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A Stylistic Comparison of Two Short Stories by Ernest Hemingway:

**“A Clean, Well-Lighted Place” and
”Hills Like White Elephants”**

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Abstract

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The purpose with this essay is to investigate how Ernest Hemingway uses his style of writing in his short stories “A Clean, Well-Lighted Place” and “Hills Like White Elephants”. The questions at issue are: What is characteristic of Hemingway's style when looking at the use of adjectives and sentence complexity? How is the Iceberg Technique used? What stylistic differences and similarities are there between the stories?

In my investigation I used a stylistic approach, in which adjectives are counted and sentence length is measured (creating mainly a quantitative analysis). The frequency of adjectives is calculated and compared against the norm in imaginative prose. Sentence length is compared against the norm for modern English. Previous research has provided a foundation for further analysis of the Iceberg Technique.

The analysis shows that the frequency of adjectives is very low compared with the norm and that many adjectives are used repeatedly. The sentences are very short, not even reaching half the length of the norm presented. Hemingway's Iceberg Technique shows in the scarce use of dialogue tags and a plot that does not reveal much about the characters or the setting. The real plot is often hidden, leaving it to the reader to interpret and “feel” what the story is really about.

In conclusion: it may be said that both short stories are told in a minimalistic style, using only what is necessary to tell the story. They have a simple plot and simple characters, just like the Hemingway style we know.

Sökord: Adjectives, Hemingway, Iceberg Technique, Omission, Sentence complexity, Sentence length

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I might say what amateurs call a style is usually only the unavoidable awkwardnesses in first trying to make something that has not heretofore been made. At first people can see only the awkwardnesses. Then they are not so perceptible. When they show so very awkwardly people think these awkwardnesses are the style

(Plimpton, "The Paris Review Interviews," 19-20)

Contents

Contents.....	4
1 Introduction	6
1.1 Hemingway: His Life and Style	6
1.2 Hemingway: Some of His Works and Writings.....	7
1.2.1 “A Clean, Well-Lighted Place” (1933).....	7
1.2.2 “Hills Like White Elephants” (1927).....	8
1.3 Organisation	8
2 Aim	9
3 Method.....	9
4 Background – Hemingway's Technique	10
4.1 Stylistics	11
4.2 The Iceberg Technique: Omission.....	12
4.3 Distrusting Adjectives	12
4.4 Sentence Complexity.....	13
4.5 The 1933 Edition of “A Clean, Well-Lighted Place”.....	13
5 Analysis.....	14
5.1 “A Clean, Well-Lighted Place”	14
5.1.1 The Iceberg Technique: Omission.....	14
5.1.2 Sentence complexity	15
5.1.3 Adjectives	17
5.2 “Hills Like White Elephants”	18
5.2.1 The Iceberg Technique: Omission.....	18
5.2.2 Sentence Complexity.....	19
5.2.3 Adjectives	21

5.3	Differences and Similarities	22
5.3.1	The Iceberg Technique: Omission.....	22
5.3.2	Sentence Complexity.....	22
5.3.3	Adjectives	23
6	Conclusion.....	24
	Works Cited.....	26

I Introduction

In this essay I will discuss how Hemingway's writing style is reflected in two of his most famous short stories: "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place" (1933) and "Hills Like White Elephants" (1927). There are two reasons why this essay focuses on these two particular short stories. First of all, Hemingway's short stories are very highly regarded, even more so than his best known novels according to Tyler (21). Kartiganer (59) states that it is in Hemingway's short stories written after 1926 that we actually find his finest work. Secondly, both these stories are very well known and written at about the same time (1927 and 1933), before Hemingway became a really well-known writer, which gives the analysis of this essay a chance to investigate how some of the most characteristic elements of Hemingway's writing style at this time are displayed. There is much to be said about Hemingway's writing style and about which elements in his life contributed to its formation; therefore it is essential to first be introduced to Hemingway himself, his life and works, to fully be able to understand his way of writing.

Why I chose this topic for my essay, is because Ernest Hemingway, his works and in particular his writing style, have always interested and enchanted me. It is therefore with great interest that I will in this essay explore the world of Hemingway and focus on some of the questions that have arisen in the process of reading his works.

I.1 Hemingway: His Life and Style

The American writer Ernest Hemingway was born in Oak Park, Illinois, on July 21, 1899 and he can be identified as the most widely read serious fiction writer in America during the twentieth century (Shuman 659). Young (5) writes about Hemingway that "no other novelist has had an equivalent influence on the prose of modern fiction". Shuman (659) writes that it is said, that the most important contribution to American literature is Hemingway's simple writing style, where he seems to leave out everything from the text except the most essential parts, by finding exactly the right words to use. Kartiganer (54) writes that "Hemingway perfected an art of exclusion" and says that Hemingway had a gift called the "built-in, shock-proof, shit detector", which he used to detect and erase all the words that did not work, leaving only the words that were of highest importance to his story. An example of this is that Hemingway is said to have "[rewritten] the ending of *A Farewell to Arms* seventy times" (Donaldson 7).

Shuman (660) says that Hemingway never went to college, instead he took a job with a newspaper called *Kansas City Star*, working as a journalist. Hemingway said that during his time as a reporter on the 'Star' he learned to write simple declarative sentences, use short paragraphs and first sentences, use vigorous English and to be cautious about adjective use –these were rules of writing he never forgot (Tyler 15-16).

At the end of Hemingway's life, he was very sick and diagnosed as manic-depressive, suffering from nightmares, paranoia, insomnia — a theme that also occurred in “A Clean, Well-Lighted Place” (Tyler 13). Beegel (273) writes that Hemingway committed suicide by shooting himself in the head with a shotgun in Ketchikan on July 2, 1961.

1.2 Hemingway: Some of His Works and Writings

Hemingway's extensive body of work included newspaper and magazine articles, poetry, short stories, novels, a book-length of non-fiction, a memoir, a parody, a play, a documentary film script, letters (up to 14,000 is a figure mentioned) and so forth (Tyler 20-21).

Shuman (663) writes that Hemingway's first full-length book of short stories titled *In Our Time* was published in 1925, and in 1926 his first important novel *The Sun Also Rises*. Tyler (73-76) writes that Hemingway's short story collection *Men Without Women* came out in 1927, and that it contained one of his best and most famous short stories, like “Hills Like White Elephants”. Shuman (663) says that Hemingway's first major commercial success was *A Farewell to Arms*, published in 1929. Other important works by Hemingway are: *Death in the afternoon* (novel), *Green Hills of Africa* (autobiographical journal), *To Have and Have Not* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (novels) and *The Old Man and the Sea* (a novella). Here should also be mentioned 'A Clean, Well-Lighted Place', first published in *Scribner's Magazine* in 1933, which is also considered to be one of Hemingway's best and most famous short stories. Tyler also lists about thirteen posthumous works by Hemingway, for example the novels: *A Moveable Feast*, *Islands in the Stream* and *The Garden of Eden* (33-160). Hemingway won the Pulitzer Prize in 1952 for fiction and the Nobel Prize in 1954 in literature for his novella *The Old Man and the Sea* (Reynolds 16).

1.2.1 “A Clean, Well-Lighted Place” (1933)

Tyler (25) says that the main theme in Hemingway's writing is about how to live with dignity in a world full of violence and issues dealing with defeat and suffering. The theme “A Clean Well-Lighted Place” (from now on abbreviated as 'Place') is solidarity, good conduct, noth-

ingness, but also the evanescence of happiness, suffering, and the insecurity of existence. In one word, you can say that the central theme is *age*.

'Place' is about two waiters (a younger and an older one) who are having a conversation about why an old deaf man, who tried to commit suicide, is sitting at the café where they work, getting drunk. The older waiter feels sympathy for the old man and understands his desire to sit alone and drink at a clean, well-lighted café, while the younger waiter does not feel much sympathy for the old man. The old waiter understands the old man's loneliness, which he explains (indirectly) in a dialogue with himself, by praying about nothingness. The old man has nothing left to live for; the old waiter only has his work.

1.2.2 “Hills Like White Elephants” (1927)

Shuman (666) says that much of Hemingway's fiction concerns men and women in love who are under so much pressure that their relationships are pushed to the limit. The theme in “Hills Like White Elephants” (from now on abbreviated as 'Hills') concerns love and/or relationships; that a relationship needs unselfish commitment and trust from both parties, otherwise it will not last.

To summarise 'Hills', it is about a man and a woman at a small train station in Spain, having a conversation, revealing, without directly saying so, that the woman is pregnant. There are hills in the distance that, according to the woman, look like white elephants, which is presumably in a symbolic manner that is characteristic of Hemingway, connected to the woman's desire to keep the baby and start a family. The man wants her to have an abortion (without ever mentioning the word) and continue their life as before. In the end, the reader never gets to know what happens afterwards.

1.3 Organisation

In the next part, the *aim* of this essay is presented. It is followed by a detailed section about the *methods* used to carry out the investigation, including explanations about stylistics, quantitative methods and how the analysis has been carried out. Next there is a *background*, where we look more deeply into Hemingway's writing style in areas concerning what made him write as he did, what the iceberg method means, how he used adjectives and structured his sentences. The *analysis* following next is divided into three parts: one for each short story and one comparative part; where this essay tries to answer the questions presented in the Aim. Finally there is a short *conclusion* where a discussion about the contents of the essay is provided.

2 Aim

The main purpose of this essay is to answer the following questions:

- What is characteristic of Hemingway's style in the two short stories “A Clean, Well-Lighted Place” and “Hills Like White Elephants”, in particular when looking at the use of adjectives and sentence complexity?
- How is the Iceberg Technique, the technique of omission, displayed in these two stories?
- What stylistic differences and similarities are there between the two stories?

3 Method

In my investigation I have used a stylistic approach, which means that I have worked ‘bottom-up’, that is to say I started with lower level items and then went on with larger structures until I worked with the text as a complete unit. This was done by paying attention to component parts such as the use of adjectives and seeing what the sentence structure looked like (Carter & Cornbleet 2-3).

The Iceberg Technique involves omission and has been analysed by looking at the structure of the dialogue, the point of view it was written in, and other aspects connected to this style. Deviation, which, according to Short (11), means that in a text there might be a linguistic phenomenon that sticks out and has a psychological effect on the reader is mainly used in poetry, but can also be applicable in analysing prose. The psychological effect deviation has on the reader is called foregrounding (defined by *Cambridge Online Dictionary* as giving “the most importance to a particular subject”).

The fact that I have counted adjectives and measured sentence length means that the analysis is mainly quantitative. In the analysis statistical results from 'Place' and 'Hills' were compared against each other to show similarities and differences. Short (332) writes that “statistical work is essentially comparative.”

The frequency of adjectives was calculated into percentages and compared to the total number of words, since it is “best to create percentages in relation to the nearest relevant superordinate category” (Short 333). A comparison was made against the norm of adjective use in imaginative prose, which is 7,8% of the total amount of words used, according to Hofland & Jonasson (6).

No parts of the short stories were excluded with regard to frequency of adjectives; every single word was counted. This was because there might have been differences in frequency between one part of the story and another, and if this had not been taken into account, it might have brought down the quality of the analysis (Short 333).

A sentence, in the present study, is “a complete structure found in written texts, bounded by sentence punctuation such as '.', '!', '?!.’” (Biber, Conrad and Leech 460). The sentence length is presented against the norm for modern English. Short (337) mentions that Ellegård (in 1978) produced a norm for modern English writing, where the average sentence length is said to have been 17.8 words per sentence. Because there was a chance that Hemingway might have used both long and short sentences, counting the average sentence length might have been misleading. Therefore the sentence length is also presented by counting the median. In this essay, median is the middle value from a list of observations ranging from the lowest values to the highest values.

To provide more accurate statistics as regards Hemingway’s sentence length, all the sentences in both stories were counted. The length of the sentences is also displayed in diagrams, showing the length of every sentence counted.

4 Background – Hemingway's Technique

Hemingway was a part of the Modernist movement, which was known for its radical experimentation and aesthetic innovation. The Modernists included James Joyce's, William Faulkner's and Virginia Woolf's stream-of-consciousness; Ezra Pound's and Hilda Doolittle's non-rhyming verse forms; and the fragmentation in T.S. Eliot's poem 'The Waste Land’ (Tyler 23).

Hemingway influenced many writers, and he is said to be the inventor of writing in vernacular American English. Minimalism, for which he is very well known, is said to have influenced a literary movement in the seventies. Minimalism is “characterized by ordinary subject matter, an effaced authorial presence, a passive and affectless protagonist, very little plot in the traditional sense, the use of the historical present tense, and a spare, emotionally restrained writing style” (Tyler 30).

Henry & Walker Bergström (362) say that a writer's medium is language, and during Modernism this came to be as important as the subject. For writers like Hemingway, it was more important *how* he wrote, than *what* he wrote.

4.1 Stylistics

Leech & Short write that the question stylistics wants to answer is the *why* and the *how*, and says that it is the reader's creative imagination that interprets the content in a text (13, 39). One definition of style/stylistics is that "Style is a way in which language is *used*" whereas stylistics is the study of style. Literary stylistics, in turn, has to do with "*explaining the relation between style and literary or aesthetic function*" (Leech & Short 38-39). Another way of explaining this is by saying that

stylistic analysis is a method of linking linguistic form, *via* reader inference, to interpretation in a detailed way and thereby providing as much evidence as possible for and against particular interpretations of texts. (Short, 27)

Leech & Short (42-44) continue by saying that when talking about style as a function of frequency, you might think that style can be measured. The statement that

Hemingway uses 'short sentences' amounts to a claim that the average length of a Hemingway sentence is shorter (to a significant extent) than the average length of an English sentence: something that can in principle be verified or falsified (43).

This statement raises the question how we actually can decide what is the average sentence-length in English. It is impossible to find a representative norm for the average sentence length and Leech and Short proceed to list numerous reasons in support of this. For example you would need the "complete corpus of the language at a given period" (44), meaning that one would have to ransack every single library in the whole world. Even if it is very difficult to measure style and to present it in the form of reliable quantitative data; measuring style is still an "important tool in stylistic description" (Leech & Short 43-71).

Carter & Nash (3-16) write that style can be recognised because it stands out in one way or another from a standard, which is defined as the most frequent style occurring in a statistical sense. This should simply mean that style can be seen as deviation, which is not right, since norms are very difficult to standardise. Carter & Nash continue by saying that we should see "style as *relational* and examine how a piece of language works in context in relation to the operations of language in other context" (16).

Leech & Short (75-77) mention two questions, under their check-list of linguistic and stylistic categories, that also are vital for this essay (see Aim), because the analysis focuses on adjective usage and sentence length. The first question under the lexical categories is "Are the

adjectives frequent?” and then under the grammatical categories, the question “What is the average sentence length (in number of words)?” (Leech & Short, 75-77).

4.2 The Iceberg Technique: Omission

Hemingway's theory of omission, already seen in his early line of work, is probably his most important contribution to literature. Hemingway always tried to write according to his iceberg principle — by eliminating as much as possible so that only the tip of the iceberg is visible above water. This way most of the story must be indirectly inferred by the reader, like the rest of the iceberg that is hidden below the murky surface. Hemingway thought his style of writing was often suggestive and not that direct, leading to the reader using his or her imagination in order not to lose the subtle parts of Hemingway's intentions (Tyler 22).

Henry & Walker Bergström (362-363) explain the Iceberg Technique by saying that Hemingway used a telegraphic style when writing, letting the reader fill in what was not visual in plain text, something he described in terms of an iceberg. There is a well known description about Hemingway's theory of omission, to be read in *Death in the Afternoon*, a novel written by Hemingway himself:

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 writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of movement of an iceberg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water. (192)

Knight (131) tells us that it is the part that Hemingway did not write down that is the most important part: The part written and visible for the reader was the least important part. Strychacz (59) writes that Hemingway was “the master of the simple declarative sentence”. He also says that Hemingway did this by always trying to reproduce the action in a truthful manner, by choosing the smallest amount of exact details so that the reader could “feel” the whole story: This is the “principle of the iceberg.”

The important information in Hemingway's text lies in the implied, but unstated parts. He wanted the reader to feel something beyond their understanding (Leech & Short 183).

4.3 Distrusting Adjectives

Ezra Pound (200) wrote that “It is better to present one Image in a lifetime than to produce voluminous works” and stated that a writer should not use adjectives or words that are superfluous if they do not reveal something important or contribute to the presentation.

Hallengren (2001), among many others who have written about Hemingway, says that it was none other than Ezra Pound who taught Hemingway to distrust adjectives.

According to Barry (209) Hemingway tried not to use adjectives, adverbs and descriptive words. If another author would have for example written "Smith ran purposefully through the heavy rain," Hemingway would probably omit the adjective 'heavy' and the adverb 'purposefully', and write "Smith ran through the rain.", something that would make the sentence more implicit and this, according to Hemingway, would have a greater impact on the reader. Barry (209) also writes that "75% of the verbs and adjectives are... without adjectival and adverbial qualification.", in other words, meaning that the adjectives are used without connecting adverbs or adjectives.

4.4 Sentence Complexity

Knight (149) says that short simple sentences are very common in Hemingway's writing, but also coordinated sentences: He specifically points out the ones using the conjunction *and*. Tyler (21-22) says that Hemingway's writing style is known for his "short declarative sentences, a preference for simple, often one-syllable words, and an emphasis on the concrete rather than the abstract." Beck, Bennett & Wall (156) also state that short sentences, written clearly, simply and not containing too much information, are one of Hemingway's hallmarks.

According to Lanham (29), parataxis is a literary technique that favours short and simple sentences. Lanham gives an example of this by quoting Caesar: "I came, I saw, I conquered." *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary online* defines parataxis as "the placing of clauses or phrases one after another without coordinating or subordinating connectives."

4.5 The 1933 Edition of "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place"

Bennett (70) writes that, according to *Scribner*, the publisher of 'Place', an inconsistency occurred in the dialogue, since a slug (piece of spacing material) used to space paragraphs in typesetting)) had been misplaced; and since every reprint was made from this specific printing, the mistake was perpetuated until 1965, when a new edition was issued.

Ryan (78-79) says that in the 1933 edition, there is an inconsistency in a dialogue between two waiters, and it is impossible to be sure of which of the waiters speak a line of untagged dialogue. The changes made in 1965 resulted in an interchange between the two waiters' identities, which resulted in two different versions of the same story. This has, according to Ryan, led to the fact that there are today two sides fighting about which version is the most correct one. Ryan explains that there are two conditions that have to be taken in to

consideration before correcting a text; first there has to be evidence that a mistake has been made; secondly there is need of evidence that the original mistake actually is a mistake, and not something Hemingway actually intended (78-79). Since there is no clear evidence of this sort, this essay will use the original 1933 edition of 'Place'.

5 Analysis

5.1 "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place"

5.1.1 The Iceberg Technique: Omission

When looking for the dialogue tag, one notices that it is often missing. This is clearly an example of omission. Sometimes there are 24 dialogue parts in a row without any tags. The example below is only a part of this dialogue sequence. The example below, with the indented extracts, is only a part of this dialogue sequence from 'Place':

"He's drunk every night."

"What did he want to kill himself for?"

"How should I know."

"How did he do it?"

"He hung himself with a rope."

"Who cut him down?"

"His niece."

"Why did they do it?"

"Fear for his soul."

"How much money has he got?"

"He's got plenty."

"He must be eighty years old." (30)

Leech & Short (322) agree concerning the missing dialogue tags and say that sometimes it is difficult to keep track of which of the waiters is saying what, because Hemingway has omitted the dialogue tags.

'Place' is written in the third-person, which, according to Griffith (37), means that the narrator is on the outside of the story and "refers to all the characters in the third person." She also says that the narrator is omniscient, and at times the characters may even speak directly to the reader. When reading 'Place', you might notice that the narrator may be omniscient, but still not much is revealed to the reader. For example, we know that the café is a clean, well-lighted

place, but that is about it; we do not know anything about the waiters or the old man's appearance (what they look like, what they are wearing, etc.). Neither do we know what we should think about the characters or about what happens in the story. When a story is written in the third person with an omniscient author, quite a lot should be revealed to the reader, but here Hemingway seems to think that it is up to the reader to interpret what the characters are like and what the story really is about.

Nothingness, and the word *nothing*, seems to be a key word in 'Place'. Hemingway is hiding the reason for the old man's suicide attempt by not giving the answer to the reader directly, but instead displaying it through the thoughts of the old waiter. When close-reading the story, you first see that the 'younger waiter' says that the old man had no reason to try to kill himself, which is easy to see because it is said clearly (to the reader). But you can also see that in one passage the 'older waiter' puts a series of *nadas* into a prayer (meaning the content in these prayers mean nothing to him any more), and you understand that he is talking about the 'old man', that this man's life is empty (mainly because he has lost his wife), that the 'old man' has nothing and that the only way out of this nothingness is death. All this is displayed through the 'old waiter'.

5.1.2 Sentence complexity

Number of words: 1434.

Number of sentences: 165.

Average sentence length: 8.69 words.

Average sentence length norm for modern English (according to Ellegård): 17.8 words.

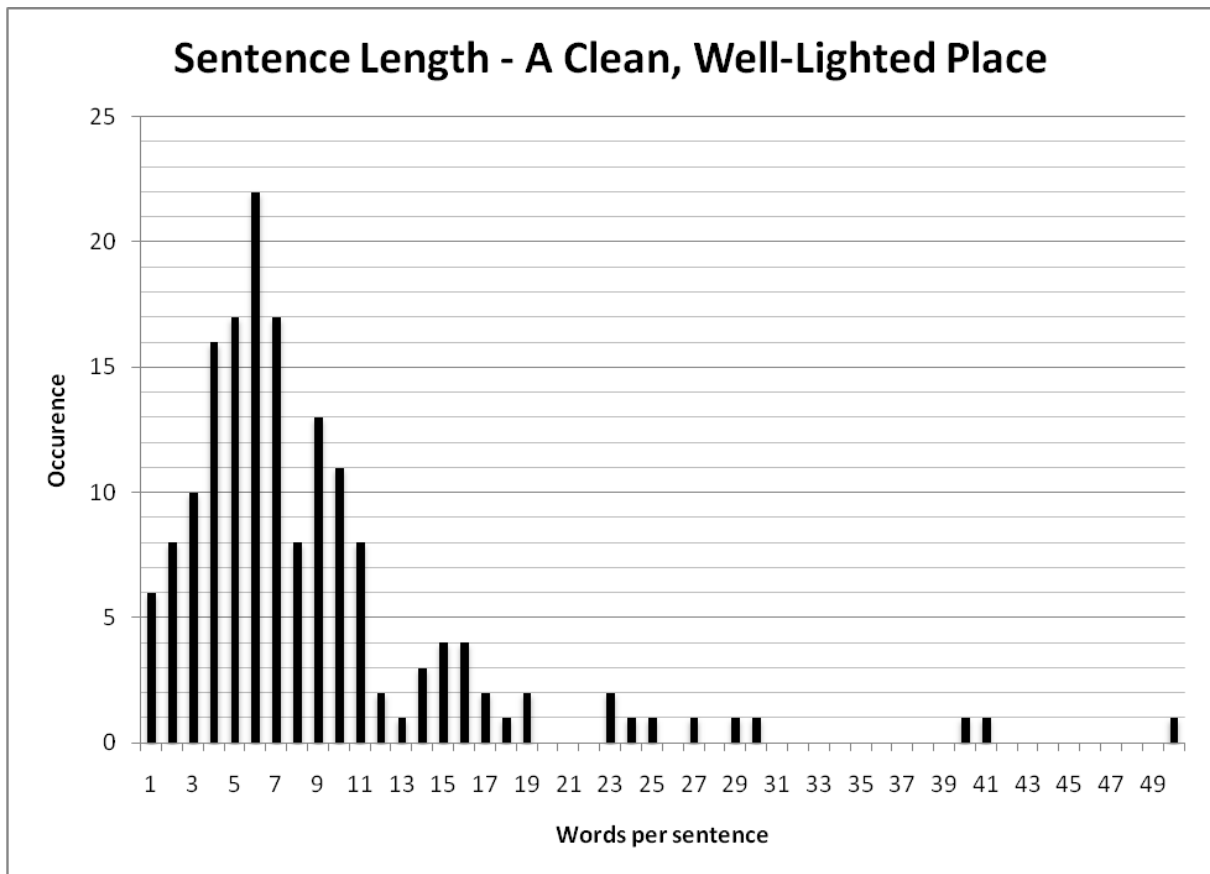
Median: 7.

Most common sentence length: 6 words = 22 sentences (13.33% of all the sentences).

Shortest sentence: 1 word used in 6 sentences (3.64% of all the sentences).

Longest sentences: 50 words = 1 sentence, 41 words = 1 sentence, 40 words = 1 sentence.

Diagram 1



In Diagram 1 the x-axis shows sentences with one to fifty words, and the y-axis shows how many times each sentence length occurs. In the Diagram 1, you clearly see how the lengths of the sentences are spread out. It is notable that only 13 (7.89%) sentences of the total 165 are above the average norm (17.8), and that 128 (77.58%) sentences are between one and ten words long, since according to Ellegård the average is almost 18 words per sentence which is almost twice this amount. Since there are many short dialogues in 'Place', this affects the average sentence length; this can be seen by looking at the sentence length in the dialogue presented (see 5.1.1).

As mentioned before, Hemingway is known for his use of short sentences, but by reading a lot of Hemingway's work, I have found out that he also likes to use long compound sentences, i.e. stacking clause and clause and clause after one another. The following example, with the indented extracts, is a part of a dialogue sequence from 'Place' and it shows how Hemingway uses 50 words in one sentence:

They sat together at a table that was close against the wall near the door of the café and looked at the terrace where the tables were all

empty except where the old man sat in the shadow of the leaves of the
tree that moved slightly in the wind. (29)

As Knight (149) has said, Hemingway's coordinated sentences often use the conjunction *and*, but this is not the case in 'Place'. As you can see in the sentence above, *and* is used only once, and this can be said about the entire story; that the use of *and* does not occur often.

5.1.3 Adjectives

Number of words: 1434.

Number of adjectives: 74 (including repeated adjectives).

Percentage of words used that are adjectives: 5.16%.

Percentage of words that are the norm of adjectives used in imaginative prose: 7.8%.

As listed above, 5.16% of the words used are adjectives; compared with the norm which is 7,8%, according to Hofland & Jonasson (6). If 'Place' would have followed the norm, it would have contained 112 adjectives.

Repetition of adjectives occurs a lot in 'Place', especially of the adjective 'old'. The three most common adjectives in 'Place' are: *Old* (18 times), *drunk* (6 times) and *clean* (4 times), which gives a total number of 28 words or 37.84% of the adjectives used.

Hemingway has not given any names to his characters but instead refers to them as the "old man" (14 times), "older waiter" (3 times) and "younger waiter" (2 times). This should be taken into consideration when looking at Hemingway's use of adjectives, because if he would have given his characters names and referred to them by doing so, Hemingway could have used up to 19, (or 25.68%), fewer adjectives. The 74 adjectives in total would only have been reduced to 55, meaning that only 3.84% of the all the words would have been adjectives, which is less than half of the general norm, 7.8%.

Pound (200) said that adjectives should only be used when they are important. The adjective *old* must be most important, then, since it occurs 18 times! And it is important to this story, since the main theme is age, getting old and not having anything any more. Through the story the adjectives indeed seem to be of importance. They are often used to describe a state someone is in; *drunk*, *lonely*, *sleepy*, or describe the setting; *light*, *clean*, *quiet*, or the people; *old*, *younger*, *deaf*. This might be a general characteristic of adjectives, but Hemingway does not go into details. He says that somebody is old, but not how old, something is quiet, but not in a

way that paints a picture in the reader's mind, like quiet as a cemetery. In a way these adjectives are essential to the story. Neither does Hemingway describe how people are dressed, what kind of glasses people drink from, what kind of chairs people are sitting on; he skips all the superfluous stuff. There might not be many adjectives, but they do help the reader to understand the core of the story.

5.2 “Hills Like White Elephants”

5.2.1 The Iceberg Technique: Omission

In ‘Hills’, the dialogue is often missing. Sometimes the tag-less dialogue sequences are quite long, like in this passage below where the indented extracts are a part of this dialogue sequence from ‘Hills’:

”What did you say?”
“I said we could have everything.”
“We can have everything.”
“No, we can't.”
“We can have the whole world.”
“No, we can't.”
“We can go everywhere.”
“No, we can't. It isn't our any more.”
“It's ours.”
“No, it isn't. And once they take it away, you never get it back.”
“But they haven't taken it away.”
“We'll wait and see.” (343-344)

In ‘Hills’ the characters are displayed from a third-person objective dramatic point of view, meaning, according to Griffith (38), that the reader gets to know the characters through what they do, say, look like and what others say about them: We do not, however, learn what they think, unless the characters tell us. There is much we do not get to know about the characters in ‘Hills’. For example, we do not know how they make their living or what the state of relationships is. We know the man is from the U.S.A., but what about the woman? We also know that the girl's name (or nickname) is Jig, but what about the man?

Wyche (58), among many, writes that the (word) abortion in ‘Hills’ is never mentioned, and that many scholars believe that the abortion is a metaphor concerning the couple's relationship. The man in ‘Hills’ talks about, an “awfully simple operation”, says that “it's all perfectly

natural”, “I’ve known lots of people that have done it” and “then it will be nice again” and so forth when talking about the abortion. So the word abortion is not visible, but why does Hemingway not use the word abortion? One reason could be that by omitting this word, Hemingway actually foregrounds it and makes the reader consider whether the abortion is the real issue in this story, or if it is something else (relationships). When studying the word abortion, in connection with Spain, where the story takes place, some interesting facts turn up. Valiente (229) writes “there has been a punishment for abortion in Spain since medieval times” and that it was not until the 1980s that this was slightly changed by some legal reforms. Fuchs (26) writes that abortion in Spain is still a crime, except if a woman has been raped, which she has to be able to prove. So, knowing about the Spanish abortion laws, we understand that it was illegal, and a taboo subject to even discuss. This might be the reason Hemingway omitted the word ‘abortion’ from his story. As Strychacz (59) wrote, Hemingway tried to reproduce the action in a truthful manner. Hemingway's own attitudes towards abortion are not relevant to mention here, since it does not really matter what personal opinions he had, because what matters is how he portrays it in the story.

Griffith (48-49) writes that in the open-ended story, “the conflicts of the plot are left unresolved.” This is certainly the case in this story; the fact that the ending never answers, or gives clues about, what the two characters are going to do next, is another clear example of omission.

5.2.2 Sentence Complexity

Number of words: 1455.

Number of sentences: 178.

Average sentence length: 8.17 words.

Average sentence length norm for modern English (according to Ellegård): 17.8 words.

Median: 6.

Most common sentence length: 5 words = 23 sentences (12.92% of all the sentences).

Shortest sentence: 1 word in 1 sentences (0.56% of all the sentences).

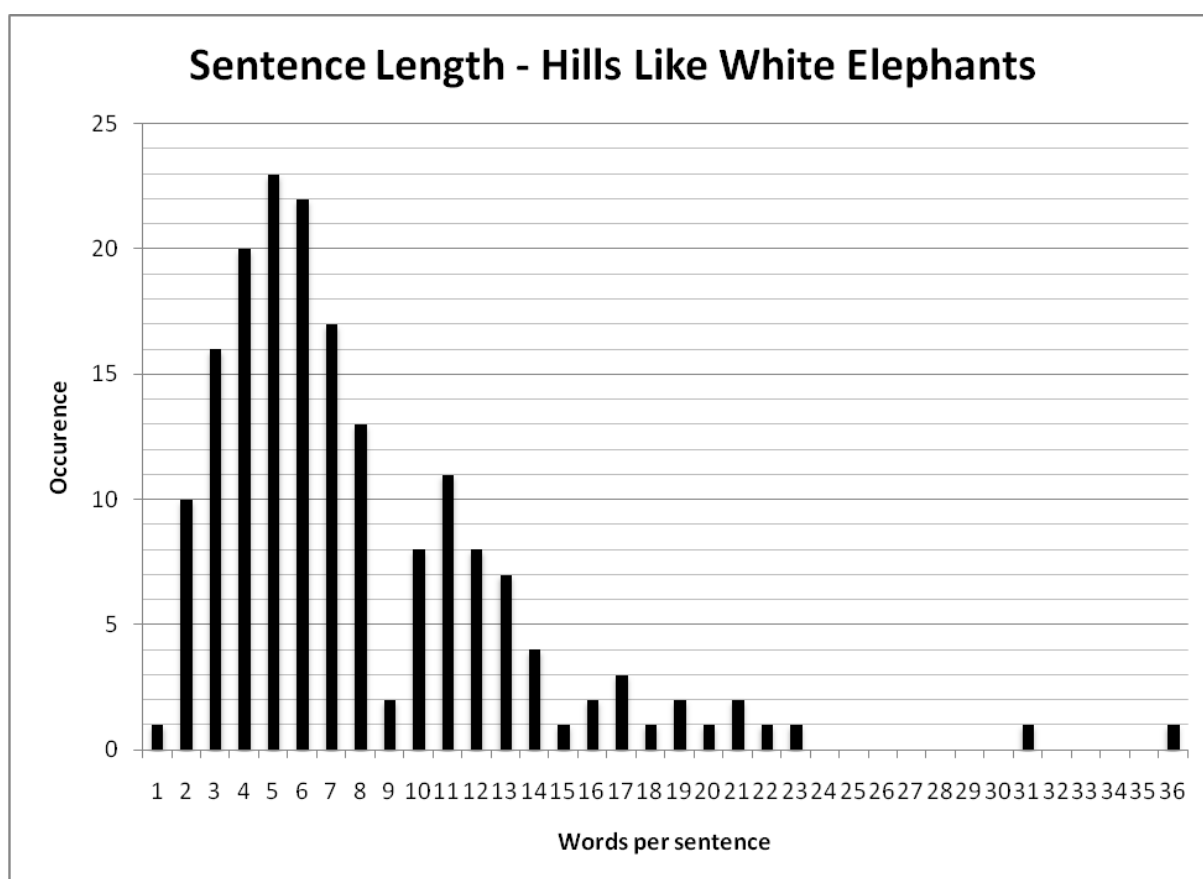
Longest sentences: 36 words = 1 sentence, 31 words = 1 sentence, 23 words = 1 sentence.

In Diagram 2 the x-axis shows sentences with one to 36 words, and the y-axis shows how many times each sentence length occurs. Notice that only 10 (5.62%) sentences of the 178 in total are above the average norm, 17.8, and that 132 (74.16%) sentences are between one and ten words long.

The example below with the indented extracts, shows that the longest sentence in ‘Hills’, contains 36 words:

Close against the side of the station there was the warm shadow of the building and a curtain, made of strings of bamboo beads, hung across the open door into the bar, to keep out flies. (341)

Diagram 2



There are not that many more long sentences, as you can see in diagram 1B. Many of the sentences containing the dialogue, are often quite short (see 5.2.1). But even the sentences not containing the dialogue, are often quite short, like the one in this example below, with the indented extracts, that is from ‘Hills’:

He drank an Anis at the bar and looked at the people. They were all waiting reasonably for the train. He went out through the bead curtain. She was sitting at the table and smiled at him. (345)

Hemingway's coordinated sentences are often supposed to use the conjunction *and* (Knight, 149). In 'Hills' you can see this in a couple of places, especially the longer sentences, for example "...was the warm shadow of the building and a curtain, made of bamboo beads, hang across..." but coordinated sentences do not occur often.

5.2.3 Adjectives

Number of words: 1455.

Number of adjectives: 48 (including repeated adjectives).

Percentage of words used that are adjectives: 3.3%.

Percentage of words that are the norm of adjectives used in imaginative prose: 7.8%.

Compared with the norm, 7.8% according to Hofland & Jonasson (6), only 3.3% of all the words used in 'Hills' are adjectives. Had Hemingway followed the norm, 'Hills' would have contained 113 adjectives.

Many adjectives in the story are repeated, and when looking at the three adjectives used most often, you notice that they appear 16 times, or make up 33.33% of the adjectives used. So the words *white* (6 times), *fine* (5 times), *simple* (5 times), stand for one third of all the adjectives in the story.

Hemingway might not have used many adjectives, but when he did, they were often of extra importance, as they should be according to Pound's own theories (200). Some adjectives that describe the setting, e.g. "*warm shadow*", "*very hot*", "*damp felt pads*", etc. seem not to be of any importance to the story, since, if left out, it would not have affected the understanding of the story. Others, by contrast, such as "I feel *fine*", "*perfectly simple*", "*be happy*" are very important for the reader to be able to get an understanding of the characters and how they feel about the topic they are discussing. For example when the man is saying "It's really an awfully *simple* operation, Jig," (342) he shows clearly how he feels about abortion, that it is not a big deal.

5.3 Differences and Similarities

5.3.1 The Iceberg Technique: Omission

‘Place’ and ‘Hills’ are similar in the sense that the dialogue tags in them are missing more often than they are present. The difference is that in ‘Place’ it is sometimes impossible to decide with certainty which of the waiters (characters) is saying what, something that is confirmed by Ryan (78-79) among others. In ‘Hills’, this issue is not a problem, since there are only two characters speaking and they both have distinctive voices.

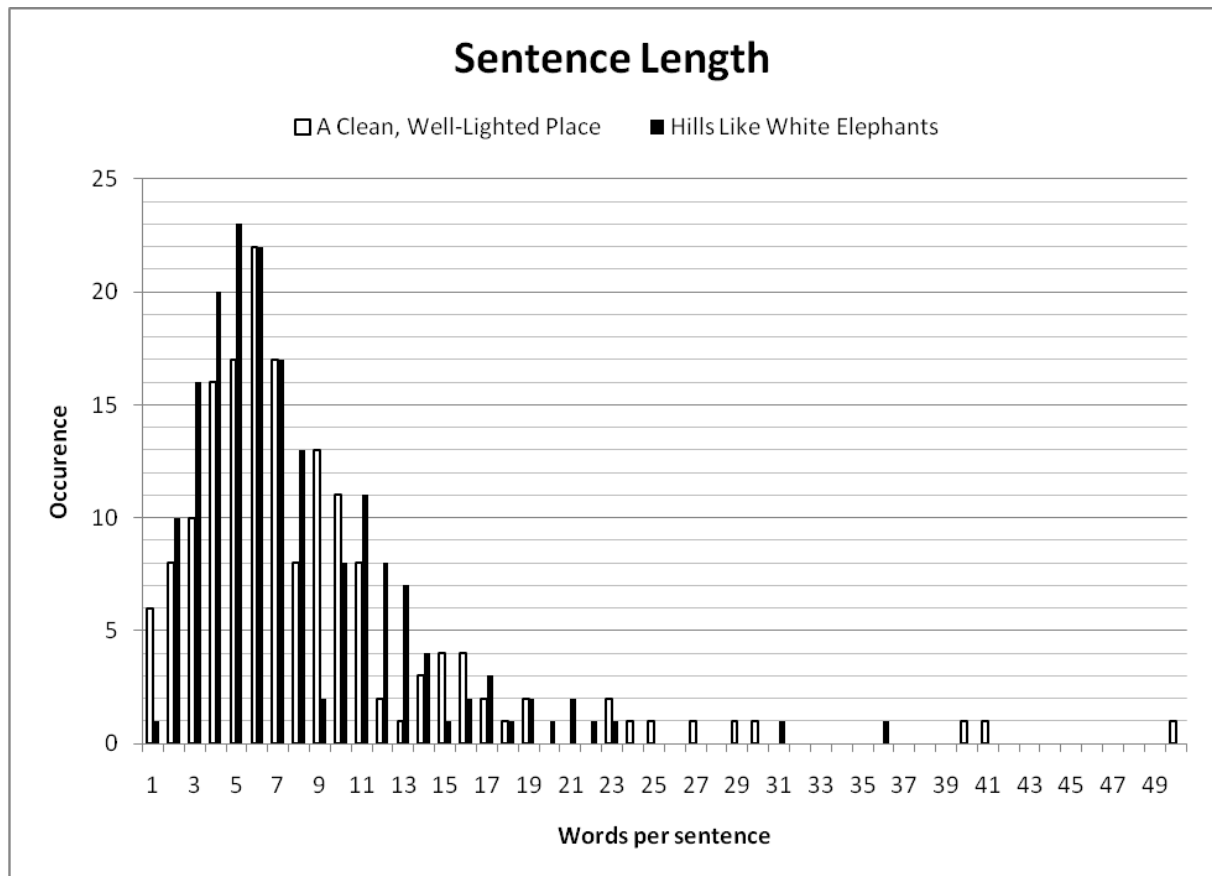
Even if the stories are written from different points of view, ‘Place’ in the third-person and ‘Hills’ in third-person objective dramatic, they both reveal roughly the same amount of information about the characters. Since they are both third-person instead of first-person stories, the reader is not inside the head of any of the characters and does not know their motives. So the reader is an objective bystander that has to piece together the story without the benefit of knowing the characters or hearing their thoughts.

What can be said about differences and/or similarities concerning the analyses of ‘nothingness’ in ‘Place’ and ‘abortion’ in ‘Hills’, is that there is more under the surface than these stories reveal and that it is important to keep your eyes on the parts/words that stick out (foregrounding and deviation).

5.3.2 Sentence Complexity

In Diagram 3 (next page) the x-axis shows sentences with one to fifty words, and the y-axis shows how many times each sentence length occurs. First of all, it is interesting to notice that both short stories are almost of the same length; with ‘Place’ consisting of 1,434 words and ‘Hills’ of 1,455 words; in numbers they differ by only 21 words (roughly 1.5%). When looking at Diagram 3, it is also striking how similar ‘Place’ and ‘Hills’ are with regard to sentence length. ‘Place’ contains 8.69 words per sentence and ‘Hills’ 8.17 words per sentence. Both stories are far behind the norm, however, which is 17.8 words per sentence. This means that, Hemingway's sentences are 52,64% shorter than a normal length sentence in modern English (recorded in 1978). The rest of the ‘sentence facts’ are also fairly similar; with the median of ‘Place’ being 7, versus that of ‘Hills’ being 6. The most common sentence length in ‘Place’ is 6 words, versus 5 words in ‘Hills’.

Diagram 3



In Diagram 3, you also notice that when you look at the bars one at a time, there might be big differences, for example the first bar where ‘Clean’ has 6 sentences containing one word and ‘Hills’ only 1. But when looking at the whole diagram in general you see that 128 (77.58%) sentences in ‘Clean’ and 132 (74.16%) in ‘Hills’ consist of 1 to 10 words. The number of sentences above the average norm 17.8 is also quite equal.

5.3.3 Adjectives

In ‘Place’ 5.16% of all the words and in ‘Hills’ 3.3% of all the words were adjectives, which is a low number compared with the norm, 7.8%. There is also a clear difference in adjective use between the two stories.

In ‘Place’, 19 adjectives were used to refer to the characters, while in ‘Hills’ not one single adjective was used for the same purpose. In ‘Hills’ the main characters were referred to as “the man” and “the girl”, even though the man twice calls the girl by her name, Jig. Both stories contain many adjectives that are repeated, and it is interesting to note that the three most repeated adjectives account for about one third of all the adjectives in both stories.

When it comes to the use of important adjectives, there are, in 'Hills', adjectives that if they had been omitted, it would not have changed the outcome of the story. In 'Place' it is more difficult to find adjectives that could have been omitted. The word *old* (as "old man") may occur many times in 'Place', but since the information carried by the adjective *old* is only new to the reader at one point (i.e. the first time it occurs), the repetition of this adjective gives the reader a "feeling" of it being a noun (a name). Therefore it can not be said that the adjective *old* is superfluous.

6 Conclusion

Analysing Hemingway's writing style turned out to be a harder task than I had anticipated. His iceberg method includes many different stylistics categories, which makes it impossible to analyse and include them all in an essay of this size. Therefore I chose to concentrate on some of the characteristic parts that many scholars have talked about, including the omission part of the Iceberg Technique. It was also difficult to find a statistical method appropriate for displaying Hemingway's use of adjectives and long sentences, since no matter how you do, there is never a true way of presenting numbers in an objective manner, something that Leech and Short (42-44) confirm by saying that it is impossible to find a representative norm and that it is very difficult to measure style.

Concerning sentence structure, Hemingway was known for writing short sentences, as mentioned by many scholars before. It is still surprising that the sentences in these two stories are considerably shorter compared to normal length sentences in modern English. It has to be taken into consideration, however, that much of the text in these stories consists of dialogue. Sorensen (177) writes that "when creating a natural-sounding dialogue, this should be done by using short sentences."

The advice Pound gave Hemingway, that he should distrust adjectives (Hallengren 2001), seems to have had quite an impact (if that is the true reason). Both stories contain far fewer adjectives than the average norm. Still, it is very difficult to find a representative norm that gives a just representation, since the way the adjectives were used, differed between the two stories. It is interesting to see that Hemingway uses two different styles when referring to the characters (19 adjectives in 'Place' and none in 'Hills'). I think Hemingway needed the adjectives for the waiters in 'Place' to be able to distinguish between them since they were both waiters. In 'Hills', by contrast, since there is a man and a woman both fairly descriptive nouns

since the gender tells the characters apart and then you do not need the adjectives to the same extent. When it comes to the old man, I think 'old' was added since he was outside the norm, similar to how in our Western-centric literature people are always white unless we say differently.

Leaving out the dialogue tag, which Hemingway often does, is of course a sign of omission. In 'Place' the dialogue tag is sometimes so absent, especially in the first part of the story, that it is actually difficult to be sure of who is saying what.

My analysis of the absence of the word *abortion* in 'Hills' and the meaning of *nothingness* (*nada*) in 'Place', was carried out by foregrounding something that stuck out in the stories, one way or another. The 'abortion', or rather the lack of it, in 'Hills' has been discussed many times before, but I wanted to try to find out, why the word was omitted. I found two theories; either that it has to do with the fact that the core of the story is actually about relationships or that it relates to how abortion was seen in Spain in 1927. 'Nothingness' in 'Place' was easier to interpret, because the word *nada* stuck out so clearly. Also Hemingway gave many clues to make the reader understand that *nothing* in the story was the reason for not wanting to continue living; when you grow old you might one day have lost everything.

Leech & Short (183) and Strychacz (59), among many, talk about "feeling" what is hidden under the iceberg, but it is very difficult to substantiate a "feeling" in a scholarly manner. In real life, when you are interacting with another person, you do not know that person's intimate thoughts, (what the person is really thinking about) but you, consciously or unconsciously, interpret and guess what the other person is thinking.

A question that arose when analysing Hemingway was: Should/can one really explain what the true core is in Hemingway's short stories, or are you actually just seeing what you want to see? In an interview Hemingway said: "Read anything I write for the pleasure of reading it. Whatever else you find will be the measure of what you brought to the reading," (Plimpton, 18).

Words used: 7,193

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