



Critics and Other Commentators

Directions: Though not a formal bibliography, the following list is arranged alphabetically by the writer's last name, mixing online and off, student and teacher commentaries. Extended notes accompany sources not on this website, and longer summaries are set off in blocks. Other references not yet summarized are listed without notes. To search this page of summaries for an idea from the story, follow the directions and sample below.

To search this page for a specific topic, use <Ctrl> + <f> (or click the "Edit" menu and click "Find") to pop up a dialog box in which you can type a keyword (*sample shown at right*). For instance, as of Nov. 2003, searching this page for "hills" (not "Hills" capitalized as part of the title) turned up three uses of the lower case word in summaries about what commentators said about their symbolism. Doing a find for "bead" turned up 9 uses of "bead," including *bead, beaded, beads*--all for symbolism of the beaded curtain.



Search for Synonyms: For instance, if you search for *alcohol*, you'll find the word in the summaries of both Johnston's and Sipiora's articles; but if you also search for *anis, absinthe, and beer*, you'll find both Lanier and Lansky's articles summarized.

Caution: **The yellow backgrounding** points to ideas that may help some readers prevent a "default" interpretation, as noted in Elisabeth Flynn's research, below. (1) The "female" reading of the story sees Jig as submissive, which takes her apparent giving in at face value and ignores the ending of the story. (2) The "male" reading of the story may be imposing a positive resolution on a "modernist" (post-World-War-I) story, which might not be sensible, either. (3) In addition, many of the critics below see one of the characters as determining to leave the other, which picks up on the idea of disappointment early in the story and also sees the man as insensitive (by also ignoring the ending of the story); this sort of interpretation also emphasizes Jig's growing strength. (4) Is there a way to combine all of these interpretations into one? Each focuses on one character or the other, making either Jig or the American the dominant figure (if not the protagonist). (5) Here's a new direction: Most of the views I've read so far ignore the idea that "they" (some external force) controls the lives of the characters. This theme was developed more completely by Hemingway in the novel he published two years after this story. For a few facets of ["they," see these notes on the use of the word in A Farewell to Arms.](#)

Sherlyn Abdo, in "Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants'" (*Explicator*, 49:4 [1991 Summer]: 238-40) focuses on Jig as the protagonist and the symbolism of the bamboo curtain in the doorway of the bar. Jig's name implies that she has been dancing to the frenetic tune of the American, **but now "the jig is up" because she faces an abortion.** Jig's attention to the "color of their skin" for the hills suggests a pregnant woman lying down, as she may be in several months if she doesn't have the abortion, but it could signify, too, the pale skin tones of a stillborn baby (239). Ironically, "letting the air in" to end a pregnancy is the opposite of Jesus' conception in Mary by the "pneuma" (239). Dried bamboo in the beaded curtain suggests infertility, and the wind against the curtain is an echo of "letting the air in." Taking two strands may suggest her and the American (not three strands to include the baby). Absinthe leaves a bitter aftertaste, caused by the wormwood ingredient, which hides the initial sweetness, so absinthe could be suggestive of their sexual

encounters, sweet at first ("jig-a-jig"), now marred by pregnancy and the threat of abortion (240). The passing cloud does not bode well for the fetus. Jig is in "an unstable and frenetic situation" (240); if Jig is European, she is "unacceptable as a marriage partner" (240). [Implications: Buddha's mother supposedly dreams of a white elephant. Is Hemingway somehow working off of this religious story and the opposite of Mary's conception of Jesus to heighten the modernist irony of the story, in the vein of Eliot's *The Waste Land*, to which this story has been compared?]

Christine **Altman** analyzes the conflict between Jig and her American in "Hills," in [an essay lodged at this website](#).

James **Barbour**. "Fugue State as a Literary Device in 'Cat in the Rain' and 'Hills Like White Elephants.'" *Arizona Quarterly* 44.2 (1988): 98 - 106. Barbour notes that the word fugue applies to music as the coming together of alternating parts, to psychology as a kind of free association, confusion, even gloom and doom; and in literature as a clustering of imagery "in a clamoring chorus of meanings" (99). Such meanings may be antithetical or ambiguous, paradoxical even, leaving the reader with unresolved questions. "Cat in the Rain" is an earlier Hemingway story about a disillusioned married woman who sees a cat in the rain and associates it with her femininity and even motherliness. The story prefigures "Hills" with clashing symbols of fertility and sterility.

Barbour joins the lamentation over Hemingway's female characters seeming like "mere sexual vessels" on the one hand or "bitches" on the other. He claims, however, that the fugue technique gives depth to Jig. Barbour sees the opening description as ripe with "sexual innuendo" (103) and praises Hemingway's dialogue for forcing readers to read "between the lines." Associations with the man stress his "materiality," while associations with Jig stress her imagination, especially in her elephant image. Seeing her discouragement represented by her desire for "absinthe," he sees Jig wanting "relief, release, amnesia, or perhaps even absolution" (104). Barbour notes that Jig uses the term "fine" sarcastically while her companion is seriously literal in his use of that word. But he also sees associations with the man as "jaded images, like post cards from a colony of expatriates" (105), characterizing the resulting image of the man as "shallow." The associations with Jig characterize the conflict of the story between "fertility" and "death," reaching a "crescendo" when Jig stands and looks over that "other side" of the train station, seeing represented there the life she wants to live. But this fertile life is overshadowed by that passing cloud, a symbol of death perhaps. Both the hills and the river are screened by trees, so the river could represent "continuity" or "the possibility of life going on after a decision" or "negotiation of some obstacle" (106). Citing [Carlos Baker's analysis of the mountains](#) in Hemingway's novel, *A Farewell to Arms*, as symbols associated with "life, love, and home," Barbour opts for interpreting the river as a suggestion of continued life regardless of how the couple decides their abortion issue. In this "collage" of imagery, Hemingway distinguishes between the simplistic feelings of the man about the operation and the welter of Jig's emotions, yet the man's existence can be seen as emblematic of the post-WWI expatriates.

Margaret **Bauer**, in "Forget the Legend and Read the Work" [*College Literature* 30.3 (July 2003): 124], notices that Jig is a more developed and complicated persona than the nameless American and suggests that Hemingway hints at the risks Jig faces in an abortion. Jig's imaginative ability, which probably extends to seeing the child as precious, gets readers' sympathies, whereas the man's flat literalness insults her and alienates readers. No matter what they do about the child, however, their relationship will not be the same. Maybe the man's drink apart from Jig foreshadows their breakup [but he returns to Jig at the end]. Apparently, her absinthe comment reminds him of his impending parental responsibilities or of being drunk and ignoring birth control. Why doesn't this American want a baby? Maybe he was in the war (WWI) and has been afraid to return home to his family's expectations. Maybe, if he's like the author,

his mother messed him up. Maybe neither of these is true or relevant.

Nancy Hemond **Brown** in "Aspects of the Short Story: A Comparison of Jean Rhys's 'The Sound of the River' with Ernest Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants'" (*Jean Rhys Review*, 1:1 (1986 Fall): 2-13), considers style, especially how time is handled by both authors. Brown notes several similarities between these two stories about unnamed couples who endure a pressure in their relationship. Although both characters in "Hills" use language to express their anxieties and even "gain power over the other," no constructive communication occurs to lead them to reconciliation. References to drinks, a "'safe' topic" section off the story and set up the irony of the man's final solo drink of anis, which Jig found disappointing. Analyzing the sentence structures used in just the narrative passages (not the dialog), Brown notes that mostly simple sentences are used. Analyzing the diction in the narrative passages, Brown notes the frequency and subjectivity of the word "smiling" used three times in the last 13 lines. The story doesn't seem to have a resolution in it of their problem, but the possibility of a solution is distinctly *not* excluded; if it were, the story would be much gloomier.

Paul **Cioe**, in "Teaching Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants': A Simple Operation" (*Eureka Studies in Teaching Short Fiction*, 3:1 (2002 Fall), pp. 101-05), assesses the difficulty of the story for students. Cioe calls "Hills" "the story that wouldn't go away." He pans the film version for being more obvious than the short story--mentioning the protagonist's "morning sickness," for instance. Why doesn't the word "abortion" actually appear in the written story? Because the story is about miscommunication, or the differing ways in which the two characters may or may not communicate. The last third of this article concerns a student's "zany stab" at guessing what the "operation" is.

Hildy **Coleman**, in "'Cat' and 'Hills': Two Hemingway Fairy Tales" (*The Hemingway Review*, 12:1 [1992 Fall]: 67-72) sees analogs between two Hemingway short stories and much earlier German fairy tales collected in Grimm, *Die Bruder, Kinder, and Hausmarchen*. Specifically, she claims that "Hills" resembles Grimm's story of "Clever Hans." After laying a groundwork by citing actual fables written by Hemingway and parts of other stories, e.g. from the point of view of a lion in "The Short, Happy Life of Francis Macomber," Coleman looks at the "ambiguous and illusionary" in two stories, "Cat in the Rain" (akin to "Rapunzel") and "Hills Like White Elephants." For "Hills," the "suffocating stasis . . . portray[s] not only a waste land but wasted lives." Unlike the knight, the American who is put to the test "fails miserably" because he is the product of a culture that is "vulgar," and he is selfish (69). The Grimm fairy tale "Clever Hans" is also nearly all dialogue of a selfish young man and a "patient, giving girl" named Gretel (70), in which Hans "mishandles" several gifts from her until he finally and stupidly goofs up the gift of herself by tying her in a stall; she runs away: "That was how Hans lost his bride" (Zipes-Grimm 127; qtd. in Coleman 71). Coleman links the story to the "memory and desire" present in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and to the dream of Buddha's mother that she got pregnant with "the Enlightened One" via a white elephant. Coleman points out that, though fairy tales end well, Hemingway tales don't. Nevertheless, there's a sort of "enchantment" present in the story (71). Hemingway spoke of writing in a "fifth dimension," which analyst P. D. Ouspensky characterized as recurrence in *A New Model of the Universe* (375) (noted in Coleman 71).

Scott **Consigny** writes in "Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants'" (*Explicator*, 48:1 [1989 Fall]: 54-55) that the curtain separates "the artificial, comfortable world of the bar, with which the man is familiar, from the often uncomfortable and unpredictable real world of nature, love, and birth that Jig desires" (54). The bar is something like Plato's cave and the ad for anis is "a copy of a copy of a copy." "Anis is an imitation of the forbidden absinthe," so it is a "metonym for all of the counterfeit replacements for the real things for which she has long been waiting" (55). "Reales" is a pun on trading reality for phoniness.

When Jig drops the strands of the beads and walks away from the Plato's cave of the American's lifestyle, it is a reversal (*peripeteia*); she faces the natural world. Failure of communication [about having everything]

shows Jig that she (and her child) are white elephants to the man.

Gary D. **Elliott** in "Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants'" (*Explicator*, 35:4 [1977]: 22-23) reasons that if the curtain can be seen to suggest rosary beads, then maybe Jig is Catholic, so that after handling the beads, she is certain of what she wants and that they have lost if she has the abortion.

Robert Fleming, who viewed "An Early Manuscript of Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants'" (*NMAL*, 7:1 (1983 Spring-Summer), p. Item 3), states four sources that are interwoven in the story:

1. Robert McAlmon, Hemingway's first publisher, mentioned to Hemingway on a trip they took to Rapallo in 1923 a woman he knew who had had an abortion. She described the operation with the notion that the "doctor just let the air in" and her ordeal ended in a few hours. Hemingway apparently admitted to McAlmon that this tidbit was the origin of the story.
2. Interviewed by George Plimpton in 1954, Hemingway claims to have met a woman himself in Prunier whom he knew had had an abortion; this encounter supposedly inspired him to skip lunch and write the story.
3. The "earliest" surviving manuscript of the story contains an unused start written in the first person about Hemingway's trip from Pamplona to Madrid with Hadley, his first wife. This unused opening starts on the train as it travels through the Ebro River valley and Hadley points out the white mountains; they changed trains at Caseta, Spain, ordering beer, and catching the express from Barcelona to head for Madrid.
4. One event that is apparently NOT a source of the story is the fact that Hemingway, though distraught over her pregnancy never asked Hadley to have an abortion. One of Hemingway's protagonists, Nick Adams, becomes a father rather grudgingly in an earlier story [in a note Fleming reminds readers that Adams came to accept the pregnancy later]; in real life, Gertrude Stein, [who knew Hemingway well enough to influence his writing style] claimed that he seemed bitter about the pregnancy. Hemingway supposedly said to her that he was "too young to be a father" [he was 24] and complained to Guy Hickok, another acquaintance, that there was no sure means for preventing pregnancy. The son was born in 1924, [apparently in Paris, where they were living]. The train ride to Madrid occurred in 1925.

Fleming concludes that knowing about these four different pieces helps us understand how "subtle" is the artistic process of fictionalizing.

Mary Dell **Fletcher** in "Hemingway's 'Hills like White Elephants'" (*Explicator*, 38:4 [1980]: 16-18) notes that "this side" of the train station represents their "present strained relationship" and "the other side" is a "potential future" (16-17). Her white elephant witticism is "an attempt to recapture a former time when their behavior was more spontaneous and inane remarks had private meaning" (17). But their past, though intimate, was also "superficial and tenuous." Moving the bags to "the other [fertile] side" and Jig's smile may suggest "a positive ending"(18), but maybe "this side" is a siding and "the other side" of the station is the main line to Madrid and abortion.

Elizabeth Flynn, in a book she co-edited with Patrocínio P. Schweickart, considers "Gender and Reading" (*Gender and Reading: Essays on Readers, Texts, and Contexts* Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986: 267-288), looking at James Joyce's "Araby," Virginia Wolff's "Kew Gardens," and Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants." In 1980, Flynn asked 26 males and 26 females in a first-year composition course to write responses to these three stories to see what gender differences might emerge--based exclusively on a first reading. Males tended to read the story by being more judgmental about the characters or identifying with them (presumably the man) on a first reading, while the females kept more balance between rejecting or

identifying with the characters (276). Actually, rejection, when it occurred, came about not because of the characters but due to the lack of obvious resolution in the conflict (277). **Males often saw the conflict as an argument between equals, while females (including Flynn herself) saw Jig as dominated by the American man and giving in to him (280-281).**

A site labeled [free cliff notes](#) includes in a wall-to-wall format suggestions that the name "Jig" could indicate changeability, that the two-minute train layover connotes that Jig must rush to have the operation before she shows; and that sexual symbols are in the hills, the elephant, the bull suggested by Anis del Toro.

Theodore L. **Gaillard**, Jr., in "Hemingway's Debt to Cezanne: New Perspectives" (*Twentieth Century Literature: A Scholarly & Critical Journal* 45.1 [1 April 1999]: 65) notes that one biographer reports Hemingway confessing to a friend that he learned to write about landscapes by looking at paintings by Paul Cezanne in his (Hemingway's) early days in Paris. Cezanne left some areas of canvas blank, guessing that the onlooker would mentally fill in the omissions. [In the Cezanne landscape at right, for instance, from the [Web Museum](#), sections of the painting on the far right and the near left foreground are actually unpainted, as is a section just left of center and others, yet these seem to be part of the landscape.] Hemingway reasoned that he could, for example, omit the word "abortion" from "Hills Like White Elephants" and the resulting tension would intensify the story.



Thomas Maher **Gilligan** considers "Topography in Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants'" (*NMAL: Notes on Modern American Literature*, 8:1 (1984 Spring-Summer), p. Item 2). Levels of reading for "Hills"

1. Beginners tend to read "Hills" literally—a couple discusses an operation and nothing is resolved.
2. A couple is threatened by a pregnancy, but they are so shallow and immature.
3. Jig manipulates the American.
4. The American gives in after Jig says she doesn't care about herself.
5. We learn a lot about this couple, and their decision is revealed in the setting of the story.

The Ebro Valley lies east-west with rail lines from Barcelona and Madrid parallel the valley. The angle of the sun that brightens the white hills indicates that the hilly side is north of the station. So the shadow indicates that the couple sits on the north side of the station.

The “other side,” the fertile side of this fictional setting, is south of the station. The man moves their two bags because the train is approaching, the express from Barcelona. This train would use the east-west rail line on the northern side of the station, so no train is using the southern rail line—at least not in the next five minutes. So the couple is no longer headed for Madrid and an abortion; instead, they may head for Barcelona and pregnancy by waiting for a train to approach the fertile side of the railway station. On the other hand, “if the man loses . . . , the girl does not win.”

David R. **Gilmour** (of Tacoma Community College) in "Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants'" (*Explicator*, 41:4 [1983 Summer]: 47-49) suggests that the beads in the curtain can't be rosary beads and are more akin to worry beads. Taking two strands fits in with a motif of "doubleness and separation" that runs through the story. Since the bamboo is hollow, perhaps it suggests the hollowness of the American's desire. There is no good reason to assume that Jig is Catholic (48). Neither of the Asian symbols--the white elephant and the hollow bamboo--are fertile (48). Looking at the beads, which have been changed from their fecund natural condition into a hollow barrier, Jig deduces that their happiness as a couple [two strands] is no longer possible (49). The ending "I feel fine" signals acceptance of her pregnancy and maybe rejection of her white elephant--the American.

David **Grant**, in "[Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants' and the Tradition of the American in Europe](#)" (*Studies in Short Fiction*, 35:3 [1998 Summer]: 267-76), considers Hemingway's presentation of an American in Europe with that of Henry James in *The Wings of the Dove*, focusing on "temporality." Both writers see Europe as a place where Americans can experience life without many of the constraints put upon them in America. The American tries to get around Jig's feeling of loss as she looks out over the European countryside. Grant [mistakenly and vaguely] accuses Jig of wanting to keep the life that she and her lover have been living. [Most other commentators acknowledge that Jig sees that life is gone forever because her view of her lover has changed; others acknowledge that Jig argues *against* the status quo with all the symbolism of the fertile side of the Ebro valley.] Grant suggests that James and Hemingway, in this story, portray Europe as a place where Americans could feel free and irresponsible. [That notion works for a while but not throughout the story; see Justice and also Renner, below.]

Grant looks at the verbs in the first half of the story, e.g. "have," "want," and "love," setting these against the "do" associated with the abortion, and concludes that these verbs indicate the abortion would be a watershed event in the couple's lives--and that such a realization is exactly what the man is trying to prevent, so abortion is as natural as the summer breeze. The passing of time is associated with the pregnancy [and the train], and having the abortion will stop time, in effect, at least in the American's mind--but this is a delusion, says Grant. Jig is increasingly against "his rhetoric of consensus." Jig wants action, a change in their relationship; the American appears to want inaction, a return to their existence before the pregnancy. Grant sees Jig final words as containing both "defiance and acceptance." She rejects pregnancy as an illness requiring treatment by abortion, but she echoes his word--"fine," as in "We'll be fine afterward"--to say how things are. Ultimately, Grant sees a bad omen because denial of a problem, in this world, will end in death [abortion].

Shelben **Grebstein** in *Hemingway's Craft* observes where the characters look in this story, noting that Jig's looks can section off the conflict in the story: "The girl looks at the distant hills, the bead curtain, the ground, the curtain again, the river, and the hills once more. Each of these looks corresponds with a phase of the conversation." "The man, in counterpoint, looks at the luggage that records their carefree and itinerant past (now at a standstill), at the tracks (escape), and at the people in the bar who are not arguing but 'waiting reasonably for the train.'" He also points to Jig's taking off her hat and the man's shifting the

luggage as important gestures where Jig gets honest and the man wishes to unburden himself (others point to this move as his giving in to Jig's wish to have the baby). Grebstein is quoted by a contributor, pjk, to the [Hemingway Resource Center message board on "Hills."](#)

Paul Hammersten, in [one of his many postings to the Hemingway Resource Center message boards](#), answers a question about the Bible and the "Hills" story. He mentions the vision of mountains being associated with the sacred, citing the top of Kilimanjaro as "The House of God," [though the same sort of equation exists in *A Farewell to Arms*, also written in the late '20s, the high, cold, clear places, e.g. the priest's home and the Swiss Alps]. He cites the psalmist "I will lift up mine eyes to the hills" [Psalm 121, Meyers points out] associating the action with Jig near the end of the story. [One could cite Mt. Ararat, where Noah's ark came to rest, and the mountain where Moses received the commandments to suggest that Jig's vision, associated with the hills, not only embraces life and rejects abortion, but also that her vision associates her with what is sacred.] Hammersten also notes that the "shadow of death" in the psalm [23] is echoed by the shadows into which the American tries to put Jig in the story.

Howard L. Hannum, in "'Jig Jig to Dirty Ears': White Elephants to Let" (*The Hemingway Review* 11.1 (1991): 46 -54) begins by drawing sexual connotations of Jig's name from a line in T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and from French. He credits Lionel Trilling (see below) as the first to link Hemingway's story with Eliot's long poem on the wasted culture of Europe, and points to the brown landscape of "The Fire Sermon" section as a specific analog for Hemingway's landscape at the opening of the story (46). Noting that the story is "surely one of the densest texts of its era" because short passages inspire lengthy critical analyses, Hannum suggests a background of arguments between the American and Jig as implicit but obvious as those in *The Glass Menagerie* between mother and son (47).

Calling the style "lyrical," he contrasts the American's repetition with Jig's spontaneous utterances. He admits that most critics see a static relationship, but others have suggested some dynamism, change in Jig-to the point of her having the abortion *and* leaving the American (47). The couple mentions neither "abortion" by name nor "marriage." Hannum notes that pouring water into anise turns it white, but it tastes black, like licorice. He notes that the American seems to understand metaphors in other statements by Jig but that he resists speaking metaphorically because he wants to assert the logic of having the abortion (48). Hannum reasons that their arguing takes on a new dimension this time because apparently **Jig had never before agreed to have the abortion**. By this means and the American's admission that he does care about her, the American loses control of the argument (49). So many of Jig's statements have been sarcastic that Hannum sees irony in her claim not to care about herself (50).

She has to have the abortion to supposedly regain his love, since if he forces her, he doesn't love her. Jig, standing up on the other side of the train station, is *not* a "submissive lover" (51). Though he claims the American retreats from his offensive to get Jig to have the abortion, Hannum claims she will nevertheless have that operation through "her own choice" (51). Hannum sees Jig's taking two strands of the curtain as an act of letting air into the bar, a foreshadowing of her having the operation. Since Jig is not content with the American's touristy existence, his stop to drink alone in the bar foreshadows his being alone in the near future (52). At the end, "her smile . . . simply does not fit with surrender" (53). She weighed the fertile vs. the sterile sides of the train station, and at the end she views the hills to weigh life alone or with the American. Not only does she rid herself of the baby, Hannum claims, but she can't stand the American any longer and will leave him gladly. So "the American has become a white elephant to her" (53).

In a note after the article, Hannum reveals that the name of the railroad station, Casetas, means "home" in Spanish, and that Hemingway had written a sketch in 1925 that used the name. Hannum suggests that he

dropped the name because "the metaphor was too obvious" (54).

Donald E. **Hardy**, in "Presupposition and the Coconspirator" (*Style*, 26:1 [1992 Spring]:1-11), comments on three stories by Hemingway, based on a "hermeneutic code" from Roland Barthes. "What does the woman want from the man in 'Hills Like White Elephants,'" he asks. To solve a problem, Hardy suggests, speakers in the three stories try to speak in a way that would get their hearers to agree to something that they would not agree to if it were said straight out.

"I just meant the coloring of *their skin* through *the trees*" turns out to be an important statement because there are no trees on that side of the train station. So Jig is trying to get the man to LOOK, but he insensitively mutters into his beer the first time Jig mentions the hills and ignores her again by asking what they should drink after this statement. One of the puzzles in this story is what Jig wants from her American companion. Answers are implied by Jig's statement. "Throughout the story the woman repeatedly attempts to get the man to see the emotional costs of the abortion and the man's alienation from her" (8). What Jig wants is "acceptance of her pregnancy and a closer communion with nature." His ignoring of her hints that he "will not or can not give the woman what she wants" (8). So he actually isn't a lover in any sense that will do Jig any good (9).

Donald E. **Hardy and Heather K. Hardy**. "Love, Death and War: Metaphorical Interaction in Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants.'" *Language and Literature* 15 (1990): 1-56.

Hashmi, Nilofer. "The Jilting of Jig." *Hemingway Review* 23.1 [Fall] (2003): 72-85. The wording and the symbolism of the story hint that Jig will have the abortion to please the man, but he will abandon her. Endings considered so far by critics are these:

1. Jig has the abortion and stays with her American.
2. Jig has the abortion but dumps the American (Hannum 53).
3. Jig doesn't have the abortion because the American yields to her perspective (Renner 214).

(1) Joseph DeFalco (*The Hero in Hemingway's Short Stories*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1963) and Timothy O'Brien both suggest that the story shows Jig giving in to the American as a sad depiction of sexual politics. Her getting the abortion is certainly plausible, but is the man's staying with her after their relationship has soured? (2) Of course, the smiling Jig at the end of the story doesn't fit with the first two endings. (3) Moving the bags is unlikely to be anything but getting ready to board the train to Madrid and an abortion. Hannum mentions that Jig and the American have probably been discussing their problem for some time, so the American must have known her feelings and hardly would be in a position or mindset, egotist that he is, to either realize Jig's intense desire for settling down or accept it.

The idea that Jig has the abortion but the man leaves her has support in the story. Lanier (281) notes the coherence of the story. The richness of the symbolic landscape is not unique in Hemingway's stories (Smith, Paul. *A Reader's Guide to the Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*. Boston: G.K. Hall, 1989) and all of the connotations of the title enhance the story. But they also suggest that this relationship ends in abortion and abandonment because this ending would have the most intense dramatic irony. The hills, after all, are distant, a dream that shows us how much Jig wants a child and therefore how much she gives up when she gives in. The American's curtness and manipulation of Jig during the story do not seem to be the actions of someone in love, someone who wants to continue this relationship. So the American's literal rejection of her simile at the beginning of the story foreshadows his ultimate rejection of Jig. Instead of a good time, Jig is now a guilt trip, changed from siren to shrew even by her trying to have a fine time. Most critics of the story have seen that this couple's relationship is forever changed; few hold

any hope for them. Stampfl (36), for instance, notices that they aren't having the fun they used to, and Hemingway has made it plain that Jig isn't satisfied with sightseeing and booze.

Her sarcasm suggests that Jig has become disillusioned with their relationship, even though she probably knew what she was getting into. She probably still needs the American, who must be the bill payer on their travels [as well as the one who knows the language and the terrain].

If he's leaving her, why does he urge her to get an abortion? Maybe he does care something about her; maybe he doesn't want to abandon her alone and pregnant in Catholic Spain; if she has the abortion, they can part as they started--and he is free of continued financial commitment. Lionel Trilling (730) and other readers have suggested that an abortion frees him from any obligation to marry Jig.

Jig's insistence that he stop talking probably occurs because she realizes the futility of trying to dissuade him from the course of action upon which they have already embarked by coming to the train station. Jig's taking of the two strands of beads on the curtain, then, is done with her back to the hills, showing that she accepts the two of them and her role as sexual playmate. The result of the American not seeing the train coming yet is time for him to go have a drink by himself, foreshadowing the end of their relationship because he is thereby rejecting Jig's invitation to come back and finish their beers.

Jig's ending smiles, then, indicate her acceptance of her former role and her strained recovery from her sarcasm and emotionality. If she's fine now, she knows that she wasn't earlier. The last smile, in particular, may seem a bit forced, perhaps with Jig barely in control of her emotions because her dream (even if momentary) is about to be killed. The distant hills have become tombstones.

Diane Andrews **Hennigfeld** (163-166) sees opposition between life and death, comic vs. tragic, in the story, even stipulating at one point that Jig's comment about having everything is chorus-like in the ancient Greek sense of an observer's analysis. The "comic" side "celebrates marriage, sexual union, birth, and the perpetuation of society," whereas the tragic "has its roots in death and sterility," in the wasteland, "made possible by human-made technology." [I haven't found anybody else who sees the train in the story as not only the onrush of inevitability, symbolically, but also as the force of technology, perhaps misapplied in the threat of an unwanted abortion.] In Gale's *Short Stories for Students* and study guide made from that book (1999).

John **Hollander**, in Harold Bloom's *Ernest Hemingway* (New York: Chelsea House, 1985. 233 pp.), wrote "Hemingway's Extraordinary Reality" (211-216), concerning "parataxis," the juxtaposition of clauses, propositions, ideas without signaled connections (such as by means of conjunctions). Jig's kind of "looking" at the hills is visionary, a manifestation of her possible future in the ninth month, unlike their "looking at things" (213). The cloud is reminiscent of the cloud in Robert Frost's "Death of the Hired Man," which prefigures death (215). The interplay of dialog and scenery views is akin to the 1960's Antonioni films "as a move in the dialog itself" and interpretation of the dialog (216).

S. P. **Jain** "'Hills Like White Elephants': A Study" (*Indian Journal of American Studies*, 1:3 (1970), pp. 33-38). Although the discussion between Jig and the American forms an aesthetically pleasing whole, it is futile because the decision has already been made to go to Madrid for the abortion. Jig is figuring out that she can keep the baby or the American but not both, so she is "accommodating" while at the same time expressing "strong reservations" (33). But Jig isn't weak, as her sarcasm makes clear; instead, she is seeking "diversion and digression" and avoiding a direct argument with the American because of her "disconsolate resignation" (34-35). Structurally, the story begins and ends with attempts to stay calm and have a "fine time," but the

middle is an “emotional mess” (37). Finally, the man’s six statements of not wanting Jig to do anything she doesn’t wish to do form a “graph of mounting tension” as the story progresses (38).

Kenneth G. **Johnston's** 1982 article on Hemingway's prose style is reprinted (166-169). Having looked at a manuscript of the story with Hemingway's penciled additions, Johnston notes that Hemingway inserted several of the observations about where Jig looks that are now in the story--table legs, two strands of beads, and that shadow that crosses the fertile side as she views it. He also notes both meanings of a "white elephant"--the unwanted and the precious--as well as likening the beaded curtain to a rosary of sorts. Further, Johnston notes that absinthe is high-proof alcohol, regarded by some as an aphrodisiac, by others as a cause of sterility. In Gale's *Short Stories for Students* and study guide made from that book (1999). Hannum (above) sees Johnston claiming that the cloud foreshadows the death of the fetus (50).

Hillary Justice wrote "'Well, Well, Well': Cross-Gendered Autobiography and the Manuscript of 'Hills Like White Elephants'" for the *Hemingway Review* (18:1 [1998 Fall]:17-32). Her biographical approach links the story to Hemingway and Pauline Pfeiffer, a Catholic, with whom Hemingway was on his honeymoon when he finished writing "Hills Like Elephants." The title refers to a dedication at the end of the draft story, which read simply "Mss for Pauline- Well, well well' (File 473,12)." Justice examines the ambiguities of the story to see why the ending can be read as indicating that Jig will have the abortion or that she won't--the two meanings of "white elephant" as "honor and ruin," two sides of the Ebro valley--"both barren and fertile." Justice's surprising claim is that the American joins Jig on her side of the train station after she walks away from the table; her evidence is that they both returned to the table and "sat down." Such movement indicates the man's coming to her way of thinking [though the dialog they speak has them disagreeing about "everything"]. Justice also points out that Jig's perceptions are spatial--she sees the scenery--while the American's are temporal, due to the impending train arrival. She also notes that in the manuscript for the story, Hemingway at one point has the man admit that "the three of us could along," but that overly obvious statement was crossed out. Justice looks closely at the manuscript, inferring that several changes made between the first and second sitting while composing the story actually support Stanley Renner's view that the American comes around to Jig's side. Hemingway, separated somewhat involuntarily from Pauline, compares the separation in a letter to an abortion. In her footnote, Justice notes that the name "Jig" connotes "a bright lure," a meaning Hemingway later used in another story.

Hillary **Justice** also wrote "Degrees of Distance: The Authentic and the Personal in Hemingway's Honeymoon Fiction" (*North Dakota Quarterly*, 66:2 (1999), pp. 77-84), continuing her biographical approach. Her essay includes comments on two short stories by Hemingway--"Ten Indians" and "Hills Like White Elephants"--and the novel, *The Garden of Eden*.

Hemingway apparently wrote “Hills” in two days while on his honeymoon with 2nd wife Pauline in le-Graudu-Roi, France, in May, 1927 (78), a location and situation that he wrote about at least four times in his career, viewing stories of “romantic and paternal commitment” vs. “betrayal.” Maybe Hemingway resembles Jig, who is seeking a romantic commitment, and Pauline resembles the man who moves the bags to the “other side” of the train station, implying a commitment to Jig [by abandoning the trip to Madrid and abortion] (80). By the way, Hemingway married Pauline in a Catholic wedding ceremony (81).

[Dr. F. Kelleter's notes on the language games in "Hills"](#) [.doc file] with other examples from Hemingway's novel, *A Farewell to Arms*, are cryptic yet suggest another interesting way into the mind games that Jig and the American are playing.

Lionel **Kelly**, in "Hemingway and Fitzgerald: Two Short Stories" (Pages 98-109 of Clare Hanson (ed.) *Re-Reading the Short Story*. New York: St. Martin's, 1989. viii, 137 pp.) looks at the differing ways in which Hemingway and Fitzgerald treat what their characters know and with ambivalence.

J. F. **Kobler** of North Texas State University in "Hemingway's 'Hills like White Elephants'" (*Explicator*, 38:4 [1980]: 6-7), counts 8 mentions of the curtain in this story of fewer than 1500 words (6). The man talks and walks through the curtain (6); Jig sees the lettering stenciled on its surface and even touches it after noticing it blow against the table. So the curtain is nothing to him, like the abortion, but deeper emotions are suggested by her more active involvement with the beaded curtain.

The curtain [from his perspective] separates the reasonable from the "unreasonable." So the abortion shouldn't be "a solid separating device," but Jig is separated from him "by strands no bigger around than an umbilical cord" (7). "I feel fine" shows Jig's determination to have the baby.

Stanley **Kozikowski** writes in the *Explicator* (52.2 [Winter 1994]:107-110) on "Hemingway's 'Hills Like Elephants'" to analyze the structure of the story based on references to the beaded curtain. In short, everything Jig finds engaging the man finds useless. Acknowledging Sherlyn Abdoo's idea on the symbolism of the beaded curtain, the writer further distinguishes between Jig's and the man's ideas on the hills, the wind from those hills, associating the latter in the man's mind with "just let[ting] the air in." The curtain, with its stencil for "Anis del Toro," Jig associates with the bull, seeding, and consequent birthing. S.K. sees the ending as an expulsion of the man from their relationship rather than the baby.

W. Keith **Kraus**. "Ernest Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants': A Note on a 'Reasonable' Source." *English Record*, 21:2 (1970), pp. 23-26. Kraus cites a third possible origin for the story. (1) Hemingway mentioned in an interview by George Plimpton that he saw a woman he knew had an abortion and skipped lunch to write the story. (2) Hemingway's acquaintance, Robert McAlmon claimed in 1938 that he had reported to Hemingway that a woman who had an abortion said, "Oh, it was nothing. The doctor just let the air in and a few hours later it was over." (*Being Geniuses Together* [London: n.p., 1938]: 159) (3) Because of "similarities in content, character motivation, tone, and word use," as well as the theme of disenchanting lovers, "Hills" seems parallel to a scene from Hemingway's first novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, in which character Frances Clyne publicly upbraids her lover, Robert Cohn, who has repeatedly refused to marry her. She is shown as emotional, "unreasonable," while Cohn, though shocked, is presented, Kraus claims, as "reasonable." The notion that marriage ends romance and the opposition of lifestyles--traveling vs. settling down--seems present in both "Hills" and chapter 6 in *Sun*.

Robert **Lamb**, in "Hemingway and the Creation of 20th-Century Dialogue" [*Twentieth Century Literature* 42.4 (Winter 1996): 453ff], analyzes the opening exchange of dialogue between Jig and the American as his getting her to want beer just by noting how hot it is--a manipulation that lets her apparently make a decision that he actually made, characteristic of their relationship. She tries mocking his words, giving in, direct disagreement, and finally silence.

Doris **Lanier**. "The Bittersweet Taste of Absinthe: Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants.'" *Studies in Short Fiction* 26.3 (1989): 279-88. Excerpted in Harold Bloom, ed. *Ernest Hemingway: Comprehensive Research and Study Guide* in the Major Short Story Writers series for Chelsea House, 1999: 43-45. Like absinthe, the traveling affair of Jig and her American is destructively addictive, claims Lanier, seeing both the end of the child and the end of Jig relationship with the American. The green of absinthe, however, is akin to the lush greenery on the fertile side of the train station. Maybe its hallucinatory quality resonates with Jig's "distorted view of the hills, reflecting her emotional and mental state." Though Jig hopes the man will come around, Lanier sees him as "coldly indifferent" to Jig's emotions and wishes; as the absinthe, the labels on the suitcases, and the baby indicate, their relationship has been sexual.

Ellen **Lansky**. "Two Unfinished Beers: A Note on Drinking in Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants.'" *Dionysus* 5.2 (1993): 28-30. This story was published during Prohibition--but here are these two characters drinking--a lot! Drinking causes both heartache (literally) but also shortness of breath, so that both characters must be uncomfortable in the heat, become less articulate, and finally breathless--silent (28). Lansky sees the table at the end as akin to an operating table and quotes a phrase from "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" about the "patient etherized on a table," even seeing the American's "Do you feel better?" as a "post-op" question (30).

Richard **Lid**, in an excerpt from "Hemingway and the Need for Speech" (*Modern Fiction Studies* 8.4 (Winter 1962-1963): 401-407, reprinted in Harold Bloom's *Ernest Hemingway* study guide for Chelsea House in his series on major short fiction writers (1999: 36-37), suggests that even though it is painful, the characters in "Hills" need to speak to try to relieve their pain. Their love affair while traveling together has become a sham because of the problem they are trying unsuccessfully to gloss over by having a "fine time." Language for these two "is both a shield and a weapon," yet "neither is enjoying the struggle." The absinthe is as forbidden as their probably unmarried pregnancy; both can cause a sort of blindness.

Roberta **Lorenzetti and Marina Mizzau**, in "'If You Don't Want to You Don't Have To': Inferential Processes in the Comprehension of Literary Texts" (*Versus: Quaderni di Studi Semiotici*, 85-87 (2000 Jan-Dec), pp. 403-18), analyze Hemingway's narrative technique, using a "narratological approach."

Kenneth **Lynn**. *Hemingway* NY: Fawcett-Columbine, 1987.

Reid **Maynard's** 1971 essay (170-172) also addresses symbolism, seeing the repeated references to *two* as an ironic expression of unity. Maynard suggests, as others have, that revealing his selfishness actually destroys whatever love Jig has for her American (171). The crucial instance for establishing *two* as a symbol of separation is Jig's grasping of the two bead strands on the curtain, perhaps she is realizing that they will never be the same as they were when they were just the two of them (171). In Gale's *Short Stories for Students* and study guide made from that book (1999).

Jeffrey **Meyers**, in his 1985 *Hemingway: A Biography* [Harper & Row], claims that this story is "Hemingway's most subtle story" (196). One of Hemingway's Paris friends, Robert McAlmon, suggests the story came from a discussion of birth control and laws against abortion. On the other hand, the story was drafted in the first person, so it could reflect some aspect of [Hemingway's reaction to his first wife's pregnancy](#) (196-197). Meyers sees a welter of oppositions in the story: her imagination, his refusal; Barcelona or Madrid as their destination, sun vs. shade, "natural v. unnatural, instinctive v. rational, reflective v. talkative, vital v. morbid," bullying vs. her fear of hurting the baby and herself; his lies, her sarcasm; his bargaining for love, her changed view of her self-centered lover; her comfort in nature [vs. his in the luggage that signifies their tourism] (197).

Enrique **Lafuente [Millan?]**, in "The Use of Pragmatic Politeness Theory in the Interpretation of Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants.'" (*Miscelánea: A Journal of English and American Studies*, 21 (2000), pp. 137-47), analyzes the speech pragmatics of the conversation, using the politeness theory of Brown and Levinson, to infer motives for statements by Jig and the American. [Abstract at http://fyl.unizar.es/miscelanea/ARTICULOS_21/ABSTRACTS_21.HTML#anchor515496 does not include the name "Millan."]

Linda Patterson **Miller**, in "'Nourished at the Same Source': Ernest Hemingway and Gerald Murphy" (*Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*, 21:1 [1988 Winter]: 79-91), considers the aesthetics of Hemingway's prose style and compares him with Murphy as Modernists.

Timothy D. **O'Brien** in "Allusion, Word-Play, and the Central Conflict in Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants'" (*The Hemingway Review*, 12:1 [1992 Fall]: 19-25) looks at language features in the story. O'Brien finds that, though the American speaks of what's "natural," he actually represents what is artificial, while Jig aligns with nature.

Dennis **Organ**, in "Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants'" (*Explicator*, 37:4 [1979 Summer]: 11), suggests that the beads are like those that babies often play with, so Jig's touching the strands signals her desire to have the baby. But the anis ad on the curtain signals the man's desire for the status quo, "trying new drinks." So the curtain shows their "emotional separation." Jig sees figuratively; the man sees literally a curtain that indicates a doorway and has an ad.

Laurie **Passey**, of Idaho Falls, Idaho, focuses on the medicinal purpose of anise and their symbolic applications in "Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants'" (*Explicator*, 46:4 [1988 Summer]: 32-33). Anise is used to treat colic. Maybe Jig is seeking relief from the fear of hollowness after abortion (32). He wants to eliminate the baby; she wants to expel shallowness and be comforted by maternal intimacy (33).

Stephen R. **Portch** compares "Hills" with Hemingway's "The Killers" in "The Hemingway Touch" (*Hemingway Review*, 2:1 (1982 Fall), pp. 43-47).

Susanna **Pavlovska**, in the second part of her [essay for language teachers](#), points out several interesting aspects of the story, including these:

- The references to the beaded curtain signal a turn in the conversation. (John Hollander had claimed the descriptive passages do this.)
- Hemingway's vocabulary is kept so simple in this story that the less common words call attention to themselves, notably "absinthe," which contains *thujone*, both a narcotic and an aphrodesiac.
- Using Pamela Smiley's concept of gendered speech in the story, Pavlovska examines the "beats" that segment the story for rhetorical purposes of the characters, especially Jig.
- She notes that unwed motherhood was the situation of only 2.7% of American mothers in 1927, despite scarcity of contraception.
- She suggests that avoiding the word *abortion* in the text of the story could have been a legal issue, since the Comstock Act of 1873 was in full force well into the 1930s.

Stanley **Renner** in "Moving to the Girl's Side of 'Hills Like White Elephants'" [*The Hemingway Review*. 15.1 (1995) : 27-41], traces Jig's characterization in the context of the setting of the story, deducing that she decides not to have the operation and that her American goes along with her decision. He uses her characterization to see structure in the story:

Viewed analytically, the drama may be seen to take place in four movements. In the first movement we are shown the stereotypical passive female, not even knowing her own mind, accustomed to following a masterful male for her direction in life. In movement two she comes to a dramatic realization of her own mind-her own welfare, dreams, and values. In movement three she asserts herself for the first time. And in the final movement we see the result of her development toward self-realization: the reluctant and still somewhat resentful

capitulation of her male companion.

Along the way, Renner separates Hemingway's sympathetic attitude from the American's callousness. Renner dings some readers for stopping when she apparently gives in, since 40% of the story remains (and 3/4 of the structure that Renner sees). He also sees Jig's smiling "brightly" at the end, in addition to the scenic clues, that she is not consenting to an abortion. He also sees a sexual connotation to Jig's name and notes that only the American, not the narrator, calls her by name.

Eusebio L. **Rodriguez** "'Hills Like White Elephants': An Analysis." (*The Literary Criterion*, 5:3 (1962), pp. 105-109)

[Prof. J. Ryan](#) suggests in a brief note about the story that the choice facing Jig and her American is complicated by Hemingway's being part of the disillusioned "Lost Generation" of WWI survivors.

Student Rebecca **Search** analyzes some of the symbolism in the story in ["Heat and Light in Zaragoza, Spain: Choosing the Nurturing Life"](#), a story housed at this website.

Seduction is the HBO (1990) that casts James Woods and Melanie Griffith as the characters in Hemingway's "Hills Like White Elephants." Joan Didion and John Gregory Dunne wrote the screenplay. The video also includes a story by Mary McCarthy and one by Dorothy Parker. When John Elson reviewed this and other films for *Time Magazine* in "Six Tales Twice Told: A Hemingway Gem Among a Treasury of Short Stories" (20 August 1990:64), he praised the dialog as "Earnest" and the sexual tension between Woods' edginess and Griffith's vulnerability.

Phillip **Sipiora**, of the University of Texas at Austin, in "Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants'" (*Explicator*, 42:3 [1984 Spring]: 50), considers the story's narrative ending. By the end of the story, Jig and the American are "legally drunk," having imbibed between them between 9 and 11 drinks--6 beers, 3 shots of Anis. So both have a blood alcohol level around .13%, assuming an average build for each. Therefore, "I feel fine" is not necessarily associated with abortion, but the statement could simply be an observation about a drunken buzz, a statement of tranquility, not resignation or resolution.

[Student Szonja Sipos](#) speaks for those who are pessimistic about the couple's chances: "*Their relationship is as empty as the landscape where their dialogue takes place.*" She claims that what Jig *doesn't* say (not talking about the baby) speaks clearly about the American's "disgusting" insensitivity.

Pamela **Smiley** wrote "Gender-Lined Miscommunication in 'Hills Like White Elephants,'" (pp. 81-94. Wagner-Martin, Linda (ed. and introd.). *Ernest Hemingway: Seven Decades of Criticism*. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State UP, 1998. 427 pp. Reprint of 1988-1-10176), examining the ways in which the couple obscured their intentions to each other and failed to understand because of the male way he talked and the female communication strategies Jig used. [Her article was also reprinted in *New Critical Approaches to the Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway* (edited by Jackson J. Benson for Duke University Press in 1990) and excerpted by Harold Bloom in *Ernest Hemingway: Comprehensive Research and Study Guide* in his Major Short Story Writers series for Chelsea House in 1999, pages 46-47, which excerpt is summarized below.]

[Several commentators have counted the times the man tells Jig that she doesn't need to have the abortion if she's reluctant.] Smiley notes the false promises of the American as "bad faith," as well as a betrayal of trust to Jig. They are in a "double bind, . . . a conversation with two objectives." The American wishes to at least keep up the appearance of their joining in a decision, as if both have an equal say, but he also wants Jig to get the abortion. Any concern he shows is undermined by the apparent contradiction between

these two purposes.

On her side, Jig's double bind (dual purpose) is simply that she wants both her lover and her child. Her giving in to something that she knows is bad for her, she seems "capricious and manipulative," but her conversation is also "logical and inevitable." Of course, the man backs off from her giving in because he can't have the sole responsibility for the decision; of course, her body is her own, but the baby and their relationship are theirs jointly. Their most important "miscommunication" occurs perhaps when Jig opens up by defining the symbolism of her side of the train station, the fertile valley, turning away from his "stagnation, sterility, and death" as well as his "lack of growth [and] eternal adolescence." Since he is "shellshocked" from her giving in but not giving in, he doesn't hear her meaning.

Barry **Stampfl**. "Similes as Thematic Clue in Three Hemingway Short Stories." *The Hemingway Review* 10.2 (1991): 30-38.

Student Amber **Stephens** (J. Sargeant Reynolds CC) researched [The Emotional Impact that Hemingway's Divorce and Separation Had on "Hills like White Elephants"](#) housed at this website.

Renowned critic Lionel **Trilling** associates the man with *reason* because of his thought in the bar near the end of the story that suggests, from his perspective, Jig is being unreasonable. He therefore associates Jig with *imagination* (or maybe anti-reason) because she speaks similes, like the title, since she can't exactly state a *reason* for wanting to have the baby. Trilling points out that Jig defines the symbolism of the scenery on both sides of the train station, seeing both the sterility of the first side and the fertility of "the other side." Trilling also sees common ground between "Hills" and a section of T. S. Eliot's *The Wasteland* entitled "A Game of Chess." He sees in both

- the theme of sterility
- the representation of boredom and vacuity and desperateness of life
- the sense of lost happiness not to be regained
- the awareness of the failure of love
- the parched, sun-dried, stony land used a symbol of emotional desiccation
- the water used as a symbol of refreshment and salvation

Both works are "modernist," representing "the human condition in the modern Western world" as a wasted experience.

[Lionel Trilling, *The Experience of Literature: A Reader with Commentaries* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1967): 731-732. Rpt. in Harold Bloom, ed. *Ernest Hemingway: Comprehensive Research and Study Guide* in the Major Short Story Writers series for Chelsea House, 1999: 38-40.]

Joseph R. **Urigo** of Vanderbilt considers the power relationships within the couple in "Hemingway's 'Hills Like White Elephants'" *Explicator*, 46:3 [1988 Spring]: 35-37). The man has authority about "language, money, science, and reason" (36), all cultural bases. Jig's authority is "physical" in that she is imaginative, fecund, and resistant to the man's cultural weapons. Ironically, his fertility has resulted in her pregnancy and

his fatherhood. At the end of the story, five minutes reminds readers that "time is on her side" in this conflict. "Natural" and "simple" ring hollow as applications of his medical knowledge, and his logic breaks down when she "challenges him" (36).

The American reacts defensively when Jig is imaginative, as in the first exchange about the white elephant, and then the man becomes a boy. His power is in the shade; hers is "in the hills." "Her body has subverted the man's cultural authority," since "language, money, science, and reason are powerless now" (37).

Lewis **Week's** 1980 essay on symbolism is reprinted (169-170). One interesting point is color: the sorrowful blackness of licorice vs. the white joy of the pregnant hills, plus the "living green color of absinthe" made from wormwood (169), which can be associated with the lush side of the train station vs. the brown of the barren countryside on the first side of the station that we see. He also clarifies the equation between the white elephant and Buddha, and the opposite association with unwanted objects (170). In Gale's *Short Stories for Students* and study guide made from that book (1999).

David Wyche, in "Letting the Air into a Relationship: Metaphorical Abortion in 'Hill[s] [Like] White Elephants'." [*Hemingway Review*, 22:1 (2002 Fall), pp. 56-71.], cites many of the critics above and how they stand on whether Jig has the abortion and whether real life experiences grounded Hemingway's portrayal of the couple in the story. He cites Hillary Justice as claiming that abortion was metaphorically a threat to his relationship with his first wife, Hadley Richardson, because he was already having an affair with his soon-to-be second wife, Pauline Pfeiffer. Wyche's thesis seems to be that both the quantity of metaphors in the story and Hemingway's life support the notion of the abortion in "Hills" as signifying trouble in the author's marriage. Timothy O'Brien and Kenneth Johnston see abortion in Jig's future, but Thomas Maher Gilligan sees Barcelona and togetherness with the baby in the couple's future, while Hillary Justice sees the ambiguous clues in the story to support either future.

Critics are also split, as are other readers, on whether the couple will stay together. Kenneth Johnston, Stanley Renner, Howard Hannum doubt it, seeing the American himself as a "white elephant" to Jig (not precious but burdensome). Hillary Justice and Gilligan concur. Wyche claims the end of the couple's relationship is "a metaphorical abortion." Wyche inventories the metaphors that other critics have seen in the story: the rails to different destinations (Renner), the two sides of the scenery around the station (O'Brien), the characters' movements representing decisions (Renner), sexual connotation of Jig's name (Hannum) and mechanical connotations (O'Brien), and the felt pads as foreshadowing of the gauze in the operating room (Wyche). Wyche stresses the beaded curtain as separating the couple from the "reasonable" occupants of the train station, especially Jig's isolation from the language of Spain, suggesting also the alienness of motherhood to her. The questions that she does ask also suggest the questions that she must have about motherhood, but she's afraid to ask her companion those questions. Like Hannum and Renner, Wyche sees Jig growing, e.g. in her awareness that her lover is self-centered. Certainly, claims Hannum, the couple has been discussing their problem before this. Perhaps, Wyche indicates, that's one reason why it takes three drinks to fortify the American's resolve to broach the subject again.

Analyzing the conversational tactics of the couple, Wyche sees Jig's giving in as calculated to get exactly the response she does get--the man letting her off, if she doesn't actually buy into the abortion decision. Justice claims that Jig holds the two strands of beads until she gets up to walk to the other side of the station. Wyche likens the American's attitude to the "adolescent idealism of Marlowe's Passionate Shepherd." Justice claims that the American joins her on Jig's side of the station because they both sat down together after returning to the table. Justice also suggests, having looked at Hemingway's manuscript for this story, that the American gives in because Hemingway gives him the statement "The three of us could get along" but decides against spelling out his surrender. Jig's ending smile, then, Justice argues is appreciation for his giving in, but Hannum suggests that smile means she will have the abortion

but leave the American. Renner sees some triumphant smugness in her smile. This resolution to leave is Wyche's metaphorical abortion.

Wyche notes four biographical sources for the story: "The first is Robert McAlmon's claim to have inspired the story and to have provided the euphemism of letting the air in. The second is a comment related by Gertrude Stein (noted below), and Guy Hickock's report (by way of Lincoln Steffens) that Hemingway recognized that no form of birth control was completely effective (207). The third is the 1925 sketch that "shares the story's setting and the simile that become the story's title," but whose "events and moods could not differ more" (204). The fourth is a story Hemingway told to George Plimpton, about meeting a girl who had had an abortion and going home to write the story." Kenneth Lynn suggested that Hemingway saw the birth of his first son to Hadley as the end of their relationship, but Wyche claims this is too literal a reading of the story. In addition, Hemingway himself seems to have used the metaphor that compared separation of lovers to an abortion: "To his future wife he wrote, 'when two people love each other terribly much and need each other in every way and then go away from each other it works almost as bad as an abortion' (Lynn 363)." Hemingway wrote these words to Pauline Pfeiffer a year and a half before writing "Hills."

Wyche cites several broken friendships and the end of Hemingway's first marriage and estrangement from his son as analogs for the abortion in "Hills," along with a warning from Robert Fleming against trying to find one, single, real-life event as the inspiration for any story. Hemingway wrote the story while honeymooning with Pauline in May, 1927, published it in the European magazine *transition* (American magazines wouldn't touch a story about abortion) and later in a collection of stories called *Men Without Women* (1928).



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