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On a Dialogue in Ernest Hemingway's Novel *Farewell to Arms*

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In this paper the author discusses just one of the numerous dialogues in Ernest Hemingway's novel *A Farewell to Arms*. The specific and rather rare structure of the dialogue mentioned shows not only Hemingway's preference for dialogue in his narrative but the way he handles his conversations when he lays stress on the most direct involvement of his characters in a scene.

1.

It was often an inevitable practice of many of Hemingway's critics to observe how much his attention was drawn to the choice and the specific use of the vocabulary, to the particular syntactic performance of sentences, and, above all, to the careful and original shaping of dialogues. So it seems quite convincing that "with a born sense of inner discipline that most of his contemporaries lacked, Hemingway followed in this path and created a new and distinctive style for his special message."[1] Just owing to these facts, what John Wain wrote in "The Observer" about Hemingway's style, is quite true:"Though there were many imitators there was never truly a 'School of Hemingway', because the standard he set was too severe." One of the main reasons for this assumption is that there is a strong link and harmony between the author's literary projections, with many aspects of corresponding language performance, on the one side, and the numerous aspects of physical and psychical reality of his own life experience, on the other. This

1. Spiller, R. E., *The Cycle of American Literature*, The MacMillan Company, New York, 1955, p. 271.

unity, according to some critics, reaches a rather high degree.[2] A. Maurois also brings into connection these two components assuming that "Hemingway's favourite characters are men who deal in death and accept its risk", accordingly, "he used this hard style, carved in hard wood, to tell hard stories."[3] All this indisputably refers to *A Farewell to Arms* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, in which the author showed his understanding of romance, suffering, compassion, horrors and agonies of war and, in general, of the brutal side od human life.

2.

We have mentioned several important characteristics of Hemingway's style, but what perhaps most often strikes the reader's eye in his prose is the use and distribution of dialogues. There is no doubt that Hemingway radically opposes the traditional technique of presenting conversations. Before we come to this point, it must first be clear that there are many ways of shaping dialogues, especially if the writer shows a preference for them in his narrative. Certainly, we must disregard the general opinion that in contemporary narrative art there appears a tendency not to insist much on the use of dialogue.[4]

Dialogues, as we know, in most cases consist of reported and reporting clauses.[5] If two characters in a novel are involved in a conversation, there must be at least two reported clauses if a dialogue, in the full sense of this word, is in question. When three or more characters are involved, it is almost impossible to get their identification without using the reporting clauses. The reporting clause can occupy one of the three positions: in front of the reported clause, in the middle, or at the end of it. In Hemingway's prose most of the reporting clauses consist of subject and predicate, the latter being in most cases the verb **say**.[6] He also very often has short or long sequences of reported clauses followed by the shortest possible reporting clauses. Besides, very frequently the reporting clauses are ommitted.[7] When one sees how he handles his conversations, and this problem

2. Spiller, R. E., *ibidem*, p. 271.: "... Just what the influence of Gertrude Stein meant to him as an artist would be difficult to determine. Perhaps it was only the new conception of the power and use of language, which was coming from James Joyce and the international Paris group in general, that freed Hemingway from the conventions of fiction which otherwise might have hampered him."

3. Maurois, A., "Ernest Hemingway" in *Hemingway and His Critics*, an International Anthology, Hill and Wang, New York, Third Edition, 1961, p. 38.

4. Jeremić, D., "Ivo Andrić" *Prsti nevernog Tome*, Nolit, Beograd, 1965, p. 64.

5. Krile, I., "The verb **Say** in the Reporting Clauses of Ernest Hemingway's Dialogues" in *Studia Romanica et Anglica Zagrabiensia*, Facultas Philosophica Universitatis Studiorum Zagrabiensis, vol XXVIII, num. 1—2, Zagreb, ianuarius—december 1983, p. 197.

6. Krile, I., *ibidem*, p. 198.

7. The following is the exemplification of such dialogues (Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms*, ch. 16, p. 83):

"*... How many people have you ever loved?*"

has just been discussed, one gets the impression that for Hemingway only in this way are his characters most directly involved, the scenes most vividly presented and, if nothing else, all these elements projected as pure facts, with cold precision.

What must be stressed regarding the dialogue structure is that the speech of characters is realized in the reported clause, whereas the reporting clause is the place for authorial intervention. The great difference between these two parts of dialogue, always distinctly separated by punctuation (quotation marks and commas), may be seen in the way one reads them. The former clause is regularly marked by more expressive tones, more suggestive intonation and rhythm. Authorial intervention serves only as an explanation or description in the interpretation of the speech of characters and may be better understood as 'commentator's voice'. The reported clause dictates the movement of the explanatory passage; therefore the reporting clause, almost as a rule, is weakly stressed. Its intonation continues in the same direction as the last stress of the reported clause.[8] As a matter of fact, the reporting clause is an external passage, almost entirely devoid of the immediacy and vividness of speech performed by characters. The use of punctuation can also be an indicator of distinction since no interrogation, or exclamation, or perhaps some other, punctuation marks, are used in the reporting clause. Then the difference may be shown by the use of some foreign or dialectal terms in the reported clause. From the linguistic point of view analysis can be done at different levels: phonological, morphological, syntactical, suprasegmental (tonal, rhythmical, intonational).

3.

We have already seen that in prose dialogue schemes of various kinds may occur. However, the purpose of the present paper is to discuss a dialogue form which is rather unusual and specific in many respects.

"*Nobody.*"
"*Not even me?*"
"*Yes, you.*"
"*How many others really?*"
"*None.*"
"*How many have you — how do you say it — stayed with?*"
"*None.*"
"*You're lying to me.*"
"*Yes.*"
"*It's all right. Keep right on lying to me. That's what I want you to do. Were they pretty?*"
"*I never stayed with anyone.*"
"*That's right. Were they very attractive?*"
"*I don't know anything about it.*"...

8. Allen, W. S., *Living English Speech*, Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., London, 1963, p. 152.

"...I looked at the man the officers were questioning. He was the fat, grey-haired, little lieutenant-colonel they had taken out of the column. The questioners had all the efficiency, coldness and command of themselves of Italians who are firing and are not being fired on.

"Your brigade?"

He told them.

"Regiment?

He told them.

"Why are you not with your regiment?"

He told them.

"Do you know that an officer should be with his troops?"

He did.

That was all. Another officer spoke.

"It is you and such as you that have let the barbarians on to the sacred soil of the fatherland."

"I beg your pardon," said the lieutenant-colonel.

"It is because of the treachery such as yours that we have lost the fruits of victory."

"Have you ever been in retreat?" the lieutenant-colonel asked.

"Italy should never retreat."

We stood there in the rain and listened to this. We were facing the officers and the prisoner stood in front and a little to one side of us.

"If you are going to shoot me," the lieutenant-colonel said, "please shoot me at once without further questioning. The questioning is stupid." He made the sign of the cross. The officers spoke together. One wrote something on a pad of paper.

"Abandoned his troops, ordered to be shot," he said.

Two carabinieri took the lieutenant-colonel to the river bank. He walked in the rain an old man with his hat off, a carabiniere on either side. I did not watch them shoot him but I heard the shots."...[9].

To make clear what we consider to be a text written in dialogue form, it is enough to say that at least two persons must take part in an informal interchange of thoughts (views, wishes, intentions, etc.) by spoken words. From the technical or formal point of view, interlocutors may be said to be equal in their rights. As a matter of fact, dialogue is supposed to contain stimuli and responses. Their interplay cannot be put out of this order and succession if the most characteristic or classic type of dialogue is in question. Its scheme would be as follows:

(1)

1_1a_1	1_1	interlocutor$_1$
	a_1	speech material 1 of interlocutor$_1$
1_2b_1	a_2	speech material 2 of interlocutor$_1$
	a_3	speech material 3 of interlocutor$_1$
1_1a_2		
	1_2	interlocutor$_2$
	b_1	speech material 1 of interlocutor$_2$
1_2b_2	b_2	speech material 2 of interlocutor$_2$
	b_3	speech material 3 of interlocutor$_2$
1_1a_3		
1_2b_3		

9. Hemingway, E., *A Farewell to Arms*, Penguin Books, London, 1961, Chapter 30, pp. 174—175.

We can see that matrix (1) has a regular sequence of passages identifiable as a_1 versus b_1, a_2 versus b_2, etc. Nothing has been said on whether or not these wholes consist of the reported clause alone. If they contained both the reported and reporting clauses, another symbol could be used to denote the reporting clause, or the commentator's intervention. In this case we should have two symbols, one for the commentator, another for his intervention. We should also use additional symbols for his intervention since this material is also subject to multiformity.

After these introductory observations, we may take into consideration the dialogue scheme that has been singled out with regard to its specificity in form as well as meaning:

(2)

1_1a_1	1_1	interlocutor$_1$
Nx	a_1	speech material 1 of interlocutor$_1$
1_1a_2	a_2	speech material 2 of interlocutor$_1$
Nx	a_3	speech material 3 of interlocutor$_1$
1_1a_3	a_4	speech material 4 of interlocutor$_1$
Nx	N	narrator
1_1a_4	$\dot{x}$	speech material 1 of his mediation
Ny	y	speech material 2 of his mediation

The main point is that in matrix (2), in contrast with matrix (1), the second participant in the dialogue is replaced by the author who acts as a narrator. This scheme is not so frequent, especially with writers who use dialogue sparingly, but various solutions are also possible.[10]

10. Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* begins as follows:
"*Tom!*"
No answer.
"*Tom!*"
No answer.
"*What's gone with that boy, I wonder? You, TOM!*"
No answer.
The great difference between this dialogue scheme and the one quoted from *A Farewell to Arms* is that in this one the first participant (Tom's aunt) does not know where the second one (Tom) is. Calling someone, especially at a distance, naturally presupposes that one need not get an answer. Accordingly, in such cases, authorial intervention is to be expected.
Our second example is taken from Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield*, Oxford University Press, London, Chapter 41, p. 600.:
"*We shall be happy,*" said Miss Clarissa, "*to see Mr. Copperfield to dinner, every Sunday, if it should suit his convenience. Our hour is three.*"
I bowed.
"*In the course of the week,*" said Miss Clarissa, "*we shall be happy to see Mr. Copperfield to tea. Our hour is halfpast six.*"
I bowed again.
"*Twice in the week,*" said Miss Clarissa, "*but, as a rule, not oftener.*"
I bowed again.
In this example we have a change in body posture, a movement similar to head-nods, shrugging one's shoulders, or any such gesture. Such movements induce, or prompt, or

Now we can try to find the reasons why the author has used this specific, rather unusual, or rare, dialogue form, at this particular place. It is also an important fact that this same form is used just once, not only in this novel, but in the whole of Hemingway's work. This dialogue takes place in the whirl of war, during the well-known retreat of the Italian army at Caporetto. Among several tragical scenes, with the army in retreat and total confusion, this one is by far the most impressive.

The first participant in the dialogue (in the quoted text singled out in bold-face type) is one of the battle police officers who addresses four questions to the lieutenant-colonel, the second participant in the dialogue. The first two questions are ellipted (reported) clauses. By contrast with the four turns of initiating speech-acts performed by the first interlocutor (direct character-reader communication), the four turns of response are not speech-acts performed by the second interlocutor but a response given by the writer (author-reader communication). In this manner, the structure of the two symmetrical opposite sequences with the alternative turns loses the usual balance based on the assumption that in most instances there is an almost regular exchange of views or information of any kind, since, obviously, both interlocutors are supposed to take part in the dialogue. In a drama, these four responding turns should be shaped and presented as the speech-acts of the second interlocutor. One may conjecture how such a balance could be achieved in this text. However, the problem of the structure of this dialogue would be resolved only technically, not substantially. Therefore it is logical to assume that just by means of this solution the author's intention was to show the specific relationship between the two interlocutors involved. We should first be aware of the situation which is described immediately before and after the occurrence of the said dialogue. What can be taken as an introduction is the following:

— *I looked at the man the officers were questioning*
— *he was the fat, grey-haired, little lieutenant-colonel*
— *the questioners had all the efficiency, coldness and command...*

It is the status of the interlocutors that is given in this text. The status may also be seen both from the text uttered by the interlocutors:

— *it is you and such as you that have let the barbarians on to the sacred soil of the fatherland*
— *I beg your pardon*
— *it is because of treachery such as yours that we have lost the fruits of victory*
— *Italy should never retreat*
— *if you are going to shoot me,..., please shoot me at once without further questioning*
— *the questioning is stupid*

and from the description of the scene at the end of the same episode:

encourage, the interlocutor to continue speaking. This text is written in the first person but this fact has no significance. It is important that in this type of dialogue the second participant does not act as a speaker. We have seen in the previous example that the second participant is not physically present.

— *we stood there in the rain*
— *he walked in the rain, an old man with his hat off*
— *they were questioning someone else*
— *he was not allowed to make an explanation*
— *he cried when they read the sentence from the pad of paper and cried while they led him off*

But the status is best seen from the dialogue itself. The scheme chosen for this dialogue speaks for itself:

— the first two initiating turns of the speech-acts performed by the first battle police officer are **ellipted** sentences
— all the four initiating turns are **questions**; their intonation is very suggestive, it implies power, authority, inconsiderateness, especially the last two which are calling to order and account.

It has already been noted that the author had not used reported clauses for the answers. As a matter of fact, only reported clauses here could be considered direct answers. It is clear that they are replaced by the narrator's mediation. The last, fourth, narrator's mediation is perhaps the most significant since one does not even know whether the lieutenant-colonel has given any answer at all. Thus, the use of such mediation, in place of the reported clauses, and particularly the uniformity (the repetition of the same syntactic structures) of the first three of the narrator's mediations undeniably results in the idea that there was no use answering. In other words, for Hemingway, "questioning is stupid" should be accepted as the only reply to all questions in that situation. The reader is also aware of the vain, futile words, but having a sense of grandeur and sublimity. They are used in the arguments given by the battle police officer (**the sacred soil, fatherland, Italy**, etc.) or those with a negative sense (**barbarians, treachery**, etc.) Another very significant symbol, suggestive of the dull atmosphere and depressive mood, is the rain.[11] The main protagonist of the whole episode is the lieutenant-colonel. He is the hero and the victim, however in his appearance (**old, fat, grey-haired, little**) there is nothing ostensibly heroic or presumptuous. He faces the situation calmly (**he walked in the rain, an old man with his hat off**) convinced that he also dies for his country and that no guilt can be imputed to him.

4.

The present analysis has not been done to direct our attention to Hemingway's use of dialogue in its more or less standard or usual form.[12] Consequently, our

11. On the use of the word *rain* see: Krile, I., "On Two Words in Ernest Hemingway's novels *A Farewell to Arms* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*", **Studia Romanica et Anglica Zagrabiensia**, Facultas Philosophica Universitatis Zagrabiensis, Vol. XXIX—XXX, num. 1—2. pp. 1—292, Zagreb, 1984—1985, pp. 47—55.

12. Levin, H., "Observations on the Style of Ernest Hemingway" in the anthology quoted in Note 3, p. 105: ..."His conversations are vivid, often dramatic, although he comes to depend too heavily upon them and to scant the other obligations of the novelist."

purpose has been to discuss those facts, aspects and details that are not quite easily observable, although the analyzed dialogue is specific with its syntactic and prosodic structure. The writer himself takes part in the chaos of retreat and appears as an eye-witness in the fateful scene of questioning and shooting. The lieutenant-colonel, as a subsidiary character, is the only participant in the dialogue among the prisoners who are sentenced to death. Besides, the reader becomes familiar with his appearance and his conduct: and, in contrast with all other army officers mentioned in this episode, he is the only one whose rank is made explicit. He appears nowhere else in the novel. The rainy day remarkably characterizes the atmosphere of the scene set apart for the retreat. It stands to reason that the role of the said dialogue form in *A Farewell to Arms* is significant in its narrower and wider aspects.

Projecting ideas in a literary work is always bound with the search of adequate language performance. Hemingway's concern for these two crucial and inseparable components was great, in particular within the scope of his individual realistic tendencies.[13] One cannot say that he managed to remove occasional traces of excessive elaborateness.[14] Nevertheless, it is true that he concentrated not only on "what" but also on "how" in fiction writing and this attitude is at least one of his merits.[15]

O JEDNOM DIJALOGU U ROMANU *ZBOGOM ORUŽJE* ERNESTA HEMINGWAYA

U ovome se članku podrobnije raščlanjuje samo jedan od brojnih dijaloga u romanu *Zbogom oružje* Ernesta Hemingwaya. Posebna, i dosta rijetka, struktura ovoga dijaloga pokazuje ne samo Hemingwayevu sklonost prema dijalogu nego način na koji se on njime služi kada želi označiti vodeću ulogu sudionika u nekoj značajnoj sceni.

13. Levin, H., *ibidem*, p. 112: ..."It is understandable why no critic of Hemingway, including this one, can speak for long of the style without speaking of the man. Improving on Buffon, Mark Schorer recently wrote: ...'[Hemingway's] style is not only his subject, it is his view of life.' It could also be called his way of life, his *Lebenstil*. It has led him to live his books, to brave the maximum of exposure, to tour the world in an endless search for wars and their moral equivalents. It has cast him in the special role of our agent, our plenipotentiary, our roving correspondent on whom we depend for news from the fighting front of modern consciousness. Here he is, the man who was there. His writing seems so intent upon the actual, so impersonal in its surfaces, that it momentarily prompts us to overlook the personality behind them. That would be a serious mistake; ... We must ask: who is this guide to whom we have entrusted ourselves on intimate terms in dangerous places? Where are his limitations? What are his values?..."

14. *The American Tradition in Literature*, W. Norton and Co. Inc., New York, 1962, p. 1352, "... *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), based on his Italian service, is a distinguished war novel, although lingering sentiment breaks through the taut economy of the stylized language..."

15. Howells, W. D., "The What and the How in Art", *Literary Criticism in America*, The Liberal Art Press, ed. by A. D. van Nostrand, New York, 1957, p. 181.