short stories, this article proposes a close textual study of three stories that perform a representation of values generally attributed to Hemingway's male protagonists, namely endurance, courage, and holding tight. Nevertheless, as this essay shows, women can also embody these values. In an effort to keep their dignity when facing their own end, the protagonists have to enforce a control over themselves by avoiding small talk and limiting their movements. These behavior patterns build up an ideal of the self as a silent and impregnable fortress. In addition, this article suggests that these values of silence can also be found in the writer's style.

Cet essai démontre l'implication des contrastes entre mouvement et contrôle, d'une part, et discours et silence, d'autre part, dans le développement moral des personnages des nouvelles d'Ernest Hemingway. Après avoir exercé un survol de l'utilisation par Hemingway du silence dans ses premiers recueils de nouvelles, je propose d'étudier trois nouvelles qui mettent en scène des valeurs que l'on attribue généralement au héros masculin: l'endurance face à la souffrance, le courage et la maîtrise de soi. Cependant, cet essai montre que les personnages féminins peuvent aussi endosser ces valeurs. En effet, alors que chacun est confronté à sa propre fin, les protagonistes parviennent à faire preuve de sang-froid en évitant les discours inutiles et en réduisant leurs mouvements. Ces modèles de conduite participent à la définition d'un idéal de l'être comme forteresse silencieuse et imprenable. Cet article met également en évidence le lien entre ces valeurs de silence et le style de l'auteur.

## AUTHORS

### CASSANDRE MEUNIER

Cassandra Meunier is a part-time English instructor, language teacher and PhD student at the University of Versailles-Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, France. Her dissertation focuses on the uses

of silence as a narrative strategy in Hemingway's fictional works. She has participated in the Hemingway Society Biennial Conference in Key West in 2004, and presented a paper on "The Dignity of Silence and Physical Control in *To Have and Have Not*."