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THE MECHANICS OF REPETITION IN THE DISCOURSE OF ERNEST HEMINGWAY

This paper proposes to study the phenomenon of repetition as conditioning the sense-making process in the discourse of Ernest Hemingway. The analysis will center on *The Sun Also Rises*, the most studied and yet the most misunderstood of all his novels. It will be shown that repetition constitutes the basic mechanics of his fiction, that repetitive patterns cohere throughout his text at the same time producing meaning and threatening its production, because when carried to its extreme repetition breeds delirium and non-sense.

Most critics of *The Sun Also Rises* either deal at length with Hemingway's trip to Spain with his wife, Harold Loeb, and Duff Twysden, or at least mention the fact that the novel is, if not pure reportage, then a reworking of the initial biographical experience. No doubt, the trip taken by Hemingway to Pamplona appears somewhere in the novel. Critics have also referred—sometimes ad nauseam—to Hemingway's war experiences, and have claimed that the impotence of Jake Barnes is a reflection of some trauma in Hemingway's own war experience; these same critics have emphasized the usage he made of the meaninglessness of the war and post-war periods. And the words suffering, death, disorder, alienation, lost generation, courage, revolt, war... appear in most critiques of Hemingway's first novel. In short, criticism sees in *The Sun Also Rises* a mimetic work.

Let us deal with the most complete of these critiques, Sarason's book *Hemingway and the Sun Set*.¹ In this book Sarason sets out to give the final word on *The Sun Also Rises*, or rather, to exhaust the relationship the novel bears to the actual trip. His main device is to accumulate a comprehensive quantity of information from those who were present on that trip and are still alive and from acquaintances of those who have died in the meantime. There is no doubt that Sarason's study sheds some

¹ B. D. Saranson, *Hemingway and the Sun Set*. Washington, 1972.

light on the novel, and that, allowing for the distance in time, most of the witness accounts are authentic although the various reportages more often than not contradict one another. Sarason's basic thesis is contained in the statement: "It was well known that the novel was heavily weighted with reportage."

To illustrate this claim let us take as an example the way Sarason goes about reconstructing the relationship between Duff Twysden and Lady Brett:

But of the fifteen persons who knew Duff none had ever heard of her being a nurse during the war. Two of these allegations might have been derived by anyone who took the novel as an accurate piece of journalism (p. 40). The scandal about the black could have its sources in *The Sun Also Rises* likewise (p. 41).

(Kong) replied that Hemingway failed to bring out her generous nature, and the therefore omitted one of her essential qualities (p. 43). (Harold Loeb) That was the only contact Brett had with the bullfighter, a single handshake (p. 125). No other lovers have ever been named, although her friends concede that she had many affairs. But such friends may have been carried away by the evocative power of Lady Brett (p. 234).

Harold Loeb too remembers her paintings, and he too did not think she was an alcoholic (p. 238).

Sarason's purpose seems to be incomprehensible for the problem which finally arises is who was Duff Twysden. And Sarason is well aware that X witnesses would give X different accounts of the same event. Another anecdote which emphasizes the futility of this undertaking is the quote Sarason brings from Hotchner's book on Hemingway relating to Duff's funeral. Hemingway seems to have told Hotchner that Duff's lovers were all drunk while carrying her coffin and that they ultimately dropped it. On the other hand, King, another witness who was one of Duff's acquaintances, claims that she was cremated. The only clear conclusion that one can draw from such an attempt at reconstruction is that there was an influence on the book by the real world and vice-versa; indeed, people attributed to Duff certain qualities of Lady Brett. What Sarason seems to have missed, though, is that there is no 'truth', and therefore looking for it is a futile exercise. Finally, saying that *The Sun Also Rises* is grounded in reality is saying the obvious, for it is certain that every work starts somewhere in the material world. Similarly, those who mention the First World War experience and its relation to Jake's impotence bring nothing to the novel: of course the war influenced the writing of the novel, and of course Jake's impotence has something to do with it. What most critics have neglected is the internalization of the war experience on the textual level, in Hemingway's production of meaning, in the style. As it will be shown, Hemingway's writing is 'the writing of war'; the war is the space of his writing.

By 'the writing of war' is meant both form and content. But also the position from which the author speaks, which in this case is the loss of

control over speech. The available critiques of the Hemingwayian style such as Bridgman's theory of the colloquial style and Cowley's theory of *cabelese* while contributing to our understanding of his fiction, in no way account for the 'act of writing' itself, for the discursive production. Hemingway himself has written on the emergence of colloquial style in modern fiction; Mark Twain, Sherwood Anderson and Henry James, before him, tried to introduce the vernacular and to infuse their works with the dynamism of verbal language. In turn, Ezra Pound and Imagism have preached concreteness in writing and rejected abstractions. All these influences could no doubt be found in *The Sun Also Rises*; however, the transparency, easiness, and colloquial concreteness disappear upon close reading. Bridgman himself had a good intuition of this disappearance: "Hemingway's talk, pared, splintered, and adrift, marked by inarticulate emotional flareups and the verbal blurr behind six dots (drummer's talk) at last falls into silence."²

It is argued here that "the emotional flareups" and their inarticulateness constitute the generating matrix of the Hemingwayian discourse; it is claimed that the key to this novel, and to Hemingway's fiction as a whole, lies in these six dots, in his maddening aspiration to keep silent. And the impotence is not a physical one, but a discursive one. For *The Sun Also Rises* is written not within language but on the brink of language, on that thin line between meaning and non-meaning, sanity and madness. 'The writing of war' hovers on both sides of this thin line. As it will be indicated later on, Paris, the fiesta in Pamplona and the war consitute one and the same space, the difference among them being merely a difference of degree. The concreteness of the world portrayed in this novel—for after all it is made up of 'real' people, wine, bulls, sex and food...—dissolves into a total abstraction: behind the transparency of the text lies chaos, madness and death, and these six dots are nothing but the annihilation of language, the dissolution of self—total silence.

If we are to look for influences, we ought to look somewhere else, on the side of Tristan Tzara and Dadaism, French Surrealism and German Expressionism, for 'realist colloquialism' leaves us with many unanswered questions. Past the first naive reading, the critical reader encounters insurmountable obstacles. What is this story trying to tell us? Why do the characters never cease drinking? Was Hemingway himself drunk when he wrote it? There is no plot more trivial than the one in this novel, yet why does the narrative take so many pages to unfold? Why insist on pushing these characters (if they can be so labelled!) into cafés practically in every page? The novel after a while becomes obscure. Why?

One can, of course, adopt Hotchner's psychoanalytical approach and

² R. Bridgman, *The Colloquial Style in America*. New York 1966, p. 229.

show how Hemingway's schizophrenia and paranoia, which were no doubt latent in the twenties, contribute to the uneasiness of this text. One could even side in this respect with Harold Loeb in his claim as to the schizophrenic symptoms in Hemingway's childhood.³ According to Loeb, the author's mother apparently dressed him in girl's clothes to make him look like his sister's twin. And this traumatic experience is at the bottom of Hemingway's bitterness and mistrust of his colleagues, and hence the twists and distortions in the portrayals of the characters in the novel. It would probably be hard to disclaim a relationship between Hemingway's late psychosis and his early life, but this kind of relationship would be difficult to base on anything factual. For Hemingway might as well have been a healthy child who developed this illness later on in life; similarly, no one can measure the effects of female clothing on a young boy. This kind of reduction in no way helps us in our attempt to grasp this textual production. Psychoanalysis will therefore be more fruitful when applied to the text itself rather than the child.

Repetition seems to make the heart of the novel, whether it is repetition of words, patterns and scenes, repetition of spaces and experiences, or repetition of characters. Hemingway's characters in general, and more specifically, in *The Sun Also Rises* develop functionally to the spaces they inhabit or visit, and the actions they undertake in these spaces, and hence the importance of cafés in the description of the characters. No critic has yet mentioned that perhaps the central hero of this novel is the café, or more specifically, the booze. But this space is only one of the possible experiences which Hemingway sets out to describe in most of his works. We have the feeling that in his search for authentic experiences, or rather, the Authentic Experience, Hemingway has chosen to describe self-contained actions which at the outset seem to be very easy to encompass.

However, the ones he chose border on ritual. Fishing, hunting, bullfighting and war are all ritualistic experiences, but they are all grounded in the material world and involve a particular and repeated sequence of actions. Each one of these experiences seems to exploit the total consciousness and being of the acting subject. People rarely dream in Hemingway's fiction; they are absorbed with their flesh and blood in what they do. And this, because they are attempting to undergo the 'true' experience, as truly as possible. The immediacy of action is to remedy the sense of tension and of separateness from the world so that the absorption of the subject in his action is a must. But the most complete approximation of this authentic experience is mediated by language. In effect, the exhaustiveness, or rather the totality of an action can seek its only expression in the domain of writing, in this case, in repetition.

³ H. Loeb, "Hemingway's Bitterness", in Sarason, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

To Hemingway, the repetitive process of experience makes possible learning, acting, and meaning, which is to say that it makes writing possible.

I explained to Brett what it was all about... so that she saw what it was all about, so that it became more something that was going on with a definite end and less of a spectacle with unexplained horrors (p. 167)⁴.

In this passage, Jake recalls the conversation he had with Brett concerning bullfighting and the effect it has on the reader is that of an incantation, some kind of exorcism, very much like a repeated prayer. In the religious context or in the Bible, prayer, exorcism, the words, are repeated in order to negate or postpone a spell, a fear. One keeps on repeating in order to keep one's hold on meaning, in order to overcome the fear of non-meaning. Hemingway's fiction contains a similar tonality to that of Biblical repetition which fills the subject totally since it does not limit itself to the physical act of repeating given the transcendental immediacy of religious experience. However, the danger of repetition is in its excess for if a phrase is repeated increasingly, the subject loses consciousness of his self and of the context of the utterance, of his grasp over meaning. For such an experience ultimately ends in meaninglessness and pure delirium. And this is precisely the effect *The Sun Also Rises* has on the reader. Because of the repetitive spaces and situations, the novel seems to have no beginning and no end, which means that its circularity defies any linearity. In other words, the narrative never 'moves on'. This is why one can hardly situate it within the parameters of the Realist novel.

The repetitive pattern does not confine itself to ritual actions only; it occurs on a very banal everyday level, in simple actions like walking or reading. Hemingway, in effect, attempts to empty out an experience by providing the reader with an accumulation of all the little steps it took him, or his hero, to act it (the methodical packing of the fish, for example). These repetitive scenes usually appear when the hero tries to empty some reality of its pain—a situation which usually cannot be helped, like Jake's love for Brett. But the attempt to escape through repetition ends in a recapitulation of the motivation behind the escape. Repetition, at its extreme, negates transcendence; in the end, it pulls one away from redemption.

I knelt and started to pray and prayed for everybody I thought of, Brett and Mike and Bill and Robert and Cohn and myself, and all the bullfighters separately from the ones I liked, and lumping all the rest, then I prayed for myself again and while I was praying for myself, I found I was getting sleepy, so I prayed that the bullfights would be good, and it would be a fine fiesta, and we would get some fishing. I wondered if there was anything else I might pray for, and I thought I would like to have some money, so I prayed that I

⁴ *The Sun Also Rises*. New York, 1954.

would make a lot of money, **and** I started to think how I would make it, **and** thinking of making money reminded me of the count, **and** I started wondering about where he was, **and** regretting I had not seen him since that night in Montmartre, **and** about something funny Brett told me about him, **and** as all the time I was kneeling with my forehead on the wood in front of me, **and** was thinking of myself as praying, I was a little ashamed, **and** regretted that I was such a rotten catholic, but realized there was nothing I could do about it (p. 97).

This loaded passage describes Jakes's act of praying and the style is incantative accordingly. But the overall effect is that of an endless accumulation of heterogeneous elements except that they all fall under the banner of excessive prayer—a prayer which is repeated like a broken record. And in this respect one is surprised at the period dividing the passage into two sentences, for the effect is of one sentence that never ends. (Maybe Hemingway put it there for reading breath; this passage is clearly one of those that one reads aloud.) However, the voice of the reader has no inflexions because this is a flat discourse bordering on delirium given that the cumulative process, in principle, can go on for ever. This discourse has no obvious need to cease (except that the novel as limited form must stop somewhere.) In line with the circularity of pure repetition, the novel does not end: the taxi throws Jake and Brett back to their same old selves, they are about to plunge into yet another fiesta.

The end of the novel, then, is its beginning and the beginning is the end in conformity with its logic of seriality. For the accumulation in the repetition is of separate, totally independent entities, sitting beside one another and oblivious to one another. Given this absence of a dialectical relationship, simultaneity and homogeneity, the only thing relating among all these heterogeneous elements in the series is the mere verbiage of repetition.

I had her watch **how** Romero took the bull away from a fallen horse with his cape, and **how** he held him with the cape and turned him, smoothly and suavely, never wasting the bull... She saw **how** Romero avoided every brusque movement... She saw **how** close Romero always worked to the bull (p. 167).

Again, explaining how things are done would supposedly lay out the experience of bullfighting. It seems, though, that if Hemingway had wanted to describe a process, as the 'hows' seem to indicate, he would have used the present continuous and not this kind of past (the equivalent of the French *passé simple*—a non-durative time). In conformity with the textual logic of seriality mentioned above, there is no chain of actions here, no process. Rather, each step, each verb encloses a specific action detached from the rest precisely because of the repetition of the 'hows' which function here as periods. The overall effect is one of a still camera moving almost imperceptibly from one image to next. This passage, therefore, connotes non-motion rather than process despite the

illusion of motion that the text seems to posit (at least on the surface). For the steps do not follow one another in a time sequence; they accumulate, repeating one another out of time. No doubt, one 'how' with a durative time would have sufficed to explain the process under description, but Hemingway's discursive production negates the process of description or description as process.

Repetition is also used in pseudo-humorous contexts (pseudo-humorous because on the surface they sound funny, but these bouts of fake humor actually hypostasize the presence of excess and delirium in this text), like drunkenness. Whenever, a protagonist gets drunk, he falls into a pattern of verbal repetition. Bill, after swallowing a good quantity of wine, talks to Jake about courage: "Ought not to daunt you. Never been daunted. Secret of my success. Never been daunted. Never been daunted in public" (p. 73). There is a similar repetition of the word 'wonderful' by Bill, the presumed successful writer. When back from a drinking bout in Vienna, his speech sounds like a broken record. "I hear you had a wonderful trip", says Jack. And Bill picks it up repeating it scores of times over the next few pages.

One might think that Hemingway is making a value judgment on tourist clichés such as "a wonderful trip"; however, the repetitive pattern of his discourse has to do with an inherent difficulty of expression. He himself suggested that critics see too much in his awkward style, which, to him, had nothing rich about it. But, precisely, this 'awkwardness' which coincides with drunkenness and delirium constitutes the key to his world view. The drunken dialogue of the novel is overtaken by a monotonous absurdity; Hemingway seems to be putting a question mark on talking, and by extension, on the act of writing.

Hemingway's discursive repetition manifests itself as well in the characters and spaces. Critics have argued at length as to the central hero of the novel. Some, like Carlos Baker,⁵ claim that mother earth is the true heroine of the novel and that Hemingway wanted to counter Gertrude Stein's label "you are all a lost generation" with the passage from *Ecclesiastes*. These critics hold that the novel is far from being nihilistic, that Hemingway believes in man's ability to recover from the chaos of war and regenerate. But this thesis seems a bit far-fetched despite the various descriptions of nature in the novel. Other critics see in Jake Barnes both narrator and central character, because, they claim, he is the only one to endure, facing his blind-alley love situation with a great deal of courage and resistance. (That is, if one of course believes that the Jake-Brett relationship is one of love.) In fact, Jake does very little for Brett, though he seems to be doing a lot and complaining a lot.

⁵ C. Baker, *The Writer as Artist*. New York 1951, p. 81.

According to Richard Havey,⁶ Jake does three things for Brett: he serves as her confidant; pimps for her; goes to Madrid to rescue her. In short, Jake is far from being the central and moral hero Hemingway is looking for (if one assumes that he is indeed looking for such a character). Other critics see Robert Cohn as the ethical hero whose initial intention was to save Brett from her corrupt environment, and the only one to live by his principles right to the end. Yet others claim that Pedro Romero is the central hero, representing manhood and courage in his life-and-death game in the bullfight. Indeed, there are passages in which he is described as a high priest at an altar. However, this view of Pedro Romero cannot be sustained since he succumbs to corruption as well in his drinking and sex.

One possibility which has not been explored is that there is no central character in *The Sun Also Rises*, and therefore no moral character to carry the author's message. We know very little about the characters by the close of the novel; it is as though they disappear by an act of magic to make it possible for Hemingway to write a last page to this story, but it is clear that these protagonists will meet again in similar circumstances. As to their differentiating characteristics, there seem to be almost none. However, one quality common to all and central to the book is their drinking ability. All characters in this novel are drinkers in various degrees, some drink more and some drink less. We are never sure exactly when they are in control of their wits and it is practically impossible to keep track of the various drinking bouts since the narrative constitutes one long drinking act.

In this connection, it is clear to the careful reader that there is no causality in this novel for things never happen out of necessity. The heroes could go to café X or Y, do action Z or W; there is absolutely no purposefulness to what is being done. After a while the reader gets the impression that Jake Barnes, if he is the narrator—that is, an autonomous narrator—might be dreaming all the other characters who are quite probably extensions of his own self (or Hemingway's perhaps).

The reader may be misled by a semblance of planification and purposefulness; one may feel that the trip to Pamplona is something the characters are looking forward to in the future. But there is no future and no plans because, basically, there is no movement given that spaces never change. This fact is illustrated vividly by Jake's measuring tool: "Mike was a bad drunk. Brett was a good drunk. Cohn was never drunk" (p. 148). Again, the word 'drunk' is repeated and the line presents an accumulation of separate units duplicating each other mediated by drunkenness. If there is a difference, it is within repetition. The minor

⁶ R. B. Havey, *Hemingway: the Inward Terrain*. University of Washington Press, 1968, p. 66.

differences existing between the characters are secondary to their repetitiveness, this is further expressed through the lack of any well-defined physical presence. They all seem to be ethereal, in line with alcohol's 'vaporous' nature.

It is as though the reader were presented with a bare scenario which retained only the actors' speeches, and asked to do the work of writer and director in order to reconstruct the scene fully and dramatize it.⁷

This lack of physical presence, the inherent absence in Hemingway's discourse relates to a manifest problematic of the mask, of identity, which the majority of protagonists seem to embody. Names and faces are blurred; the heroes have a hard time recognizing themselves (with the help of alcohol). Mrs Hobin, the whore, introduces herself as Georgette Leblanc (p. 18). Brett looks like a boy (p. 22), while Mike "looks like a death mask of himself", and "I looked strange to myself in the glass" (p. 224). We recall Jake inspecting his wound in the mirror at the beginning of the novel. Cohn likes to take haircuts, to change faces. In short, drunkenness contributes to this blurring of selves. Indeed, one cannot speak of clear-cut identities in this novel. "However, this thingness (of the characters' bodies and lives) is not so much a matter of knowing a great deal about what the characters look like or what they wear. Hemingway is surprisingly reticent in such details."⁸ It should be noted here that if Hemingway is reticent it is not because he falls short of a full portrayal of his protagonists but because alcohol and absence go hand in hand, and the novel in no way constitutes a representation of a given reality but the creation of a world, a production of meaning. Finally, the repetition in the characters is warranted by their lack of movement—the stasis of the repetitive spaces and the stasis of discursive repetition. Lack of movement means first, that spaces and situations do not change and second, that due to repetition, the discourse coincides with itself indefinitely, that it goes back on itself ceaselessly.

A few critics have pointed to the inherent stasis in Hemingway's fiction, but they have not carried it far enough, that is, to the discursive level. Philip Young says:

This is motion which goes no place. Constant activity has brought us along with such pleasant gentle insistence that not until the end do we realize that we have not been taken in exactly, but taken nowhere; and that, finally, is the point.⁹

Chaman Nahal comes closer to the discursive stasis.

⁷ S. N. Grebstein, *Hemingway's Craft*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois U.P., 1973, p. 133.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

⁹ P. Young, *The Sun Also Rises*, [in:] *Studies in "The Sun Also Rises"*, Columbus, 1969, p. 89.

But in none of these channels of direct action can one think of a scene in the novel where the physical action stands out as a major piece of narration. Further, we see that what could have been scenes of impressive action [...] are repeated to us only after they are over; there is no first hand portrayal of them. It seems certain that whatever else *The Sun Also Rises* may be, it is not a story of great action¹⁰.

The key word in this quote is "repeated", which means that writing, discourse, are here to supplement action, to replace life. Lack of movement and lack of change, call to mind the famous statement: "all trains finish in Madrid, they don't go anywhere from there" (p. 240). These trains never left Madrid in the first place; they come from nowhere and do not go anywhere for the difference between Paris and Pamplona, the supposed two poles of action, is one of degree only, not a qualitative one. "I wish I had gone to Paris with Bill (says Jake) except that Paris would have meant more fiestaing" (p. 232).

Paris is the fiesta and vice-versa. Some suggest that one could practically follow with a map the characters' movements throughout Paris, and down to Pamplona, or that this Paris is the Paris of tourists. But what does Paris mean, especially to the expatriates of The Twenties? "The night life of Paris, for example, whose casualness is murderous and chaotic, has no reasonable explanation; it 'happens' and the events have a quality of aimless sequence."¹¹ Paris is chaos and disorder; it is the space of loss, and its representatives are Georgette Leblanc, the whore, and the group of homosexuals accompanying Brett. This Paris is a state of being; in no way does it coincide with the real Paris. The protagonists are, as a homogeneous whole, absorbed by this space, their identity vanishing against the background of such chaos. And what is Pamplona, if not the exact replica of Paris multiplied to the nth degree!

At noon of Sunday, the sixth of July, the fiesta exploded. There is no other way to describe it (p. 152). The marble-topped tables and the white wicker chairs were gone. They were replaced by cast iron tables and severe folding chairs. The café was like a battleship stripped for action (p. 153). Before the waiter brought the sherry the rocket that announced the fiesta went up in the square. It burst and there was a gray ball of smoke high up above the theatre Gayarre, across on the other side of the plaza. The ball of smoke hung in the sky like a sharpnel burst, and as I watched, another rocket came up to it, trickling smoke in the bright sunlight. I saw the bright flash as it burst and another little cloud of smoke appeared (p. 153).

The experience of war is transposed here, and in Paris as well. The only way we can speak coherently of the presence of war in Hemingway is in terms of its internalization and transformation through fiction. All the critical references to Jake Barnes, his war experiences and wound

¹⁰ Ch. Nahal, *The Narrative Pattern in Ernest Hemingway's Fiction*. Cranbury, 1971, pp. 29—30.

¹¹ F. J. Hoffman, *The Twenties*. New York 1965, p. 103.

are valid, but what counts is the internalization of such an experience. That is, the impotence involved in the act of writing, the impossibility to bring the story to its close, and this is what is meant by a 'writing of war'. Hemingway seems to be saying that Pamplona and Paris are war: one experiences them as one experiences war. Paris and Pamplona (the space of writing and repetition) in varying degrees constitute repetitions of a war experience that has passed. "Everything became quite unreal finally and it seemed as though nothing could have any consequences" (p. 154). Is not this another space of total loss, "a spectacle with unexplained horrors" (p. 167)?

There is an interesting 'hum' in the cafes. "This hum went on and we were part of it" (p. 161). This appears to be the hum of drunken talk, mere verbiage and delirium. Some of the scenes here recall *Alice in Wonderland*. Things are eccentric, confused and out of proportion. We have the village idiot and the kids, crazy dancers with crazy music, giants and dwarfs, bullfights, a victim of the bull "just for fun"—in short, a horror movie. "Things were not the same and now life came only in flashes" (p. 217). Life is lost and replaced by flashes—copies of life, simulacra.

Critics have claimed that the one redeeming sequence in the novel is the fishing trip on the Irati River, and that this trip constitutes an escape from the alienation of Paris and a total communion with nature. Is Irati a different space from Paris and Pamplona? This is doubtful for, as was suggested, difference in Hemingway comes within repetition. On the fishing trip, pure delirium is encountered. Things make least sense of all in these dialogues:

Show Irony and Pity...

Are you going to show irony and pity?

I thumbed my nose.

That's not irony.

As I went downstairs I heard Bill singing, „Irony and Pity.

When you're feeling...

Oh, Give them irony and give them pity. Oh, give them irony... just a little pity (p. 114).

Good. Coffee is good for you. It's the caffeine in it.

Caffeine, we are here. Caffeine puts a man on her horse and a woman in his grave... (p. 115).

Listen you're a hell of a good guy, and I'm fonder of you than anybody on earth. I could not tell you in New York. It'd mean I was a faggot. That was what the civil war was all about. Abraham Lincoln was a faggot. He was in love with General Grant. So was Jefferson Davis. Lincoln just freed the slaves on a bet. The Dred Scott case was framed by the Anti-Saloon league. Sex explains it all. The Colonel's Lady and Judy O'Grady are lesbians under their skin (p. 116).

What is he trying to say? We cannot disregard such passages because the book is full of them and they all cohere to form an infrastructure

which coincides with Hemingway's being-in-the-world. The fishing chapter is full of illogical, drunken talk. Like the rest of the book, things do not seem to make sense here. But interestingly enough, it is through this verbiage that some of the most important things are said. In the middle of this drunken conversation the most crucial problem of writing arises. It is here that appears the formula, "You're only a newspaper man. An expatriated newspaper man."

There is a consistent relationship between drunkenness and writing throughout the book. Besides being drunkards, the characters are writers, either in actuality or in potential, and this includes Mike Campbell who is a good storyteller. (136) But they are all having problems with their writing: Cohn is having a hard time with his second book (p. 37); Bill thinks that "writing is lousy" and he is ashamed to be a writer (p. 175), while Jake is only an expatriated newspaper man. Drunkenness is a necessity which plunges you into the world of the work without your feeling the transition between reality and fiction. Alcohol is the medium which blurs the borders of reality and fiction: alcohol sits on the narrow line of the ontological gap.

I read Turgenieff. I knew that now, reading it in the oversensitized state of my mind after much too much brandy. I would remember it somewhere, and afterward it would seem as though it had really happened to me (p. 149).

We have a few more references to this blurring of the two worlds: Cohn gets ideas from books (p. 12); he applies books to reality (p. 9). Jake Barnes himself does not stand riding along Boulevard Raspail because "perhaps I have read something about it once" (p. 42). During the fishing trip, Jake reads a book about a man who disappeared in a glacier, "and his bride was going to wait twentyfour years exactly for his body to come out on the moraine, while her true love waited too, and they were still waiting when Bill came up" (p. 120). Alcoholic experience is necessary if one wants to move freely from the book to the world and vice-versa, for it is double in nature. First it puts you in the presence of the world—or rather semi—presence, since consciousness is not in full control of the real world; and secondly, it revives past experiences in you without specifying their time. Alcoholic being is then delirious being; it frees consciousness from the fullness of the world's present and helps it recapitulate some of the fullness of the past. And the repetition of alcohol and delirium might give one the sensation that the past can be recapitulated in its total fullness. This is precisely Hemingway's illusion, his failure in life and success in literature, because the impossibility of recapitulation constitutes the core of his books.

Time, in Hemingway, is therefore pure repetition; it is divided into an indefinite number of units duplicating one another, the only mediating factor being the series itself on which the duplicating and duplicated

instances occur. There is no relationship amongst the units except for their seriality which is posited as the space of repetition. And the annihilation of the time sequence through pure repetition makes for the diminution of experience. For if experience is a serial accumulation of heterogeneous units of repetition, it falls under mass production—an indefinite number of exact reproductions of the same model. Of course, the number is indefinite if one wills it. But even if when multiplies a definite number of indefinite elements, one ends up with an indefinite number of copies. In principle, the notion of mass production is indefinite even if one produces a limited number of items, since there is always the possibility of producing more copies of the same product. But it remains to investigate the initial model.

As suggested, there is in Hemingway a time out of time—the time of the model of which all the other times constitute repetitions. This is the time of the initial experience, of “the way it was”. Presumably, in Hemingway’s world, there was something, an experience, basically different from all its expressions, ‘lost’ but forever recaptured through discourse. In Hemingway, ‘life’ differs from its ‘flashes’ and writing is the ceaseless attempt to recapture ‘life’. It would seem, then, that Hemingway’s textual production has one purpose: to recapture ‘things past’; hence the stasis and circularity of his discourse. Movement and change are ruled out because they stand in the way of the initial experience; alienation, in the Hemingwayian context, means an obsession with the repetition of that initial experience which can only be approximated. In short, the ‘falling short’ of this repetitive approximation leads to impotence, to abortion, for the story is never written.

Listen, Robert, going to another country does not make any difference. I’ve tried all that. You can’t get away from yourself by moving from one place to another. There’s nothing to that.

It is clear that Hemingway negates any fresh look at the world; if being here and being there are one and the same thing, there is no purpose in movement at all. This remains the experience of a self totally full of itself, perpetually in fear of losing grasp over itself. If this is madness (as Hotchner would have it) then it is ‘repetitive madness’, a discursive madness. For, to Hemingway, these privileged primary experiences, ‘life’, are the stuff of discourse: writing and the primary experience are one and the same. The seizure (the recapturing) of the first moment occurs in Pamplona, within the space of writing, in language. But the identity of discourse and experience is never complete: an unbridgeable gap remains between them which Hemingway obsessively and unsuccessfully attempts to bridge with repetition.

In *Death in the Afternoon*, the space of writing par excellence, Hemingway tells us:

I was trying to write then and I found the greatest difficulty, aside from knowing truly what you really felt, rather than what you were supposed to feel, and had been taught to feel, was to put down what really happened in action; what the actual things were which produced the emotion that you experienced ¹².

In order to write the "actual things", Hemingway must reject mediation or simulation; the self must be stripped of „everything it was taught to feel” as well as “everything it was supposed to feel”. That is, Hemingway posits the possibility of a self as pure as possible, a naked-centralized self which would be able to feel the experience as if it were just born, a self that approaches the world in total nakedness—a *tabula rasa*. However, this can only be a myth, since the primary experience itself can never be experienced with a naked self for every self is pre-given and pre-defined. Furthermore, re-experiencing in life is impossible for one cannot cross the same river twice: the re-crossing is a new crossing or a fake crossing a simulation—writing.

Repetition, therefore, ends in delirium and excess because of the obsessive motivation behind it. The blueprint, in mass production, has priority in time over its copies; in the absence or loss of this blueprint any copy can serve as a blueprint. At a certain point all copies become originals. Consequently, self, or the centre, is divided into an infinity of duplications running after one another in a circle since the original, the primary experience, is lost. Hemingway fails to realize that the repetition in discourse cannot duplicate the primary experience, that writing involves a process of mediation. The mechanics of repetition make it impossible for Hemingway to write the story. What he has done, thus, is to write the story of writing as a story.

MECHANIZM POWTÓRZEŃ W Dyskursie Ernesta Hemingwaya

STRESZCZENIE

Rozprawa ma na celu studium nad tekstową dynamiką dyskursu Ernesta Hemingwaya w świetle procesu powtarzania, które jest częścią składową jego tekstu. Wykazuje ono, że powtórzenie jednocześnie pośredniczy procesowi twórczemu, ale i zagraża samemu jego istnieniu, bo Hemingwayowski dyskurs unosi się nad cieniutką linią podziału między sensem i nonsensem, ponieważ powtórzenie doprowadzone do dyskursywnej krańcowości rodzi delirium. Analiza koncentruje się na utworze *The Sun Also Rises*, ale odnosi się do całości dyskursu Hemingwaya; zawiera także implikację tezy dotyczącej tekstu w literaturze amerykańskiej lat dwudziestych XX wieku. Zgłasza twierdzenie, że pewnego rodzaju homologiczny stosunek uzyskuje się między procesem powtarzania przy masowej produkcji a tekstowymi powtórzeniami w dyskursie Hemingwayowskim. Ten stosunek jednak nie jest wyraźnie określony, bo istota takiej homologii pozostaje tylko przybliżona.

Przełożył Witold Ostrowski

¹² *Death in the Afternoon*. New York 1960, p. 2.