



Journal of the Short Story in English

Les Cahiers de la nouvelle

49 | Autumn 2007

Special issue: Ernest Hemingway

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Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/jsse/739>

ISSN: 1969-6108

Publisher

Presses universitaires d'Angers

Printed version

Date of publication: 1 December 2007

Number of pages: 67-82

ISSN: 0294-04442

Electronic reference

Alice Clark-Wehinger, « Deviation and In-Betweenness in “The Sea Change” », *Journal of the Short Story in English* [Online], 49 | Autumn 2007, Online since 01 December 2009, connection on 30 April 2019.

URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/jsse/739>

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Deviation and In-Betweenness in "The Sea Change"

Alice Clark-Wehinger

- 1 Hemingway sets up the dramatic content of "The Sea Change" (1931)¹ as a contest of wills between a man, Phil, and an unnamed woman, which culminates in a moral conflict between 'virtue' and 'vice.' The dialectical movement between these two opposing forces is sustained up until the moment that Phil gives into the woman's plea for a deviant form of sexual liberation. At this point the tension begins to dissolve and clear-cut distinctions between virtue and vice, like male and female gender, break down. "The Sea Change" testifies to Hemingway's talent for creating a style whose devices (ellipsis, understatement, silences) deviate from traditional narrative techniques. The obliqueness of his writing is reflected in character, subject, and plot structure. The plot itself is nonexistent and motives are never clearly explained.
- 2 The story consists of a tense conversation which takes place between a couple sitting in a bar in Paris. Hemingway drafted, pruned and reworked the text until it finally boiled down to 1260 words.² Out of 1260 words only about two: "perversion" and "vice," provide explicit information about the nature of the argument going on between the handsome young man (unnamed at the outset; later we learn he is called Phil) and his pretty girlfriend or wife. The narrator peppers the narrative up with elliptic allusions which have the effect of peaking the reader's interest. But on the whole he gives the reader minimal clues for understanding the couple's peculiar relationship. The very open-endedness of the text, its befuddling lack of plot, and its insistence on deviant behavior have often led to flights of fancy in critical assessment, many of which defend the idea that Phil's deviant sexuality will lead him to probable homosexual penchants. The majority of critics tend to interpret the story as a struggle between heterosexual and homosexual wills, with Phil finally embracing the latter, thus declaring the death of his heterosexual identity.
- 3 My understanding of the text departs from many of these critical observations which assume that "The Sea Change" is about the main character's move toward homosexuality.

I find these assumptions awkward and have endeavored to restrict my own critical insights to illuminating the way in which literary devices and processes in the story deviate from traditional narratological methods. Further inter-textual observations will enable us to understand in greater depth how the title of the short story, taken from Ariel's song in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, elucidates the meaning of the text. I propose to explore "The Sea Change" not so much as a loss of, but as a search for the restitution of sexual completeness. I will consider this in light of the competing forces of vice and virtue, and male and female distinctions which surface and then finally collapse with Phil's change and with the girl's declaration of undifferentiated sexual experiences. Here, the Shakespearean subtext will shed light on the in-betweenness motif inherent in the short story.

- 4 "The Sea Change" starts out as something decisively "rich and strange." Structurally speaking, it breaks with traditional narrative techniques by omitting expository information concerning character and setting. The reader is plunged headlong into the middle of a dispute between Phil and his partner. The detached third-person narrator provides scant information from past events which could elucidate the crisis. Even more perplexing, the direct speech of Phil and the girl rarely unveils any display of their inner feelings, thus cloaking the characters' personalities, past, and their peculiar quarrel in mysterious darkness. Their crisis, as Erik Nakjavani has noted, is presented *in medias res*, and sustained by silences within the dialogue.³
- 5 Hemingway sets up the exposition scene as a series of questions that revolve around an undefined impersonal pronoun 'it.' By centering the argument on an unspecified 'it,' Hemingway's narrative strategy constantly deviates from a central course. This hide-and-seek strategy, which reveals as much as it conceals, constantly dodges potentially illuminating responses by having the characters give elliptic answers, or by simply answering a question by another question:
- "All right," said the man. "What about it?"
 "No," said the girl, "I can't."
 "You mean you won't."
 "I can't," said the girl. "That's all that I mean."
 "You mean that you won't." (397)
- 6 Thus, the exposition scene sets the tone for the peculiar voice specific to "The Sea Change," a short story which comes across as a slippery statement about how fundamentally polyvalent and changing the sense of meaning is, particularly in terms of human communication. It is of particular interest to note that the medium in which Hemingway develops this sense of uncertainty is dialogue. Descriptive details are reduced to the strict minimum. The story itself makes up five scant pages, most of which comprise a dialogue which reads more like a script than a narrative. An atypical form of narration, Hemingway's technique adroitly avoids closing itself into the traditional method of introducing characters through readily identifiable personal details, time, and location.
- 7 The contraction of information concerning the characters' physical appearance, feelings, and surroundings reflects Hemingway's minimalist technique, a method of writing which reduces textual content to its bare minimum. In so doing, Hemingway deviates from mainstream story telling techniques, namely through the use of ellipsis, contraction, and dramatic dialogue. Dramatic occurrences in "The Sea Change" are not evoked as a series of events or actions, but rather as a continual movement of words exchanged between two people. Fortunately, the flow of dialogue does not lapse into a pattern of stasis as it

might under the pen of a less talented writer. Hemingway's ingenious use of dialogue and cues (voice, eye contact, gesture) creates a heavily dramatic atmosphere which maintains the reader's attention throughout the story. Hemingway saw that dialogue could essentially be used to sustain and even act as a substitute for action, a view Shakespeare adopted himself in staging many of his plays as verbal duels.⁴

- 8 "The Sea Change," it should be noted, underwent several revisions before it became comprised essentially of dialogue. At every stage the changes would enable Hemingway to weed out descriptive details from the text.⁵ The trimming away of excess information would have significant consequences on Hemingway's writing. Inserting silences in the dialogue, for example, provided him with a medium for sustaining suspense. Suspense, in "The Sea Change," depends largely upon the holding back of information as in: "Then they did not say anything for a while" (398). Charles Nolan, regarding this point, has remarked: "Ultimately, Hemingway saw the power of starting with dialogue, withholding our understanding of what the quarrel was about" (Nolan 55). Norman Grebstein also insists on the importance of Hemingway's dialogue technique in short fiction:

Among the most radical and yet most noticeable features of Hemingway's short stories is their heavy reliance upon dialogue. [...] No other important American writer of short fiction gave more weight to dialogue or used it with greater frequency. No one had so fully exploited the dramatic method nor does anything written before Hemingway explain the form of such stories as "The Killers," "Hills Like White Elephants," or "The Sea Change" which are composed almost exclusively of dialogue. [...] It follows that upon dialogue falls much of the burden of setting, plot, character, and theme. Unlike conventional stories where plot is integral to the narrative, here *what happens* is subordinate to *what is said*, the end result being that plot has relatively little importance. (Grebstein 99-100)

- 9 Dialogue, it is true, has a primary function in "The Sea Change" – it is, in fact, the driving force of the narrative. It has a theatrical quality about it which departs from more conventional verbal exchanges, and points to a new aesthetic approach in short story telling which uses the speech act to convey a character's mental state: a technique capable of eliciting nuances and changes in emotion through gestures, glances, and voice. Hemingway creates a highly theatrical medium with his dialogue technique by introducing furtive glances, telling gestures, portentous looks and strange changes in tone of voice. Body cues (the gaze in particular) are one of the narrative devices that provide cues for the reader's response, functioning in much the same as stage directions in a play. Phil's desire and agitated ambivalence towards the girl is communicated through the way he keeps darting looks at her hands: "She had very fine hands and the man looked at them. They were slim and brown and very beautiful" (397).
- 10 The theatrical overtones of the text are equally palpable in voice modulation. Eagerness and even elation characterize the girl's voice: "She could not believe him, but her voice was happy" (400). In counterpoint, the man's voice displays a vast and confused panoply of emotions. To emphasize this point, Phil's conflicting desires are projected as a mixture of jealousy: "I'll kill her" (397), authoritative machismo: "'Let's not talk rot'" (398), and finally in peculiar voice inflections as he changes his mind and gives into the girl: "'All right [...]. All right'" (400). Throughout the story, Phil's voice is continually faltering, modulating and changing, depending on his feelings toward the girl. In depicting Phil's disconcerted sense of desire, attention is thus focused on his enigmatic change of voice which is associated with the inner change he undergoes at the end of the story. These voice cues (inflection and tone of voice) are integral to narrative strategy.

Hemingway uses these devices to dramatize a quality that cannot be seen in, or perhaps even understood by Phil: "His voice sounded very strange. He did not recognize it" (400). Inner thoughts concerning voice, much like stage directions in theatre, are filtered through the detached third person narrator who continues to stress the increasing anxiety of Phil's physical and mental state: "His voice was not the same, and his mouth was very dry" (400). The text, in essence, reads much like a scenario with its multiple references to voice and to the gaze.

- 11 The last two paragraphs crescendo into a series of optical referents corroborating the significance of the visual register in the closing scene:

[...] He *looked* out the door. He *saw* her going down the street. As he *looked* in the glass, he *saw* he was really quite a different-*looking* man. [...]

The young man *saw* himself in the mirror behind the bar. "I said I was a different man, James," he said.

Looking into the mirror he *saw* this was quite true.

"You *look* very well, sir," James said. "You must have had a good summer." (401, italics mine)

- 12 The last words, spoken by James, the bartender, have the decisive effect of truncating the abrupt ending, and call into question the necessity of a resolution scene.
- 13 The story, as such, reads much like an act taken from the middle of a play, and leaves the reader with the distinct sense of being an observer: watching and listening intently like a spectator who has arrived too late to catch the exposition scene. Concurrently, the lack of a straightforward resolution in the story is paramount to missing out on the end of a play's dénouement. This is all a part of Hemingway's narrative strategy which plays on the power of insinuation as we can see through his use of dramatic devices and staging effects.⁶ The staging of character in the short story follows a similar dramatic approach. Characterization of the girl demands highly visual narrative components; we know, for example, that she is sun-tanned, beautiful, and young. Everything in the characterization of the girl hints at a stagey form of irony. Her personal identity is kept anonymous via the personal pronoun "she." Only her sexual preferences are proof that the girl deviates from the norm. In dress code and in speech Hemingway has conferred ironically normative behavior upon her. Her coded behavior and her language, more precisely, stand in striking contrast to her otherwise deviant desire to engage in a sudden homosexual adventure. Phil's direct manner of putting a precise name, "vice" (399), onto deviance is politely berated by the girl: "'Let's not say vice,' she said. 'That's not very polite.' 'Perversion,' he said" (399). With no name to fill in her identity and a vivid, yet normative physical description, the young woman is the focalized fetish object of the narrative, notably through the metonymy of hands: "She had very fine hands and the man looked at them" (397). Yet, despite all this, Phil remains strangely detached from the object of his desire: "He looked at her hands, but he did not touch her with his" (398).
- 14 Object of desire, fetish object, and object of love, the girl fulfils multiple functions in the story which was initially intended to be for *The Forum's* editor who had requested Hemingway to write a story about love (Bennett 228-229). Hemingway's exploration of the topos of love did not correspond to traditional love stories; nevertheless, "The Sea Change" is undeniably a story about love as the onomastics of the protagonist's name, Phil, from the Greek (love), suggests. This is corroborated by the fact that the story was to be part of a trilogy of love stories to be published in *The Forum*.⁷

- 15 Although the story is ostensibly about love ("I love you very much.' [...] 'Don't you really believe I love you?'" 398), the lovers' relationship does not reflect a typical love story since Hemingway structures the narrative around a shadowy Other. From the exposition scene on, clues point to a triangular conflict: "I'll kill her," Phil threatens, "Couldn't you have gotten into some other jam?" (397). "If it was a man--' [...] 'It wouldn't be a man. You know that. Don't you trust me?'" (398) the girl exclaims, clarifying the homosexual nature of her conquest. "The Sea Change" presents a departure from the traditional love story by placing a heterosexual love relationship in the critical context of homosexual desire.
- 16 The conflict here calls upon an absent other to set the stage for a homosexual adventure which will fuel a love story heavy with irony. As Bennett has remarked: "Hemingway has taken the conventional triangle plot – man versus man for girl – with its conventional resolutions, and inserted a character in the triangle who should traditionally be ineligible: the other woman" (Bennett 229). Thus, "I'll kill her" has an ironic ring for the reader. The revenge motif in Hemingway's love story diverges from traditional form since Phil cannot take on the other woman as a rival in the way he could challenge a man. This set-up enables Hemingway to avert the customary resolution which would result in retaliation by substituting a female rival for someone of the same sex.
- 17 The peculiar twist gives the story an ironical touch by skewing the representation of traditional binary relations. This is quite apparent in the story's ironic focalization on couples. Hemingway dismantles stereotyped images of men and women in the narrative through the ambiguous representation of couples. The semantics of the couple is stressed incessantly, similarly the number two and the pair are made ample reference to throughout the story. James' thoughts, for example, are about couples: "He had seen many handsome young couples break up and new couples form that were never handsome for long" (399). The clients in the bar are all couples: "Two people came in the door and went up to the bar" (399). Furtive glances are exchanged between couples: "The two at the bar looked over at the two at the table, then looked back at the barman again. Towards the barman was the comfortable direction" (399). And when Phil goes to the bar to pick up the "two checks," the "two at the bar" move down "to make room for him" (401). Despite this insistence on couples the waiter is alone, and the two clients at the bar are paired off, but they do not form a heterosexual couple. Finally the text suggests that the young man is about to become engaged in a homosexual relationship.⁸ The subject of the short story is ostensibly about sexual deviation and a look at the subtexts (Pope and Shakespeare) will shed light on this point.
- 18 At the end of the short story, in what is considered as the resolution scene, where Phil finally relinquishes his sexual authority over the girl by giving his approval, so to speak, of her homosexual adventure, she responds with characteristic irony: "Oh, you're too sweet.' 'You're too good to me'" (400). Phil retorts caustically: "'And when you come back tell me all about it'" (400). It is at this point in the story that the narrative voice, focalizing on Phil, calls our attention to the strange change he is about to undergo: "His voice sounded strange. He did not recognize it" (400). This change, encapsulated semantically in the title, "The Sea Change," provides a clue to grasping a deeper understanding of what seems to be Phil's change.
- 19 Let us start out by putting more precise terms on this change which may be viewed as an identity crisis as such. Phil's crisis is evoked through the dramatic device of voice and through the motif of the mirror. Decrypting this change is problematic due to the acute

contraction of unnamed events which culminate in the protagonist's crisis. And the narrative voice, as we have noted, provides only a few elliptic explanations for what led up to, or what instigated this transformation – notably in the extract which makes allusions to "perversion" and "vice." On this occasion, textual references to the couple's sexual practices are evoked in very loose terms by the girl as " 'the things we've had and done' " (399), and then in Phil's oblique reference to Alexander Pope: " 'Vice is a monster of such fearful mien, [...] that to be something or other needs but to be seen. Then we something, something, then embrace' " (399). These two exchanges both reveal and conceal crucial information about the couple. Characteristic of Hemingway's strategy of deviation, Phil's convoluted literary quotes substantiates the context of profound ambiguity and deviance in which the couple's story is steeped. This has led many critics to draw striking conclusions both about the couple and about Phil's change in the "resolution scene."

20 Warren Bennett, for example, interprets the girl's remark about " 'the things we've had and done' " (399), as proof that the couple's deviant sexual practices, which he qualifies as cunnilingus, have had the perverse effect of emasculating Phil: "Recognizing that what Phil and the girl have 'had and done' refers to cunnilingus and to Phil's having been the girl's girl opens a new dimension in regard to Phil's attempt to quote a passage about vice from the neoclassic *Essay on Man* by Alexander Pope" (Bennett 233).⁹ Bennett sees cunnilingus as both a deviant act and as the basis for the argument that Phil has become "the girl's girl." This leads him to the conclusion that the resolution scene is about Phil's desire to embrace homosexuality. Bennett views Phil's voice changes as "the destruction of his masculine sexual identity" (Bennett 239), and is persuaded that the true resolution of the short story is "the psychic death" of Phil.¹⁰

21 The resolution scene, Bennett affirms, can be read as Phil's "sea change," which is "Eliotic, not Shakespearean – Phil's sea change is a psychic purification in a symbolic death by water which will extinguish the fires of his sexuality. The lust of the flesh will be gradually washed away, as the sea washes the flesh from the bones" (Bennett 240).¹¹ Bennett seems to have conflated images from Eliot's poem, *The Waste Land*, with images from the subtext taken from Ariel's song:

Full fathom five thy father lies,
Of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes;
Nothing of him that doth fade
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange. (*The Tempest*, 1.2.400-405)

22 It seems more likely, as Charles Nolan has remarked, that "Phil is merely reflecting on the irony of his situation and expressing his own bitterness" (Nolan 63). Nolan exercises caution in his critical assessment of Phil's transformation, but fails to consider how this change reflects an inner conflict, and similarly how the conflict is reflected in the subtexts. Robert E. Fleming notes, in particular, that these literary allusions have a

logical organic relationship to the story when the reader realizes that Phil is a writer. [...] The negative aspects of Pope's words and the positive connotations of Shakespeare's provide symbolic poles for the conflict and the nature of the artist. Both allusions are implicit in the words of Phil's mistress: "We're made up of all sorts of things. You've known that. You've used it well enough." (Fleming 216)

23 Indeed, diametrical oppositions: male/female, vice/virtue, good/bad, orchestrate the entire text. These oppositions are reiterated in the literary subtexts with the excerpt

from Pope supposed to represent the radical pole of Phil's division, and Shakespeare representing the *entre-deux* possibility of transforming these opposites into a coherent whole.

- 24 In contrario, the girl's position reflects the Shakespearean pole since her speech expresses a desire to overcome these contradictions. She refuses to acknowledge vice as a common denominator of her relationship with Phil and thus distances herself from the quote taken from Pope's *Essay on Man*, wherein the human condition is defined by the negative pole of vice. Phil, in giving a name to their so-called deviant sexual behavior, incites the girl to protest: "You don't have to put a name to it" (400). She urges Phil not to speak of 'it' as a negative quality inherent in their relationship. However, Phil insists: "That's the name for it.' But this time, he is careful not to use the term "perversion," or "vice."
- 25 The narrative voice begins to yield to the girl's point of view at this stage as she reassures Phil: 'We're made up of all sorts of things,' and then goes on to remind him that he practices this philosophy of *entre-deux* himself and there is nothing morally condemnable about it: "You've used it well enough' ". Phil begins to change over to the girl's perspective: "'All right,' he said. 'All right' " (*ibid.*). However, the girl's interpretation of Phil's response is potentially befuddling in light of the fact that she has just won a victory by swaying him over to her point of view. For a brief moment, she goes on to assess their relationship – in terms of the negative factors she had formerly denied: " 'You mean all wrong. I know' " (*ibid.*).
- 26 The conflicting assumptions that both Phil and the girl make concerning their relationship – as either a good or a bad one – is never truly resolved. And the attempt to surmount the pathological split on the moral level may never be resolved entirely, but there is a definite will to abolish these distinctions: " 'But I'll come back. I told you I'd come back. I'll come back right away' " (400), the girl says reassuringly, suggesting that she is embarking on an ephemeral conquest which will terminate, unlike her relationship with Phil which is inscribed in a long if not perpetual duration. Indeed, the girl seems to have triumphed in her quest for a polyvalent accord with Phil where distinctions between fidelity and infidelity, vice and virtue no longer exist. Her affirmation of love and devotion to Phil is outwardly contradictory, but inwardly concordant with her desire to experience an ephemeral sexual affair. After all, she is transparent enough to ask his permission, suggesting there is nothing in this fling that need be hidden. The girl's demands reflect a desire to break with the dialectical split which plagues Phil. She represents the agent by which his change, his liberation from duality, may come about. The girl then is concurrent with the notion of change in terms of the possibility of eradicating distinctions between vice and virtue, right and wrong.
- 27 The text's insistence on change cannot go unnoticed; it surfaces first in the words of the title, and again in the resolution scene in Phil's voice ("His voice was not the same," 400), and in his reflection in the mirror ("As he looked in the glass, he saw he was really quite a different-looking man," 401). The narrative voice states that the change Phil is undergoing occurs as a result of the girl's departure: "He watched her go. He was not the same-looking man as he had been before he had told her to go" (400-401).
- 28 The elliptic style of voice in the resolution scene is puzzling; it brings up the question as to what sort of change is being alluded to. Phil's assertion: " 'I'm a different man' " (401), when the girl leaves, suggests that he has retained his manhood, but in the sense that his

manhood has just been transformed into something different, something "rich and strange." Hemingway's elliptic reference to Phil's change finds new meaning when placed in the context of Ariel's song of death and metamorphosis in *The Tempest*.

- 29 Shakespeare's play, set in a Prelapsarian context, calls up Edenic scenes of creation. *The Tempest* dramatizes a world where the pagan impulse reigns, where the writer-artist, Prospero, possesses regenerative powers commensurate with the magus that can bring on polymorphic changes.¹² Ariel, the fine spirit of the air, can show himself in different appearances. The play's tribute to the self as a space for reconciling contraries, echoes the girl's sense of mutability as she knows that people "[a]re made up of all sorts of things." In *The Tempest* mutability can sweep away dialectical imperatives determining life and death so that Ferdinand's father¹³ appears to be "undrowned" (2.1.234). Ferdinand hears strange, haunting music, including the evocative song of death and metamorphosis in Ariel's song which refers to the father's sea change as something "rich and strange."
- 30 The possibility of opposite poles coexisting together is reflected in the philosophical thought of the Renaissance expressed as *coincidentia oppositorum*.¹⁴ According to this concept, polarities exist simultaneously rather than conflictually. Many of Shakespeare's plays function within a context of *coincidentia oppositorum* where the question of power, identity, and sexuality comes to the fore. *The Tempest*, for example, dramatizes the doing and undoing of Prospero's all powerful creative forces as a liberating experience, just as *Antony and Cleopatra* stages the temporary dismantling of Antony's masculine power by Cleopatra as a potential liberation. The hyper-virile warrior, Antony, mythically related to Hercules, relinquishes himself to Cleopatra one night in a drunken stupor. Cleopatra brags to her messenger about how she got Antony drunk, took him to bed and proceeded to exchange her head-dresses and mantles for his sword:¹⁵ "I drunk him to bed,/ Then put my tires and mantles on him, whilst/ I wore his sword Philppan" (2.5.21-22).¹⁶ The implied deviant sexuality and the exchange of gender roles in *Antony and Cleopatra*, recall the *entre-deux* pattern of male/female relationships in "The Sea Change." The short story vibrates with the fascination and fear of unnamable forces directing sexuality and gender.
- 31 Hemingway's preoccupation with change in the short story recalls *entre-deux* motifs in Shakespeare's work, which, like Hemingway's, evolved in a period of great social change where deviant codes tended to subvert the norm. The girl's cropped hair and show of sexual emancipation in "The Sea Change" are indicative of changing gender trends in the post-war period of Europe and the United States.
- 32 The work of both Shakespeare and Hemingway portrays the woman's move toward masculinity as dangerously empowering, and the man's move toward femininity as potentially disempowering. In "The Sea Change" this tension is expressed in Phil's initial discourse characterized by binary oppositions, unlike the girl's. Yet, when the girl leaves the bar Phil looks at James and makes a strange statement which seems to be directed toward the girl, but this time without the purely negative connotations associated with the term "vice." At the end of the story Phil associates "vice" with something which allows for an open-ended interpretation of the word, and consequently of his relationship with the girl as an *entre-deux* experience which integrates opposites. "The Sea Change," in these terms, suggests the possibility of human relations as something "rich and strange," powerless in their power to change, and yet ever changing in their vast potential for interchangeability.

- 33 Finally, the title's reference to the sea endorses the fantasy of a return to the source of primordial and polymorphic origins. This is echoed in suggestive homophonic pairs: *sea/see; she/he*. The insistence on polyphonic changes in voice: "His voice was not the same" (400), and on the multiplicity of selfhood, further substantiates the polyvalent meanings inscribed within the text which functions as a palimpsest, undulating, ebbing and flowing, holding back and releasing, revealing and concealing, as the narrative voice seeks new ways of challenging dialectical imperatives. This quest for change in the short story can be read as a manifestation of the author's own bold, yet incomplete quest for more open-ended sexual¹⁷ and artistic¹⁸ horizons during the post-war period.
- 34 Some half of a century later, in *The Garden of Eden*,¹⁹ Hemingway reveals what he had sought so intensely to conceal over his lifetime: his search for an all-embracing sexual and creative energy. *The Garden of Eden*, a novel published posthumously, reiterates the fantasy of a return to origins as a search for polymorphic sexuality, a theme Hemingway had touched on earlier in "The Sea Change." In the novel, this fantasy is brought to its fulcrum in the figure of David, a writer, and his wife, Catherine, who exchange sexual roles. The vivid description of Catherine's metamorphosis towards maleness (she cuts her hair short like the girl in "The Sea Change" and pursues a relationship with a younger girl which evolves into a triangular relationship), shows the extent to which the *entre-deux* motif had infiltrated Hemingway's late work. Fetish themes like triangular love and homo-hetero relations and androgyny, which were only sketched out in earlier works like "The Sea Change," resurface in *The Garden of Eden*. Hemingway's more mature work is designed so that dualities collapse, which has the function of allowing the protagonist to tap into formerly unheard of sexual and artistic energy.
- 35 Though *The Garden of Eden* is thematically linked to Judeo-Christian myths of the Fall, it dispenses with the notion of sin and in so doing creates space for David's new creative matrix. His strange metamorphosis at the end of the novel corroborates the beginning of new artistic and sexual completeness. The renewed creative powers which David becomes endowed with after having been disempowered are akin to those of the magus, Prospero, in *The Tempest*. Hemingway's fascination with the return to the origins and primacy of being is inevitably the expression of a desire to link artistic and sexual impulses into a common bond. It is of particular interest that this primal creative impulse is what instigates David's artistic transformation, enabling him to cross a threshold into the sphere of oneness: at one with his poetic voice, in a state of plenitude, whole and complete. Thus Hemingway reflects the American voice of writers, like Walt Whitman, who sought to express the experience of an undifferentiated sexual and artistic self in literature. The state of wholeness, which Phil and the girl seem to be aspiring to in "The Sea Change," is finally achieved in *The Garden of Eden* as the closing lines suggest:
- 36 David wrote steadily and well and the sentences that he had made before came to him complete and entire [...]. Not a sentence was missing and there were many that he put down as they were returned to him without changing them. By two o'clock he had recovered, corrected and improved what it had taken him five days to write originally. He wrote on a while longer and there was no sign that any of it would ever cease returning to him intact. (247)

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NOTES

1. This short story was first composed between January and June of 1930. A signed typescript of "The Sea Change" is dated September 22, 1931. It was then published in Paris by Edward W. Titus in the December issue of *This Quarter*. However, it was not originally intended for Titus's magazine, but rather for *The Forum*.
2. "Let us see what we can do in 1260 words," Hemingway noted somewhat ironically as he contemplated how he would be able to make his story meet *The Forum's* editor's demands for a well-delineated plot (in Bennett 229).
3. Eric Nakjavani notes that the story begins "right in the middle of a conversation that has seemingly been going on for some time between Phil and the girl. [...]" He adds: "The reader experiences the overwhelming desire to mount an imaginary search and seizure operation to recapture this lost beginning. But this loss is obviously irrecoverable in its entirety. The reader has to be consoled by realizing that every authentic beginning or origin is likely to remain shrouded in mystery. Only traces of the story's problematic beginning [...] can be partially recuperated and reconstructed through the reader's listening to the text's silences" (Nakjavani 164-165).
4. Volumnia's adage: "Action is eloquence" characterizes a Shakespearian motif which associates discourse with action (Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*).
5. In assessing the revisions the story underwent, Charles Nolan notes that Hemingway's amendments were, on the whole, intended to eliminate a major impediment: description. Nolan explains that Hemingway removed almost all description, paring the text down until it was constituted almost essentially of dialogue: "In the original manuscript, Hemingway gave a fuller description of the woman, detailing aspects of her hands, face, throat, mouth, and cheek bones [...]. In the second version, the description of the man is cut entirely" (Nolan 54-55). The reference is to the Ernest Hemingway manuscript of "The Sea Change."
6. S. Norman Grebstein has noted the theatrical quality of Hemingway's writing: "It is as though the reader were presented with a bare scenario which retained only the actors' speeches, and asked to do the work of writer and director in order to reconstruct the scene fully and dramatize it. Thus, it is left to the reader to add the pauses and interpret the dialogue for tempo, volume, tone, and inflection, and to decide the proper emphasis for setting, action, and gesture. The secret of Hemingway's dialogue is just this demand it sets on the reader, while at the same time it allows him to stage the scene in his own head [...]" (99).
7. Bennett cites a pencil manuscript headed "Three Love Stories"/ by Ernest Hemingway, (Item 681, John F. Kennedy Library). Of the three love stories in the pencil manuscript one is entitled "The Sea Change". Bennett concludes: "Apparently ['The Sea Change'] was intended to be one of the three planned stories for a magazine called *The Forum*" (228).
8. Bennett concludes that the two men are catamites and corroborates this assumption by calling attention to Hemingway's use of affected language: "The two clients are homosexuals, which is revealed in the language they use. One 'addresses' the barman, which implies an affected formality; [...] they also force an affected familiarity by calling the barman 'old James' and by discussing his appearance when James's 'Yes, sir' does not indicate such a familiarity. The one client's instruction not to 'neglect to insert' the brandy is a pretentious and exalted rhetoric similar to the language Hemingway uses in *The Sun Also Rises* when dramatizing the homosexuals with 'white hands, wavy hair, white faces, grimacing, gesturing, talking,' using rhetoric such as, 'I do declare' [...]. The textual evidence of the language in the story is supported by a deleted manuscript fragment in which Phil refers to the 'clients' as 'punks,' that is, catamites or male prostitutes" (Bennett 237).

9. "Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,/ As, to be hated, needs to be seen;/ Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,/ We first endure, then pity, then embrace" (Pope, Epistle II).
10. Bennett affirms: "Hemingway intends from the outset to establish the true conflict invisibly, in the arena of Phil's mind, like dynamite hidden under a bridge, and to make the true resolution the psychic death – the ironic killing – of 'poor old Phil' " (229).
11. "Musing upon the king my brother's wreck" (Eliot 191) – Eliot's Poem, "The Fire Sermon" (*The Wasteland*), makes a passing allusion to *The Tempest* (1.2.389-405).
12. Prospero's island is evidently in the Mediterranean, and he represents the figure of the *magus* who could bring on strange changes in the natural and the supernatural world. Shakespeare's contemporaries were fascinated by this figure of creative change and regeneration.
13. Ferdinand is the only son of the King of Naples whom Prospero has secretly chosen to be his son-in-law. Ferdinand bewails what he assumes is his father's death by drowning. Ferdinand is the only one of the shipwrecked company to encounter the magician, Prospero, directly.
14. Coexisting opposites in Renaissance thought correspond to the notion of *coincidentia oppositorum*. This term is often associated with the philosopher and humanist, Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464). Unlike Aristotle, Cusa not only perceives the contradictions at the limits of the expressible, but endorses them.
15. This scene from Antony and Cleopatra was inspired by Ovid's *Metamorphoses* which recounts Hercules' enslavement by Omphale, the queen of Lydia – it relates sexual deviance with tragic-comic consequences. Like Antony and Cleopatra, Hercules' and Omphale's roles become inversed when the queen of Lydia takes the warrior's club and lion skin mantle and dresses him in her robes, obliging him to weave with her other maidens stooped at her feet. See Lucas Cranach's painting of Hercules and Omphale (1532) which focuses on the disempowering of the great warrior.
16. It is true that in this scene Antony's appropriation of Cleopatra's feminine attributes is not an entirely conscious decision since he is in a state of inebriety. The Philippan sword was used by Antony at the Battle of Philippi in which he and Octavius defeated Brutus and Cassius.
17. Hemingway's readings in the 1920s reflect an interest in deviant sexual codes. After the war he began to read up on sexuality in terms of "variant behavior." This subject was becoming a fervent topic of conversation at the time. Hemingway endeavored to understand the social import of the sexual changes taking place: "I thought that I had lived in a world as it was and there were all kinds of people in it and I tried to understand them, although some of them I could not like and some I still hated" (*A Moveable Feast*, 19). In the 1920s Hemingway was reading Havelock Ellis's *Erotic Symbolism*. The book discussed female orgasm and the erotic nature of hair which would become a fetish in Hemingway's writing. In 1921 he sent a copy to Hadley, his first wife and they exchanged essays on male and female roles, a subject of interest at this time when sexual liberation had spread to Paris (Bennett 226-227).
18. Bisexuality and homosexuality were incarnated by outspoken artists, many of them women whom Hemingway met in Europe, notably Gertrude Stein. Hemingway told Edmund Wilson in 1952 that "The Sea Change" was written from the knowledge he gained about lesbianism from Gertrude Stein in 1922. (See Bennett 227.) Bennett quotes Edmund Wilson, November 8 1952, *Letters*, 795: "Gertrude Stein talked to me once for three hours telling me why she was a lesbian, the mechanics of it, why the act did not disgust those who performed it... and why it was not degrading to either participant. It was this knowledge, gained from Gertrude Stein that enabled me to write *A Sea Change* [sic.], which is a good story, with authority." However, Gertrude Stein would contend that she had no influence whatsoever on Hemingway (Young 173). In the end, did Gertrude Stein's female homosexuality truly inspire "The Sea Change"? If so, why is Hemingway cited in 1922 as having attributed the genesis of the short story to his "hands on experience": "I had seen the couple in the Bar Basque in St. Jean de Luz and I knew the story too, too well, which

is the squared root of well, and use any well you like except mine" (Flora 131). The question arises as to whether Hemingway knew "it" – the story of the couple – through first hand experience – or from someone else – vicariously, Gertrude Stein, for example. Hemingway maintains a constant ambiguity of meaning, designated in the polyvalent use of "well" which can be a metaphor for the artist's inkwell, and for the artist's change of sex from male to female, "use any well you like except mine."

19. *The Garden of Eden* is the last uncompleted novel by Ernest Hemingway, which he worked on from 1946 until his death in 1961. It is set on the Côte d'Azur in the 1920s.

ABSTRACTS

"The Sea Change," mainly a dialogue between a couple sitting in a café, is a very brief short story with almost no action. The elusive nature of Hemingway's narrative strategy, which constantly holds back information from the reader, acts as a substitute for "real action" and gives the impression that the short story could be staged for theatre. Hemingway sets up the dramatic content of his short story as a contest of wills between a man, Phil, emblematic of 'virtue,' and an unnamed woman, symptomatic of "vice." Yet clear-cut binary distinctions break down. This is corroborated by the symbolic implications of the title, "The Sea Change," taken from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, where death and life are absorbed into one common state of metamorphosis. From this perspective, "The Sea Change" can be viewed as a dramatization of Hemingway's poetic search for a prelapsarian locus where distinctions no longer exist.

"The Sea Change", composée essentiellement d'un dialogue entre un jeune couple attablé dans un café, est une très brève nouvelle ne présentant pratiquement pas d'action. La nature insaisissable de la stratégie narrative de Hemingway, qui cache constamment au lecteur des informations importantes, fonctionne comme le succédané de la "véritable action", et nous donne l'impression que la nouvelle peut être mise en scène. Hemingway présente le contenu dramatique de sa nouvelle comme une dispute entre un homme, Phil, censé représenter la 'vertu', et une femme innommée, qui est le symptôme du 'vice'. Néanmoins, les distinctions binaires nettes ne tiendront pas. Ceci est confirmé par le jeu de l'intertextualité présente dès le titre, "The Sea Change", lequel renvoie à *The Tempest* de Shakespeare, où mort et vie ont partie liée en un seul état de métamorphose. Dans cette optique, la nouvelle peut être lue comme une dramatisation de la quête poétique chez Hemingway d'un lieu paradisiaque où les différences s'évanouissent.

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