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On Two Words in Ernest Hemingway's Novels "For Whom the Bell Tolls" and "A Farewell to Arms"

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In the present paper the author analyses the occurrences of "snow" in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and "rain" in *A Farewell to Arms*. They denote natural phenomena but their meanings may also imply semantic properties other than those signifying pure meteorological facts. These particular aspects are discussed in more detail to show the specific contribution of "snow" and "rain" to the psychological integrity of the main characters in the two stories. One of them takes place in Spain during the Civil War, the other in Italy during World War One.

1

It could be argued that there is a relationship between the occurrence and frequency count of "snow" in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and that of "rain" in *A Farewell to Arms* merely owing to the fact that the meanings of these two lexical units belong to the same semantic field.¹ They both denote natural phenomena; more precisely precipitation of some kind, and, as such, have the same basic sense components, although obviously they differ in some semantic features. Naturally, speakers need not distinguish between basic and specific sense components since different meanings regularly have different formal structures:

However, the meanings of "snow" and "rain" depend not only on collocations that are lexically and grammatically possible but also on an infinite number of possible contexts of situation. Such contexts are also de-

1. Meanings are usually classified as synonymous (rainy-pluvius/pluvial) hyponymous (precipitations — rain/snow/hail) and antonymous (snow — rain).

cisive factors in the formation of the so-called referential meanings of words. Even when the meanings are referentially transparent they may depend on context that are not easily and immediately observable or understood. Logically, the denotations of "snow" and "rain", when used in everyday conversational communication, are easily reduceable to the sets of sense components that may be completely detected and exhaustively described. On the other hand, in a literary work, words functioning as stylemes assume other important roles. With their additional references words do not simply relate to events or situations presented *ad hoc*. The use of every word is then more or less relevantly related to the complex and intricate structure of the whole literary work. Words occurring in non-literary usage are hardly ever subject to such complex relationships. In a literary work, "snow" and "rain" cannot simply be considered, as symbols having to do with weather conditions of a region or other aspects of climatic or meteorological significance. The meanings of these two, like all other words, can be used for stylistic purposes and other reasons. This is to say that their use is almost never confined to references given *ad hoc*. For this reason, such expressions are unrepeatable compared with the same expressions occurring in some other work of art.³

"Snow" and "rain" may contain a member of different sense components which are not necessarily involved in each of their occurrences. E. g. "snow" may, in different contexts, bring forth such contextual meanings as conditions favourable for skiing or sledging, the pleasure of throwing snowballs, fear of avalanches, an image of untrodden paths and secluded regions, low temperatures in winter days, the use of appropriate footwear or sportswear etc.

"Rain" may connote the use of an umbrella, nasty weather, disappointment due to a lost weekend, a good (due to abundant rain) or a poor (due to the lack of rain) crop of grain, fruit etc.; it may also connote fear of thunder and lightning, a clouded sky, a sense of dampness, rot, decay and the like.

2

In the novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls* "snow" occurs for the first time at the beginning of Chapter 3:

2. Modern semantic theory treats meanings as notions with two possible aspects: *sense* and *reference*. *Sense* is a relationship between lexical items themselves and *reference* is a relationship between lexical items (intralinguistic elements) and persons, objects, places, qualities, actions, states, events etc. (extralinguistic elements).

3. Hemingway's literary expression has been discussed by many critics: A. Maurois, M. Praz, G. Stein, H. Levin etc. See: *Hemingway and His Critics*, New York, Hill and Wang, 1961.

"... , he (Jordan) saw, ... that the mountain slope was a delicate new green and that there were patches of old snow under the crest" (p. 37)

In the same chapter, a little below, "snow" has no direct connection with the main course of the story since Anselmo's conversation refers to some events before the Civil War:

"There were the hides of wolves I had shot. In the winter, hunting them in the snow." (p. 41, Ch. 3)

"... finding him (the bear) on a hillside in the snow, overturning a log with this same paw." (p. 41, Ch. 3)

The next occurrence of "snow" directly concerns the guerilla fighters and their situation at the time however:

"... 'All melt. Ice up there,' El Sordo said and pointed to the snow that showed on the bare crest of the mountains. 'Too far.'" (p. 138, Ch. 11)

Further occurrences of "snow" are more frequent after Chapter 12. Now the notion of "snow" becomes more closely related to events which are of major importance for the development of the plot. This part of the novel focuses on the role of the main hero Robert Jordan. During the Civil War he acts as a volunteer whose task it is to blow up the bridge. The mention of "snow" here finds its place in the descriptions of the area in which the guerilla fighters are faced with many difficulties concerning the transport of supplies or protection from enemy reconnaissance. The small group of fighters live in a cave which, well hidden among the trees, serves as a shelter. The snow blocks their actions, makes movement risky, almost impossible. In Chapter 13 Pilar and Jordan talk about the snow which is likely to fall although they are almost in June now. In Chapter 14 the occurrences of "snow" are more frequent (36) than in any other chapter. The mention of "snow" is also significant in Chapters 15 (16), 16 (9), 20 (15), 21 (12), 22 (11) and 23 (14).

It is also important to stress the fact that "snow" most often occurs with "cave" and "bridge".⁴ The most impressive part of the story takes

4. The occurrences of "cave" in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*:

II	15	VIII	9	XVI	5	XXI	6	XXXIII	5
IV	8	IX	9	XVII	3	XXII	2	XXXVII	2
V	5	XI	4	XVIII	3	XXV	1	XXXVIII	6
VI	2	XIV	6	XIX	2	XXVIII	1	XLI	1
VII	1	XV	2	XX	9	XXIX	3	XLII	1
									111

The occurrences of "bridge" in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*:

I	30	VII	1	XIII	3	XVIII	3	XXXIV	2	XLIII	103
II	13	VIII	3	XIV	1	XIX	2	XXXV	1		
III	27	IX	5	XV	4	XXII	3	XXXIX	1		242
IV	3	XI	14	XVI	2	XXX	4	XLI	7		
V	1	XII	2	XVII	2	XXXI	1	XLII	3		

place inside and around the cave (Jordan's love for Maria) and near the bridge (Jordan dies after having blown up the bridge). The following passages illustrate these relationships:

"... When blow the bridge?"

'You know about the bridge?'

El Sordo nodded...

El Sordo went into the cave and came out with a pinch bottle of Scotch whisky and three glasses...

... 'All melt. Ice up there,' El Sordo said and pointed to the snow that showed on the bare crest of the mountains." (p. 138, Ch. 11)

"'No offensive No aviones. No bridge. Just snow,' Pablo said." (p. 175, Ch. 14)

In these examples, as in most other instances in this novel, the meaning of "snow" is denotative almost exclusively in a meteorological sense and has no other implications. In such cases "snow" represents its general or central meaning. On the other hand, "snow", with some of its well-known characteristics is employed as a speech figure in the illustration of Robert Jordan's mental state at the moment of his dying:

"And he lay very quietly and tried to hold on to himself that he felt slipping away from himself as you feel snow starting to slip sometimes on a mountain slope and he said, now quietly, then let me last until they come." (p. 443, Ch. 43)

In a similar way, the whiteness of snow, which is unquestionably among its most typical and most evident properties, is used to show the proverbial contrast of 'black and white'. This opposition can be shown in a variety of ways and by a vast number of symbolic expressions. It is not strange that the author utilizes "snow" in this sense since this word has a rather high frequency count in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.⁵ Clearly, Hemingway had a deep understanding for the imagery and feeling evoked by snow,

"'What rotten stuff is the snow and how beautiful it looks,' Pilar said. 'What an illusion is the snow.' She turned to Maria. 'I am sorry I was rude to thee, *guapa*. I don't know what has held me to-day. I have an evil temper.'" (p. 150, Ch. 12)

The speech figure in the above dialogue implies two ideas: first, the whiteness of snow connotes a feeling of cleanness, purity, chastity, or the like; and, second, its futility or uselessness.

As we have already mentioned, "snow" is the subject matter of numerous important conversations. It occupies a prominent place in several dialogues between the main protagonists in the novel *For Whom the Be!*

5. The occurrences of "snow" in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*:

III	3	XV	16	XXIV	1	XXIV	1	XXXVIII	3
XI	1	XVI	9	XX	15	XXV	8	XXXIX	1
XII	3	XVII	4	XXI	12	XXVI	2	XLIII	5
XIII	5	XVIII	4	XXII	11	XXVII	3		
XIV	36	XXIII	14	XXIII	14	XXX	1		158

Tolls. One must also bear in mind Hemingway's preference to dialogue form which is, by contrast with general tendencies in modern prose, rather an original and often experimental approach:⁶

"'Want to make snowballs?' he (Jordan) said to Pablo. 'Want to have a snowball fight?'" (p. 174 Ch. 14)

"'Maria,' Pablo called. 'It is still snowing and the snow is beautiful.'" (p. 175, Ch. 14)

"'Let me have a cup of wine, please,' he (Jordan) said in Spanish. Then, 'Lots of snow? Eh?' he said to Pablo. '*Mucha nieve.*'" (p. 173, Ch. 14)

In the above example, the translation of "snow" into the Spanish term is an example of the author's tendency to evoke the native atmosphere in its most original and authentic aspect. It is noteworthy that the use of dialogue — a frequent Hemingway practice, as we have already said — contributes a great deal to the realization of this. Snow plays a still more conspicuous role in the following dialogue:

"'Thanks,' Robert Jordan said. 'I'll be sleeping outside.'

'In the snow?'

'Yes.' (damn your bloody, red pig-eyes and your swine-bristly swines-end of a face). 'In the snow.' (in the utterly-damned, ruinous, unexpected, slutting, defeat-conning, bastard-cessery of the snow.)" (p. 173, Ch. 14)

After several different and stylistically more or less significant occurrences of "snow", in the above passage Pablo's character is depicted in terms of a negative description. He is compared to some negative aspects of "snow". The use of adjectives and especially the grouping and the rather unusual and original compounding of noun qualifiers in these descriptions are no doubt a sign of strengthened stylistic effects.

Finally, beside such examples, there also appear common denotative properties of "snow" which are presented as a contrast to other natural phenomena such as a wind, a summer thunder shower, a blizzard, a tropical storm, a gale. The repetition of one and the same expression stresses the fact that the notion of "snow" plays a significant role in this narrative by Hemingway (the italics are mine):

"But a *snowstorm* was the opposite of all that. In the *snowstorm* you came close to wild animals and they were not afraid. They travelled across country not knowing where they and the deer stood sometimes in the lee of the cabin. In a *snowstorm* you rode up to a moose and he mistook your horse for another moose and trotted forward to meet you. In a *snowstorm* it always seemed, for a time, as though there were no enemies. In a *snowstorm* the wind could blow a gale; but it blew a white cleanness and the air was full of a driving whiteness and things were changed and when the wind

6. See: I. Krile, "O jednom dijalogu u romanu *Zbogom oružje* E. Hemingwaya", *Vidik* 3—4, 1980, p. 120—127.

stopped there would be the stillness. This was a big storm and he might as well enjoy it. It was ruining everything, but you might as well enjoy it." (p. 176, Ch. 14)

3

The frequency count of "rain" in the novel *A Farewell to Arms* also points to the very important lexical and stylistic function of this word.⁷ At the outset of this novel troop movements are described in the regions of Udine and Gorizia. They take place in the wet, muddy plains beside the river, at the foot of the mountains that are either bathed in the sun, covered with snow or rainy clouds. Changeable weather conditions succeed each other but rainy days prevail. This referential meaning of "rain" is used in a purely meteorological sense. So far, Hemingway's writing, supported by numerous documentary details has an unquestionably realistic approach; The following is the exemplification of such descriptions:

"... and in the fall when the rains came the leaves all fell from the chestnut trees and the branches were bare and the trunks black with rain." (p. 7, Ch. 1)

"At the start of the winter came the permanent rain and with the rain came cholera." (p. 8, Ch. 1)

The above example also brings forth the idea of human suffering caused by the war.

Then "snow" dominates through the winter season in Chapter 2, and through the spring which extends from Chapter 3 to Chapter 18. The summer days are described from Chapter 18 to Chapter 25. The autumnal period extends from Chapters 25 to 38 and the winter once again from Chapters 41 to the end of the story. The occurrence of "rain" is most frequent in Chapters 19 (15), 27 (22) and 30 (15). The following extract shows a strong symbolic and very impressive function of "rain":

" 'It's raining hard.'

'And you'll always love me, won't you?'

'Yes.'

'And the rain won't make any difference?'

'No.'

'That's good. Because I'm afraid of the rain.'

'Why?' I was sleepy. Outside the rain was falling steadily.

'I don't know, darling. I've always been afraid of the rain.'

7. The occurrences of "rain" in *A Farewell to Arms*:

I	3	XXIII	4	XXVII	22	XXXI	6	XXXVII	7
IX	1	XXIV	8	XXVIII	18	XXXII	1	XL	10
XIX	19	XXV	2	XXIX	1	XXXIV	4	XLI	5
XXII	3	XXVI	1	XXX	15	XXXVI	5		

131

'I like it.'

'I like to walk in it. But it's very hard on loving.'

'I'll love you always.'

'I'll love you in the rain and in the snow and in the hail and — what else is there?'

....

'Tell me.'

'All right. I'm afraid of the rain because sometimes I see me dead in it.'

'No.'

'And sometimes I see you dead in it.'

'That's more likely.'

....

'Yes, it's all nonsense.'

'It's all nonsense. It's only nonsense. I'm not afraid of the rain. I'm not afraid of the rain. Oh, oh, God, I wish I wasn't.' She was crying. I comforted her and she stopped crying. But outside it kept on raining." (p. 100. Ch. 19)

In the above conversation the fear of rain is brought into connection with unpredictable situations and intolerable suffering in the days of the horrible war. "Rain" connotes feelings of depression and helplessness. It announces ruin that may be caused by the war. In other words, unsolvable social and political problems are presented symbolically as ominous natural phenomena. Rain, like a curtain of darkness seems to hide bright horizons to which human beings are looking. In the conversation quoted above the phrase with the three different kinds of natural phenomena: "in the rain and in the snow and in the hail" stands for "always" Both expressions are used to stress the duration of love which is also the subject matter of this conversation.

Then, there is a long passage in which "rain" symbolizes Frederic's grief and his melancholic love for Catherine:

"... If there were no war we would probably all be in bed. In bed I lay me down my head. Bed and board. Stiff as a board in bed. Catherine was in bed now between two sheets over her and under her. Which side did she sleep on? Maybe she wasn't asleep. Maybe she was lying thinking about me. Blow, blow, ye western wind. Well, it blew and it wasn't the small rain but the big rain down that rained. It rained all night. You knew it rained down that rain. Look at it. Christ, that my love were in my arms and I in my bed again. That my love Catherine. That my sweet love Catherine down might rain. Blow her again to me. Well, we were in it. Every one was caught in it and the small rain would not quiet it. 'Good-night, Catherine.' I said out loud...

'You talked out loud,' Piani said.

'I was having a dream in English,' I said.

The rain was slacking and we were moving along." (p. 153—154, Ch. 28)

A large part of this passage is written as an internal monologue in which rain serves as a physical background for the scene taking place within the column of vehicles. What has been said so far concerning the occurrences of "rain" refers to the war in Italy where Frederic, as officer, and Catherine, as nurse, both served in the Italian army. The following occurrence of "rain" shows quite a different use of this word. Owing to the fact that Switzerland is not a country at war, for the refugees "rain" becomes a symbol of hope and well-being.

"Isn't the rain fine? They never had rain like this in Italy. It's cheerful rain. And we're here, darling! Do you realize we're here?" (p. 215. Ch. 37)

Finally, the last use of "rain" that has to be singled out in the present analysis is found after Catherine's death at the very end of the novel. In the final sentence Hemingway writes:

"... After a while I went out and left the hospital and walkend back to the hotel in the rain." (p. 256, Ch. 41)

In this way, "rain" is once again an omnipresent symbol in the background of the 'war and love' story presented in *A Farewell to Arms*. We should not be surprised that Hemingway paid such close attention to detail to make his narrative stylistically expressive and as far possible balanced in every respect. Indeed, George Plimpton interviewed him about precisely this:⁸

"How much rewriting do you do?"

"It depends. I rewrote the ending to *A Farewell to Arms*, the last page of it, thirty-nine times before I was satisfied."

4

In conclusion one can state that the occurrences of "snow" and "rain" in the two novels are primarily due to Hemingway's concern to present geographical facts and historical events in an almost documentary way. But what has been singled out and analysed in this paper refers primarily to the writer's efforts to introduce some particular individual tones. Through these his prose receives, one could say, unforgettable stylistic effects. To achieve this, "snow" in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and especially "rain" in *A Farewell to Arms*, are given an outstanding function. In their denotation of physical meteorological phenomena they do not remain within common lexical ranges. Indeed they help to bring forth an image of this world at the moments of a struggle between life and death. This human experience is expressed through love, fear, grief and regret.

8. G. Plimpton, "An Interview with Ernest Hemingway in *Hemingway and His Critics*, New York, Hill and Wang, 1961, p. 23.

O DVIJE RIJEČI U ROMANIMA ERNESTA HEMINGWAYA "KOME ZVONO ZVONI" I "ZBOGOM ORUŽJE"

U ovome se članku analiziraju semantički aspekti dviju riječi: "snijega" u *Kome zvono zvoni* i "kiše" u *Zbogom oružje*. Ove dvije riječi označavaju prirodne pojave, ali u određenim književnim kontekstima mogu dobiti i druga specifična semantička, a često i neponovljiva stilska obilježja. Neka se od tih obilježja izravno uklapaju u kategorizaciju likova i situacija u ova dva poznata romana. To su priče o ljubavi, borbi za život i stradanjima u vrijeme dvaju značajnih historijskih sukoba, Španjolskog građanskog rata i Prvog svjetskog rata.