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THE DIALECTIC OF DISCOURSE IN *THE SUN ALSO RISES*

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Although they have serious reservations of different kinds and degrees, the mainstream American modern novelists—James, Fitzgerald, Wharton, and even Dreiser—consider society to be the inescapable place where the individual must live his life, and as such, it is a presence and force in their novels. Hemingway, in so many respects more exemplary of the modern spirit than any of his literary contemporaries, and hence the most widely imitated writer of the first half of the twentieth century, rejects this traditional perspective to follow the most radical implications of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*; namely, that society—in the sense of a collective public world with its institutions, customs, and values—cannot provide, either physically or metaphorically, the context for individual self-realization. Moreover, society is not any place that matters. While it remains an external antagonist capable of destroying the individual, and a physical backdrop for his activities, it no longer provokes the kind of internal conflict between collective and personal imperatives that Huck experienced.

In keeping with the characters' alienation from society, both responsibilities of ordinary speech—that language mean something and that this meaning be communicated—are atrophied in *The Sun Also Rises*. Distance from society is exemplified linguistically through an avoidance of institutional meaning, a response to the paradox that language either means too much by involving the speaker in societal commitments or means too little in failing to express the truly significant. The assumption that language is inimical to the discussion of those few matters which are important, i.e., feelings and personal experiences, leads to numerous injunctions not to speak and to verbal behavior which consciously attempts to exclude much of the common conversational fare. In part this attitude springs from a philosophical position that the level of empirical reality, as Alfred Korzybski states, "is not words and cannot be reached by words alone. We must point our finger and be silent or we shall never reach this level."¹ The inability of language to reach what Korzybski calls the "objective level" motivates much of the verbal restraint in Hemingway's fiction, but more threatening than this impotence and irrelevance of language is its power to destroy the most valuable experiences. Roland Barthes's distinction between pleasure and bliss is germane to Hemingway's

practice: "Pleasure can be expressed in words, bliss cannot. Bliss is unspeakable, inter-dicted."² Brett's reiterated plea to Jake after she has sent Pedro Romero away is that they never talk about it, but she constantly returns to the subject until Jake finally reminds her:

"I thought you weren't going to ever talk about it."

"How can I help it?"

"You'll lose it if you talk about it."³

This is the dialectic of discourse in *The Sun Also Rises*: the felt necessity of imposing discipline on speech wars with the desire to express and communicate. Bliss, that which is most worth having and remembering, is asocial and inexpressible, but the characters' (human) need to speak produces a felt tension in the dialogue. Focusing upon the experience of others, Jake's narrative voice embodies the writer's struggle to articulate within the limits imposed by the nature of language. Avoiding large areas of experience and emotionally flattening out others, it creates a smaller, safer, controllable world out of the chaotic and dangerous universe, yet one that points beyond itself to the larger, unexpressed territory.⁴ As narrator, Jake knows what Hemingway knows—the difference between what can and cannot be said—but as character, when he is emotionally involved in events, he intermittently forgets.

The other aspects of language as the enemy is its role as "a space already occupied by the public."⁵ Hemingway characters may disregard societal imperatives to pray, work, or marry, but they cannot totally escape what Locke calls "the great Instrument and common Tye of Society."⁶ Speaking entails participating in the "reciprocal web of obligations that is the content of the system of conventional speech acts";⁷ hence the content of discourse in *The Sun Also Rises* must be purged of all but certain categories of immediate personal experience in order to escape the burden of social responsibility which it usually carries. Such a policy originates in the distrust of institutionalized meaning that informs the linguistic credo of Frederic Henry in *A Farewell to Arms*; namely, that abstractions have been corrupted by societal abuse and only place names and numbers retain semantic integrity.⁸ Language is thus drained of societal coloration or hollowed out so that a denotative meaning remains while ordinary connotations are lost. For example, Brett and Mike are *engaged*, a word implicated in the basic structure of society, yet they observe none of the protocols expected of an affianced couple. The meaning of *engaged* in their case is restricted to the stated intention to marry, unsupported by the usual

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confirmatory behavior. The same message of distrust is implicit in the nature of speech throughout the novel:

(Jake) "I got hurt in the war," I said.

(Georgette) "Oh, that dirty war."

We would probably have gone on and discussed the war and agreed that it was in reality a calamity for civilization, and perhaps would have been better avoided. I was bored enough. (17)

The war as Jake's personal calamity, a specific physical injury, recedes before an all-embracing, remote abstraction, the war as "calamity for civilization." As the ironic understatement of "perhaps would have been better avoided" emphasizes, the war cannot be talked about without falling into conventional formulas that close off the possibilities of individual expression. Such a discussion suits boredom because it requires no personal investment of thought or feeling.

Jake makes light of "large statements" and "fine philosophies" whose extrapolation from living experience engulfs the meaningful particular. He gets bogged down in just such a process when he moves from the specific sensations of pleasure and disgust at Mike's baiting of Cohn to a general formulation of value: "That was morality; things that made you disgusted afterward. No, that must be immorality. That was a large statement. What a lot of bilge I could think up at night. What rot, I could hear Brett say it" (149). Jake appropriately thinks of Brett because her refrain—"Let's not talk. Talking's all bilge"—expresses the inability of speech to describe meaningful experience and the anarchic sense of its powerlessness to order this experience. This particular denial of language comes at a pivotal point in a discussion whose full extent reveals both the dynamics of their relationship and their attitudes toward language:

"Couldn't we live together, Brett? Couldn't we just live together?"

"I don't think so. I'd just tromper you with everybody. You couldn't stand it."

"I stand it now."

"That would be different. It's my fault, Jake. It's the way I'm made."

"Couldn't we go off in the country for a while?"

"It wouldn't be any good. I'll go if you like. But I couldn't live quietly in the country. Not with my own true love."

"I know."

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"Isn't it rotten? There isn't any use my telling you I love you."
"You know I love you."
"Let's not talk. Talking's all bilge. I'm going away from you, and then Michael's coming back."
"Why are you going away?"
"Better for you. Better for me."
"When are you going?"
"Soon as I can."
"Where?"
"San Sebastian."
"Can't we go together?"
"No. That would be a hell of an idea after we'd just talked it out."
"We never agreed."
"Oh, you know as well as I do. Don't be obstinate, darling."
"Oh, sure," I said. "I know you're right. I'm just low, and when I'm low I talk like a fool." (55-56)

The dialogue is totally controlled by Brett, who first responds to Jake's urgings negatively, then, after the assertion that "talking's all bilge," announces her own plan of action which does not include him. By "talking" Brett means "talking about" or exchanging views; she is willing to use speech to communicate her plans or desires, not to discuss them. For Brett discussing or arguing is futile because her determination to do what she wants to do, regardless of what might be said about it, repudiates the societal bonds embodied in language, the recognition of responsibility to subordinate individual impulse to a larger, social concern and to rules of meaning inherent in language itself. As John R. Searle writes, "The retreat from the committed use of words ultimately must involve a retreat from language itself, for speaking a language...consists of performing speech acts according to rules, and there is no separating those speech acts from the commitments which form essential parts of them."⁹ Brett's telling Jake "there isn't any use my telling you I love you" means that this conventionally powerful assertion actually has no power to affect her behavior or their situation and thus might as well remain unsaid. When Jake tries once more to impose his fantasy of their going away together on Brett, she responds more sharply, without the palliations of the first part of the dialogue. His maintaining that no agreement has been reached prompts her to say "you know as well as I do"—know through

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an acquaintance with the brute facts, the givens of his wound and her nature, rather than through their speech together.

Brett's language conforms to the world while Jake's unsuccessfully attempts to get the world (Brett) to conform to his words. Given the gulf between desire and reality in Jake's life, it is difficult for him to achieve a disciplined language, and he does so only through the kind of conscious effort seen in his self-mocking rejection of "fine philosophies." Initially, his overtures to Brett represent attenuated forms of societal commitment, first in the idea of their living together, then in the absolute assertion of his love for her, while Brett's mode of declaring love effectively cancels it. When Brett takes the initiative by announcing her decision to leave, Jake is reduced to asking for details of her plan rather than proposing a plan of his own. Significantly, he fails to ask or learn the critical fact that Brett is going away with Robert Cohn. Although Jake's part of the dialogue reveals his yearning for some version of commitment, the conversation ends with his acknowledgment that he has been "talking like a fool," i.e., verbalizing fantasies of conventional behavior, the linguistic relics of a society that no longer embodies value or authority for the war survivors.

Linguistic authority, as the famous *Farewell to Arms* passage asserts, resides only in the simple factuality of numbers and names. Thus Jake returns to his apartment after a frustrating encounter with Brett to find two letters, both common institutional forms of communication, one a bank statement, the other a wedding announcement. In terms of content the first is relevant to Jake, who uses it to balance his checkbook; the other is irrelevant because the people involved in the announced marriage are unknown to him. The form of the second message communicates in spite of the inappropriateness of the content to this particular receiver just as, if the bank's figures were in error, the form of communication known as a bank statement would not be invalidated. But when Jake thinks about Brett, he can find no satisfactory linguistic form and therefore abandons the effort to order his thoughts about her in language: "Lady Ashley. To hell with Brett. To hell with you, Lady Ashley...I suppose she only wanted what she couldn't have. Well, people were that way. To hell with people" (80-81). Jake's speculative initiatives are always broken off with an expression of dismissal or passive resignation in the face of the human dilemma that "nobody ever knows anything" (27).

Like Captain Ahab, the Hemingway protagonist confronts the inscrutability and seeming malice of the universe, but he sees no way of conquering or making sense of it, even through the ordering process of language. As Jake says about his wound, "I was pretty well through

with the subject. At one time or another I had probably considered it from most of its various angles..." (27). Because he also sees no way of influencing the behavior of others, Jake tends to accept their assertions of will passively: "I try and play it along and just not make trouble for people" (31).¹⁰ All of these positions diminish the efficacy of speech and consequently circumscribe its territory, but it is necessary to distinguish the experience itself from the report. When Jake sums up his relationship with Brett, his words impose only a minimal degree of linguistic order because, as the emphatic closure reminds, to go beyond an austere defined factuality is to risk the betrayal of experience through falsification: "That was it. Send a girl off with one man. Introduce her to another to go off with him. Now go and bring her back. And sign the wire with love. That was it all right" (239). The framing comment places sharply defined boundaries around actions which are depersonalized and schematically presented, evidence of conscious discipline, yet as a sequence the actions bear an emotional charge that is also rigidly delimited by the frame.

Nevertheless, the severe economy and control do not diminish the experience in the interest of avoiding self-justification and subjective distortion. William Barrett, among others, implies that the price Hemingway pays for such avoidance is inconsequentiality; he characterizes the "real feelings" presented as "humble and impoverished," although he goes on to laud Hemingway's style for "its ability...to see what it is one really senses and feels."¹¹ To reverse the sequence of Barrett's remarks, what one really senses and feels is humble and impoverished, but since it is truth, Hemingway deserves acclaim for representing it. Such a reading seems to be based entirely upon a highly restricted and literal reading which ignores the creative space between narrator and text, and correspondingly between text and reader. This darkness visible is a dynamic silence, a consciously contrived artifact of restraint. The *expression* may be considered "humble and impoverished" insofar as it is strongly monosyllabic and unembellished, but the *feelings* evoked by passages of this sort are neither—nor are they "exposed," to use Barrett's word, so much as palpable.

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Simply not speaking about what matters, as Jake and Brett try to do, is one form of linguistic alienation; another extends the abstract rhetoric of social discourse beyond its customary sphere because it is too vague and clichéd to have retained more than the crudest kind of

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signification. Having no color of its own, this vapid, timeworn language is made to yield a number of different effects, “one phrase to mean everything,” as Jake says about English speech.¹² On being introduced to Brett Count Mippipopulous uses the standard rhetoric of such an occasion straightforwardly while she passively responds in kind:

“Well, does your Ladyship have a good time here in Paris?”...

“Rather,” said Brett.

“Paris is a fine town all right,” said the count. “But I guess you have pretty big doings yourself over in London.”

“Oh, yes,” said Brett. “Enormous.” (28)

This kind of perfunctory response which requires no effort, meaning, or commitment simply fills up what would otherwise be a socially awkward linguistic vacuum when two people are introduced—although the extreme lack of effort Brett exhibits could be construed as mockery. Between intimates like Jake and Brett the same sort of dialogue acquires meaning through irony transmitted and received:

“It’s a fine crowd you’re with, Brett,” I said.

“Aren’t they lovely? And you, my dear. Where did you get it?”

“At the Napolitain.”

“And have you had a lovely evening?”

“Oh, priceless,” I said. (22)

This vocabulary is also used to convey genuine feeling. When Jake and Bill prepare to leave Burguete, Jake and Harris mutually regret that their fishing together is over:

“What a rotten business. I had hoped we’d all have another go at the Irati together.”

“We have to go into Pamplona. We’re meeting people there.”

“What rotten luck for me. We’ve had a jolly time here at Burguete.” (127)

Elsewhere Jake tells us that Harris was “very pleasant” and “nice,” and Harris himself says several times that Jake can’t know how much their fishing together has meant to him: “‘Barnes. Really, Barnes, you can’t know. That’s all’” (129). After this emphatic closure, Harris expresses his feelings by giving each man an envelope containing trout flies he

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has tied himself. Affective experience can be referred to and categorized by means of the familiar basic vocabulary Hemingway has appropriated—*fine, nice, lovely, rotten*—but it cannot be described or assessed beyond the elementary distinction between positive and negative.

What happens, as opposed to what is felt, can be rendered in language but is rarely worth the trouble, given the narrowing of value to certain immediate personal experiences. Jake's work is referred to only in passing, Paris exists as a topos of streets and cafés, and the novel's typical discourse is about movement and liquor—what has been, is, or will be drunk, and where. In other areas conversational inertia obtains either because the subject isn't worth pursuing or because it falls beyond the pale of what can be spoken about at all:

Cohn looked at the bottles in bins around the wall.
 "This is a good place," he said.
 "There's a lot of liquor," I agreed. (11)

* * *

"Do you know that in about thirty-five years more we'll
 be dead?"
 "What the hell, Robert," I said. "What the hell." (11)

Jake's first reply is reductive, his second characteristically dismissive. In neither case does he want to contribute content to Cohn's thought; he speaks for the usual social reason that he must acknowledge being spoken to. Such rules of polite conversation still govern speech in *The Sun Also Rises* although the province of speech has been radically curtailed to eliminate what cannot be profitably expressed; like the vocabulary of social discourse the form of communication persists without the message of societal commitment it usually carries.¹³ In speech act terms the regulative rules are observed, but not necessarily the constitutive.

Given their lack of interest in living through words, each of the members of Jake's group except Bill has only a single verbal style; Bill has a repertory of voices and a sense of linguistic fun that the others lack.¹⁴ Rather than genuinely witty, he is facile and playful; when Jake describes him to Brett as a taxidermist, he replies: "'That was in another country...and besides all the animals were dead'" (75). The allusion is not functional; it is simply a clever rejoinder in the spirit of Jake's sportive identification. Bill mocks collective values relentlessly from his initial appearance recounting the story of the "big sporting

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evening” in which a Viennese audience throws chairs at a black boxer who dares to knock out the local boy:

Injustice everywhere. Promoter claimed nigger promised let local boy stay. Claimed nigger violated contract. Can't knock out Vienna boy in Vienna....All we could get was nigger's clothes. Somebody took his watch, too. Splendid nigger. Big mistake to have come to Vienna. (71)

The unsportsmanlike behavior at the fight with its suggestion of racial as well as national chauvinism, the promoter's attempt to fix the fight and then to avoid his obligation to pay, the theft of the watch, all characterize society as unjust while Bill's extravagant praise of the boxer—*wonderful, awful noble-looking, splendid*—establishes him as heroic. The simplified vocabulary and syntax which are hallmarks of the group's verbal style are suited to the starkly polarized terms of conflict which, in Bill's telling, are transvalued. Black becomes superior both physically and morally; white is weak (“That white boy musta ruptured himself swinging at me,” the fighter says), conniving, and treacherous. “Big mistake to have come to Vienna” stands for any societal involvement.

In a joking banter that looks forward to Nathanael West's character Shrike Bill also parodies religious commonplaces and the ritualistic form such utterances take: “Let us not doubt, brother. Let us not pry into the holy mysteries of the hencoop with simian fingers. Let us accept on faith and simply say—I want you to join with me in saying—What shall we say, brother?” (122) Bill hesitates momentarily because there is no prescribed dogma to insert in his parodic ritual. He similarly mocks consumerism with a sales pitch to buy a “nice stuffed dog” and the New York literary establishment with his litany of the latest catchwords, “irony and pity.” Historical figures and contemporary public men receive fancifully irreverent treatment: “Abraham Lincoln was a faggot. He was in love with General Grant” (116). In this respect too, uttering nonsense meant to beguile and entertain through its outrageousness, Bill is a singular character in the novel. Uninvolved with his material, as Jake cannot be, he allows his imagination verbal expression without inhibition. His ability to use language satirically provides Bill with an organizing approach to experience that shields him from the destructiveness of Brett but also keeps him from the deeper enjoyment of *afición* that Jake feels.

Mike is the least conscious member of Jake's group, his devaluing of society more a blend of the casual contempt and lack of personal

discipline of someone who has inherited wealth. Whereas Bill's criticism of society is the basis for consciously contrived and polished verbal performances, in Mike's one extended speech, a long anecdote about some medals he borrowed and gave away, disdain for such prestigious symbols as badges of valor and formal dinners attended by royalty is part of the narrative texture, not the point of the story. In contrast to Bill Mike is an uncertain narrator who continually explains or seeks reassurance that his audience understands his story and who has no real sense of its shape. Yet both their long anecdotes, like the narrative that contains them, belong to the same paradigm in which the narrator is distanced from his own participation in the events recounted by his detachment from the societal code that structures them. There is a drama within each story concerning people who operate within the code, but no meaningful involvement for Bill or Mike.

Mike's opening assertion, logically and grammatically one sentence but conveying more emphatic rejection as two, sets the tone of offhand dismissal of society's values: "I suppose I've the usual medals. But I never sent in for them" (135). When Mike's tailor wants to provide him with the medals he has rightfully earned, Mike protests that any medals will do. Justifying his ignorance about his own medals, Mike interrupts his story at this point to solicit agreement from his likeminded audience: "Did he think I spent all my time reading the bloody gazette?" (185) Once the tailor has given him some medals, he puts them in his pocket and promptly forgets them:

"Well, I went to the dinner, and it was the night they'd shot Henry Wilson, so the Prince didn't come and the King didn't come, and no one wore any medals, and all these coves were busy taking off their medals, and I had mine in my pocket."

He stopped for us to laugh.

"Is that all?"

"That's all. Perhaps I didn't tell it right."

"You didn't," said Brett. "But no matter."

We were all laughing.

"Ah, yes," said Mike. "I know now. It was a damn dull dinner, and I couldn't stick it, so I left. Later on in the evening I found the box in my pocket. What's this? I said. Medals? Bloody military medals? So I cut them all off their backing—you know, they put them on a strip—and gave them all around. Gave one to each girl. Form of souvenir. They thought I was hell's own shakes of a soldier. Give away medals in a nightclub. Dashing fellow."

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"Tell the rest," Brett said.

"Don't you think that was funny?" Mike asked. We were all laughing. "It was. I swear it was. Any rate, my tailor wrote me and wanted the medals back. Sent a man around. Kept on writing for months. Seems some chap had left them to be cleaned. Frightfully military cove. Set hell's own store by them." (185-186)

Mike's audience laughs first at his naiveté as a fabulist; what he perceives to be the climax of his story is the least dramatic of three illustrations of opposition to the societal valuing of medals. Actually, since the ironic intersection of Mike's bungled attempt to follow protocol with the unforeseeable circumstance that medals are not worn after all occurs in a context of high seriousness and formality, whose magnitude intensifies the divergence of values, Mike's intuition of its thematic weight is valid.¹⁵ The true climax is the scene in the nightclub, a sudden drop from the official world of pomp and ceremony into a milieu of hedonistic gratification and social fluidity where Mike can be himself, impulsively desecrating the medals and dispersing them among girls casually encountered, yet still passing for a socially respectable figure—the dashing soldier who generously gives away the tokens of his bravery and patriotism.

The epilogue to the story, which Brett must also elicit, reveals Mike without the misleading public personae of the earlier events. In the privacy of his relation to a tradesman he is seen to be a man whom society can neither approve nor trust, but since speaker and audience do not share the societal values symbolized by the medals, the "serious discrediting" of Mike is inverted to become a tripartite demonstration of Mike's superiority to those who accept the official valuation. At the dinner he is spared the awkwardness of the others, who must publicly remove the medals he has forgotten to put on, and in the nightclub he is taken for a "dashing fellow" when he gives them away. Finally, in the aftermath of the evening Mike's aplomb compares favorably to the importunings of the tailor and the consternation of the medals' owner, caricatured as a "frightfully military cove."

Like Mike, Robert Cohn behaves badly, but according to another standard of conduct altogether, one predicated upon the assumption that the ordinary, socially approved ways of conferring value are worth while.¹⁶ Because he has not had the defining experience of the war, which all of Jake's circle have in common, his is the only personal history Hemingway presents in detail; for the others the war has deprived the past of relevance. His protected and in a way make believe

experience—his wealth, the elitist world of Princeton, amateur boxing, literary magazines—leads him to want the conventional existence of professional success, love, and going home that the others have repudiated. In Pamplona he is briefly able to live the romantic fantasy that eluded him in Paris, “ready to do battle for his lady love,” but he is ultimately defeated by the realization that his affair with Brett had no meaning for her and has no future. This denial of the world of commitments and significances that Cohn perhaps unwillingly embodies is his true initiation into the expatriate circle, one that sends him back to a more conventional existence.

In keeping with his embodiment of traditional social values beneath a bohemian exterior, Cohn uses language with its societal freight of responsibility. Although he now finds Frances a burden, to Jake’s suggestion that he break with her, he replies: “I can’t. I’ve got certain obligations to her” (88). When Cohn takes umbrage at Jake’s description of Brett and Jake tells him to go to hell, Cohn rises from the table in anger:

“Sit down,” I said. “Don’t be a fool.”

“You’ve got to take that back.”

“Oh, cut out the prep-school stuff.”

“Take it back.”

“Sure. Anything. I never heard of Brett Ashley. How’s that?”

“No. Not that. About me going to hell.”

“Oh, don’t go to hell,” I said. “Stick around. We’re just starting lunch.” (39)

For Cohn, Jake’s “go to hell” is a personal insult, seriously meant and provocative; its constitutive rules require that offense be taken.¹⁷ For Jake, this interpretation is immature romanticism, but when Cohn persists, Jake becomes so extravagantly accommodating that his retraction is clearly as casual as the original provocation had been. Through mockery the act of capitulation is rendered harmless, more meaningless language. Cohn is placated, however, because he is operating according to the conventional rules of language use whereby the imagined offense has now been nullified by Jake’s “taking it back.” He wants no trouble with Jake, his “best friend,” but his espousal of the standard linguistic code demands that the form of retraction and apology be carried out before the conversation can be resumed.

The scene is reversed in Pamplona when Cohn truly insults Jake by calling him a pimp and Jake responds by swinging at him. For the moment Jake’s personal code and that of society converge although later

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Jake reverts to his customary passivity by distancing the insult and foregrounding an incident in his past. The two episodes are equally submerged in his desire for the physical gratification of a hot bath. Although in this instance it is Cohn who apologizes, Jake who accepts the apology, linguistically and emotionally the outcome replicates the earlier scene. In both cases Cohn is the one to insist upon conventional social rituals, the verbal apology and shaking hands, and to obtain relief and a sense of closure through their performance, no matter how devoid of genuine substance. Jake appears indifferent throughout in contrast to Cohn's obvious emotion; neither a verbal formula nor a social gesture has meaning for him. What matters, Brett's affair with Pedro Romero and his own part in it, is like other things that matter—outside the domain of words.¹⁸

If Robert Cohn represents conventional values neurotically displaced to the expatriate circle, Pedro Romero is the ideal man of a simpler world, one whose successful functioning within society does not preclude living his life "all the way up." This firm social grounding, which buttresses rather than counters his individuality, allows him to be a serious person; even when making a joke he speaks soberly, and even at a table full of drunks he politely shakes hands and takes their toast "very seriously," surely without any idea that they could make such a ritualistic gesture frivolously. Among Spaniards Romero conceals his knowledge of English because it would not be proper for a bullfighter, a figure of the national mythos, to know a foreign language so well. Where Jake must retreat from speech about himself because it brings him too close to the pain of his condition, and Cohn boasts about his prowess as a writer and a bridge player out of insecurity, Romero can discuss his work dispassionately and unselfconsciously because he does not rely on speech to establish his identity. Although he meticulously observes the proprieties of language, employing words as meaningful signifiers, he does not confuse sign and substance. He communicates personal authority silently: "He seated himself, asking Brett's permission without saying anything" (185). His mastery of the bulls, which also becomes a communication to Brett, is equally wordless.

Only Romero has dignity in the confrontation over Brett. Both Jake and Cohn consign it to meaninglessness, Cohn by imposing the social ritual of closure, a perfunctory handshake, Jake by simply shrugging it off. Romero refuses to shake hands in order to invest the fight and the social gesture with significance: to acquiesce would be to forgive or dismiss Cohn's attack as unimportant. Because he draws certitude from traditional sources as well as from his own power,

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Romero alone is capable of loving Brett without diminishing himself.¹⁹ Adhering to the prescribed masculine and feminine roles that have become blurred in the postwar expatriate circle, he wants to place her within the conventional context of womanliness and marriage.

3

For the free floating expatriate existence Paris and Burguete are topographies of self-gratification abstracted from social context.²⁰ Pamplona, on the other hand, is a harmonious whole whose pleasures are generated by the communal fiesta rather than egocentrically pursued. This setting presents society in its traditional forms: rituals of celebration and mourning, edifices like the cathedral and the bullring, collective purpose. In Pamplona, the veneer of decorum which vestigially cloaks the expatriates' irresponsibility wears thin, and they are all diminished by juxtaposition with the explicit standards of an enduring, established world, one that offers an ideal in Romero, a judge in Montoya. Romero is the catalyst who causes Brett to be most flagrantly a bitch, Mike and Cohn to behave badly, and even Jake—who is at first “forgiven his friends” by Montoya—to forfeit Montoya's approval. Early in the stay Jake had advised Montoya not to give the bullfighter a message to mingle with potentially corrupting foreigners at the Grand Hotel, essentially the same message Jake himself later delivers for Brett. Like her other admirers Jake, too, is transformed into a swine albeit one who refuses to distort or sentimentalize his situation.

In Madrid the sense of society as a world apart is reinvoked by Jake's comment to Brett: “Some people have God....Quite a lot” (245). As Brett and Jake's unsuccessful efforts to pray have demonstrated, even with the disposition to do so they cannot respond to institutional systems of valorization. Societal rituals fail to work for them; their own rituals are personal and nonverbal. Jake confirms this when he prefers Brett's self-indulgence to the institutional obligation concerning the bullfighter that he had earlier subscribed to. Although in leaving Romero Brett atypically renounces something she wants, she, too, rejects societal commitment in the traditional forms of womanliness and marriage that Romero seeks to impose upon her. In closing the Romero episode Brett and Jake reestablish their familiar world—the rituals of eating and drinking well, the reassuringly empty social discourse interspersed with the painful talking around what is significant, and finally, the taxi ride which emblematically restores them to their habitual ambience, a moving vehicle passing through

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society, subject to its language and laws (the policeman raising his baton) but removed from involvement with it.

As the novel's last exchange between Brett and Jake confirms, the narrow private space of the taxi is further emblematic of their linguistic confinement:

"Oh, Jake," Brett said, "we could have had such a damned good time together."

...

"Yes," I said. "Isn't it pretty to think so?" (247)

The suppressed protasis of Brett's assertion recapitulates the dynamic of silence in Hemingway discourse while the past tense potential incapable of fulfilment typifies the situation of the Hemingway protagonist, whose theoretically manageable hedonism is brought down by whatever real life condition the protasis contains. In *The Sun Also Rises* Barthes's idea that a narrative is a long sentence applies equally to life.²¹

The last bit of dialogue thus encapsulates the dialectic of discourse that structures the entire novel. Like all of the characters at various times, including Jake, Brett cannot stop herself from "talking rot." Jake, who elsewhere was admonished to silence by Brett, is here able to resist the temptations of verbal fantasy, yet his rhetorical question also reminds us once more of the interface between what can and what cannot be said—the need for restraint versus the desire to embody thought and feeling in words. While Jake's response ironically emphasizes the inherent foolishness of any contrary-to-fact speech, it affirms unironically the autotelic nature of language and the seductiveness of its power to create sustaining and consoling fictions.

NOTES

¹*Science and Sanity*, 4th ed. (Lakeville, Conn, 1958), p. 899.

²*The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller (New York, 1975), p. 21.

³*The Sun Also Rises* (New York, 1926), p. 245. Further references are to this edition of the text and will be given parenthetically after quoted passages.

⁴As Hemingway wrote in *Death in the Afternoon* (New York, 1932), p. 192: "If a writer of prose knows enough about what he

is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writing is written truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them."

⁵Stanley Fish, "How to Do Things with Austin and Searle: Speech Act Theory and Literary Criticism," *MLN*, 91 (1976), 989.

⁶John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford, 1975), p. 402.

⁷Fish, pp. 994-995.

⁸This is the thesis of Larzer Ziff's "The Social Basis of Hemingway's Style," *Poetics*, 7 (1978), 417-423. However, I disagree with Ziff's conclusion that this style "works effectively only in conjunction with material that supports the view that public ideals are false and truth resides solely in un verbalized private experience" (422). Once again Barthes's distinctions seem more accurate and, I believe, more applicable to Hemingway. Unlike the isms and abstractions Hemingway eschews, simple specifics enforce "the final state of matter, what cannot be transcended, withdrawn" (45). Whether public ideals are "false" or "true," the language that refers to them is by nature denied this kind of meaning.

⁹*Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge, 1969), p. 198.

¹⁰Cf. Huck Finn: "I never said nothing, never let on; kept it to myself; it's the best way; then you don't have no quarrels and don't get into no trouble." Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Boston, 1958), p. 106.

¹¹*Irrational Man* (New York, 1962), p. 45.

¹²Cf. David Lodge's discussion of wonderful as just such an all-purpose word in *The Ambassadors: The Language of Fiction* (London, 1966), pp. 210-212. Hemingway, too, finds it a useful word for a range of situations. When an American tourist asks Bill if he's having a good trip, Bill replies, "Wonderful." Jake's comment—"he's wonderful"—when Brett tells him that Cohn is looking forward to joining the group in Pamplona is typically Jamesian.

¹³Even at the minimal level of obligation the characters recognize, their arrangements to meet each other, commitments are frequently broken (notably by Brett and Mike).

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¹⁴Jake sometimes feeds Bill lines, but he tends to model them after Bill's and to participate only to the extent of stimulating Bill's inventiveness.

¹⁵Mike may subconsciously wish to end his story here in order to hold back what is truly discrediting—the mutilation and disposal of property belonging to and highly valued by someone else.

¹⁶In a world which has left such values behind, Cohn's embodiment of socially acceptable behavior and goals is represented pejoratively as infantile, in Harvey Stone's words, "a case of arrested development." Jake says that Cohn had a "funny sort of undergraduate quality about him," and he wears polo shirts, "the kind he'd worn at Princeton" (194).

¹⁷Distinguishing between personal and ritualistic insults, William Labov writes: "The appropriate responses are quite different. Ritual insults are answered by other ritual insults while a personal insult is answered by denial, excuse or mitigation." *Language in the Inner City* (Philadelphia, 1972), p. 335.

¹⁸Jake's only immediate thought when he confirms that Brett and Romero have gone off together is that "it was not pleasant."

¹⁹While both Jake and Montoya invoke the stereotype of the young man corrupted by the older woman, Hemingway makes clear in an embarrassingly overwritten passage (the only one of its kind in the novel) that this does not happen to Pedro Romero: "Everything of which he could control the locality [in the bullring] he did in front of her all that afternoon. Never once did he look up. He made it stronger that way, and did it for himself, too, as well as for her. Because he did not look up to ask if it pleased he did it all for himself inside, and it strengthened him, and yet he did it for her, too. But he did not do it for her at any loss to himself. He gained by it all through the afternoon" (216).

²⁰As such they are completely different, however. Burguete is a pastoral environment free of the excesses of Brett, Mike, and Cohn. Paris is an urban world where the expatriates are most at home.

²¹"An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative," *NLH*, 6 (1975), 241.